RFP 02/2024: NETWORK CARRIER AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

Communication #1

Date of Issue: 12 June 2024

1. Answers to questions posed by Bidders.

These questions and answers as well as issued / reissued documents referred to in this document can be found on SARS's website at www.sars.gov.za.

Question and Answer

No	Question	Answer
1.	In case of partnership, should the other partner also attend the briefing?	No, only one partner should attend both, the compulsory briefing session and the compulsory price templates workshop session.
2.	Draft Agreement, should this be signed for submission, or do we only acknowledge and only sign on award?	There is no need to sign the agreement at this stage of the process, but it is important that you indicate in your submission through the relevant contract response template that you are agreeable to the terms and conditions of the agreement. If not agreeable, please indicate the extent which you are not agreeable by highlighting same in the contract response template and track change the mark ups/comments on the agreement.
3.	what is required to display the capability to handle or process the 70 million SMS traffic?	A 12-month SLA report showing the number of SMS delivered in the past 5 years.
4.	What supporting evidence / input would be required / expected if you are not Bidder A from Mamelodi?	The question is unclear. Can the bidder re- submit the question and be specific as to which Tower and Section.

No	Question	Answer
5.	Must the ICASA / ECS(I-ECS) Licence be in the name of the parent company or subsidiary of the bidder or can the bidder sub-contract for this requirement?	The license must be in the name of Parent Company or subsidiary and cannot be sub-contracted. The requirements state as follows*, "The Bidder is required to submit proof of licence(s) it holds, together with a warranty that its licence holding enables it to provide the services for which it is bidding for. The Bidder may rely on regulatory licences held by a parent company or subsidiary, provided a satisfactory explanation of how such reliance will comply with regulatory requirements and that the warranty of compliance is provided. The Bidder may not rely on a third party's licence(s). The evidence of licence holding must correspond with the licence holding claimed"*
6.	Tower C queries: CPaaS is hosted in public cloud, hope that's acceptable? 1) Is there any indication of volumes (current and forecast by channel) 2) SARS require the ability for staff to respond to inbound SMS queries - is an agent desktop required, or will this integrate into the current	The RFP documents do not specify any restrictions on the cloud provider or the hosting location for the service. SARS is open to various cloud providers as long as the security constraints & service levels are met. 1) Estimate only. For the 2023 calendar year SARS sent a monthly minimum of 10 million and a maximum of 30 million SMS per month. These figures are likely to increase up to 20% per annum. The figures are only indicative of volumes and will be split 50:50 (may change depending on price and other factors) between the two providers appointed. 2) From a contact centre perspective, the Call centre agents do not respond to any SMS's via another SMS. The only integration of SMS into the contact centre is via USSD (*134*7277