



RESPONSES TO RESPONDENTS' QUESTIONS

Section 2.1.1.1 Contractor's Capabilities

1. Question

For what period of time should the potential contractors provide information on prior litigation and formal administrative protests etc.?

Response

The State is requesting **all** prior and current litigation and/or formal administrative protests or actions concerning the areas mentioned in this section.

Section 2.2.5.1 Change/Enhancement Requests

2. Question

Cost estimates for change enhancement requests are requested utilizing the hourly rates for labor grades provided in the respondents proposal. We request that the State acknowledge that these estimates may be just a portion of the total costs necessary for the change/enhancement. Costs may be provided to cover potential purchase of equipment, need for subcontract work, materials etc.

Response

The State acknowledges that a change/enhancement may involve the purchase of additional equipment, material, etc. and expects the Respondent to specify those costs in its estimate.

Section 2.3 Governing Regulations

3. Question

Will the State confirm that the contractor proposals will account for costs of compliance as of the date of the RFP and costs for compliance with changes will be covered under the change control provisions?

Response

No, only the changes/enhancements mandated by the State of Alabama or Federal law or regulations as being the responsibility of the State or just desired by the State will be covered under any mutually agreed upon contract or this RFP. The Contractor will be solely responsible for making any other changes/enhancements to its system to comply with the rules and regulations that govern EBT systems and operations.



Section 2.5.1 Performance Standards

4. Question

Does this standard apply to posting of benefits from monthly recurring files as well as daily, and if not what are the standards for monthly recurring files?

Response

Yes, the benefits from the monthly recurring files must be posted to the clients' accounts on the same schedule as the daily benefit files and the monthly benefits will be made available for the clients' access by 5:00 a.m. CT on the clients' respective benefit availability dates.

5. Question

What are the estimated maximum number of benefits for a given daily file, and a given daily posting from a monthly recurring benefit file (assuming this is dependent on the state's stagger schedule)?

Response

In responding to this question, it is the State's understanding that the Respondent is inquiring about the number of records in a daily and monthly benefit file. The estimated maximum number of benefit records in a daily benefit file is 1,323 and 186,458 for the monthly benefit file. These numbers do not include the number of case/client records that may be sent.

Section 3.1.1.5 Fraud Investigator Accounts

6. Question

How much fraud is associated with this program?

Response

The State is aware that fraudulent activity occurs, but to what extent is unknown at this time.

7. Question

Would the state be interested in a system that would virtually eliminate fraud?

- A. Question number 1 will help us understand the magnitude of fraudulent transactions and thus will provide the savings (if any) by implementing the newer technology.
- B. The possibility of an initial increase in cost in transitioning to new technology would be greatly outweighed by the savings to the state resulting from the elimination of fraud by the use of state-of-the art technology with unmatched security capabilities.



Response

Yes, the State is interested in a system that can virtually eliminate fraud.

8. Question

Should records be kept for three years in electronic format or hard copy?

Response

The State expects that records will be kept in electronic format for a period of three years or longer if notified.

Section 3.2.2 Card and PIN Issuance

9. Question

Would the State consider the use of the ARU PIN selection feature for new card issuances as well as PIN changes? This would eliminate PIN mailers altogether and reduce the cost to the State.

Response

No.

Section 3.2.2.1 Issuance Through Mail Requirements

10. Question

Will the State accept an option for all client accounts pins selected through an ARU PIN selection rather than a mailed pin?

Response

No.

Section 3.2.3.1 Timeframe Requirements

11. Question

Will the State place some general parameters on the maximum number of items to be sent overnight so that contractors can assess potential capacity?

Response

No, because the need to send EBT cards overnight occurs very rarely.

Section 3.3.2 Retailer



12. Question

How many retailers does the contractor need to provide training videos and printed material?

Response

See Section 3.8.1, Current Environment Description.

Section 3.3.3.1 Administrative Terminal

13. Question

Will the State require a “train-the-trainer” session for state trainers who will be training State and County workers on the new EBT system and the enhanced features available?

Response

Yes, see Section 3.3, Training.

If appropriate:

14. Question

How many individuals will be trained at the “train-the-trainer” session(s)?

Response

The State does not expect to exceed twenty-five (25) State personnel.

15. Question

How many sessions will the State require?

Response

The State cannot determine the actual number of sessions until a Contractor is selected, but anticipates that one session would be sufficient.

16. Questions

Where will the session(s) be held, and when?

Responses

Training will occur at a State facility in Montgomery and the date/time will be determined after a Contractor is selected.

17. Question



Will the State provide facilities with sufficient PC with Internet access for the training sessions?

Response

Yes.

Section 3.5.1 Client Help Desk

18. Question

Will respondents receive added technical points if the core offering includes domestic customer service?

Response

All information and services requested by the State will be considered during the evaluation process.

19. Question

The section states that the contractor shall provide EBT account and benefit access information via a toll-free, "1-800" number. Since the card will only have minor changes, it is assumed that the existing contractor will be transferring the current toll-free number to the new contractor. Please confirm that this assumption is correct.

Response

Because the existing Client Help Desk toll-free 1-800 number is used specifically for Alabama's clients, the State does expect that the current Contractor will transfer that number.

Section 3.6.11 Transaction Fees

20. Question

Could the State please provide the monthly number of successful ATM and POS cash withdrawal transactions that exceeded the two free threshold and incurred transaction fees for a recent three month period? Please provide the total dollar amount of these transaction fees that were paid to the contractor, as well.

Response

The State's number of successful ATM and POS cash only withdrawal transactions and the respective amounts that exceeded the two free threshold and incurred an interchange fee during the three most recent months are as follows: February 2005 – 2,195 transactions at a cost of \$658.50; March 2005 – 2,451 transactions at a cost of \$735.30; and April 2005 – 2,379 transactions at a cost of \$713.70.



Section 3.8.1 Current Environment Description

21. Question

In the last bullet in this section, there is a reference to "42 Meal Services" (retailers). What requirements does the State currently have for identification of clients seeking service at these stores and what certification and reporting on this group of retailers is requested? Are they all integrated stores or are some EBT only?

Response

Identification requirements are the same as they are for any other client. FNS maintains the statistics concerning retailers; therefore, FNS standards must be met concerning certification and reporting. See Section 3.11, EBT Reporting and the sections that follow for additional information.

Section 3.9 Adequate Cash Access

22. Question

How does the State expect the contractor to demonstrate that no client must travel further than 15 miles to a cash access location?

23. Question

Is this done on an average basis considering the number of cash recipients and the number of square miles in the State?

24. Question

How is it done today?

25. Question

Can you provide a report of the cash access locations in place today? Does it meet this criteria?

Response

In response to questions 22-25, the State provides the address to the Contractor for every EBT client for an EBT card to be mailed, so the Contractor will have the location of every cash recipient in Alabama. The State will allow EBT-only machines to be used to satisfy the cash requirement. The State expects the Contractor to propose a method whereas clients do not have to travel greater than 15 miles to gain cash access; however, the State does recognize the fact that unique circumstances encountered by the Contractor may dictate allowing a greater distance.

Section 3.11.6 Customer Service Statistics Report

26. Question



Would the State please provide the average call lengths for client and retailer calls for both ARU and CSR calls, respectively?

Response

The average call lengths for client and retailer calls for both ARU and CSR are as follow: Client ARU – slightly less than one (1) minute; Client CSR – almost two (2) minutes; Retailer ARU – slightly below one (1) minute; and Retailer CSR – slightly under one and a half (1.5) minutes.

Section 3.13.3 Natural Disasters Within the State

27. Question

Please clarify exactly what the contractor is supposed to price in this section and the pricing section IV-4. Is any portion of the service supposed to be included within the core CPCM? Section 3.13.3 indicates the contractor must maintain 25,000 EBT accounts and the associated cards and pins yet section IV-4 asks for pricing in increments of 5,000 cards. Is this over and above the initial 25,000?

Response

Section 3.13.3 is intended to inform the Contractor of the State's expectations for providing benefits during a declared natural disaster and the requirement for maintaining the State's existing 25,000 EBT accounts, cards and PINs on the EBT database for use during a federally declared disaster situation. Yes, Schedule IV-4 is requesting pricing for additional EBT accounts, cards and PINs above the State's existing 25,000.

28. Question

The State requires a drop-ship option for EBT cards. What is the PIN procedure for these drop shipped cards (ARU PIN select)?

Response

The State expects the clients to use the ARU PIN select feature.

Section 4 Pricing

29. Question

How is the State calculating the total cost of each vendor's proposal? Will the start up costs be added to the CPCM costs, or will start-up costs be weighted or valued differently than CPCM costs?

30. Question

At what volume tier or range will the State evaluate the pricing scoring in this section and/or focus their evaluation of the pricing?



Response

In response to questions 29 and 30, the State has provided all the information it deems necessary and appropriate in the RFP concerning the evaluation process. Also see Section 1.1.6, Proposal Evaluation Information.

Pricing 4.1 Response Requirements

31. Question

In regard to location of service provision, how will the State evaluate service locations in the bids? (Understand that State preference is stated later, but how will that preference be administered in selecting the best proposal? Used as a tie breaker for equivalent bids, etc?)

Response

All information and services requested by the State will be considered during the evaluation process.

Pricing 4.1.2 Pricing Assumptions

32. Question

Please clarify how pricing tiers will be administered, using all types of case added together to determine tier or does each case type volume individually define the billing tier for that case type.

Response

See Section 4.1, pricing will be volume based (“tiered”) dependent upon the total actual number of active cases on the EBT system.

Section 4.2 Start-up Costs

33. Question

Are there any limitations on how the start-up pricing charts are completed?

Response

See Schedule IV-1 for the State’s expectations.

34. Question

Is the cost of the EBT POS terminals reflected in this contract?

Response

See Section 4.2, Start-up Costs.



Section 4.4 Pricing of Optional Services

35. Question

How should respondents propose alternative locations for core service provision? If there are cost or service differences due to location of service, for example, should bidders complete 2 versions of Schedule IV-2 in order to have those alternatives evaluated fully?

Response

Respondents should only complete one version of Schedule IV-2 and ensure that the proposal encompasses all of the relevant information outlined in Sections 4.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3 and 4.3. All alternative options should be included in Schedule IV-3.

36. Question

Please clarify the method of scoring. The RFP indicates that scoring of CPCM pricing will only be completed on the pricing contained in Schedule IV-2. However, contractors have been asked to provide pricing schedule IV-3 in terms of an increase or decrease in CPCM. While we understand that the items in IV-3 are optional we would expect that the State include within the scoring the items the State intends to select. If the State does not include items it intends to select it could possibly give a better overall price score to a bid that result in a higher overall price when factoring in all services the State expects to select. Please confirm the State's intention to score selected options within the overall pricing score. If not, please explain the rationale.

Response

All information and services requested by the State will be considered during the evaluation process.

Section 4.8 Client Fees for Cash Withdrawals

37. Question

Does the State intend that the cost of the first two client cash withdrawals per month per case be included within the core CPCM? If so, will the State pay for these withdrawals on a per transaction basis? At what rate?

Response

The State does expect the first two successful client cash only withdrawals per month to be included as part of the core CPCM price. The State will not pay a separate cost for the withdrawals. See Section 3.6.11.

Section 4.11 Pricing for Options (re: Schedule IV-3, Pricing Table for Alabama EBT Optional Services)

38. Question



Will the State please clarify when it would make the decision for selecting the options for the following:

- client and retail customer service call centers in the U.S;
- client call center within 30 miles of Montgomery;
- on line Data Warehouse.

Pricing on a CPCM basis for this is dependent on the timing of implementation. We expect that the State will make this decision upon contract execution and implementation would be for the full term of the contract. If a change is requested after initial implementation then the State and the Contactor will negotiate a change order? Please confirm and clarify.

Response

The State's ability to make an informed decision to select or not select an optional service is directly dependent upon the Respondent's proposal. Therefore, if the price is dependent upon the timing of implementation, the State suggests that the Respondent reflect the varying cost and specify the required date(s) of implementation.

39. Question

The State indicates that start up costs should be specified separately. Should we use this schedule?

Response

Yes, Schedule IV-3 should be used. Respondents should then identify start-up cost as such and specify the amount.

40. Question

Restrict client calls – does this price apply to call center regardless of location? (i.e., domestic, Montgomery)

Response

Yes.

41. Question

For the required optional Call Center Pricing for a Call Center in Montgomery, is the site expected to be 24x7 and 365? If not, can you please clarify?

Response

Yes.

42. Question



For the required optional Call Center pricing for a Call Center in Alabama, is it intended that this Site would support English only? Or English and Spanish?

Response

The Call Center shall support English and Spanish speaking customers.

43. Question

Does the domestic call option require back up to also be provided domestically?

Response

Yes.

44. Question

Does the Alabama call center option require the back up to be provided in Alabama? We suggest that if that is a requirement that the contractors be required to offer a price for back up in Alabama and back up at another domestic site separately.

Response

No, but Respondents may still provide additional pricing for other backup locations.

Appendix B Historical Caseload Data

45. Question

How many clients are currently being serviced by the current contractor on an annual basis?

Response

The information requested is located in Appendix B.

Appendix E Historical Card Replacement Data

46. Question

How many EBT cards are issued per year?

Response

The information requested is located in Appendix E.

46A. Question

What is the cost of each EBT card the contractor must provide to the state?

Response



The State expects the cost of EBT cards to be included in the CPCM.

46B. Question

Is the purchase of the cards under this contract or another contract?

Response

All cost associated with the Respondent's proposal shall be included in their Pricing Proposal.

Miscellaneous Questions

47. Question

Please provide a list of all equipment and specialty equipment (servers, computers, and technical personnel) needed by the contractor to fulfill this proposal.

Response

Our current Contractor provides a "turn-key" system for the State. Therefore, the State expects the Respondent to determine the equipment and personnel needed to fulfill their proposal.

48. Question

Would it be appropriate for Answertek's President and/or CEO to contact the current contractor to ask specifics, prior to the awarding of the new contract?

Response

For the State's restrictions on solicitation of information regarding the RFP, see Section 1.1.2, Contact Person. The State is not allowed to advise or direct Respondents in their method of obtaining information to prepare their proposals.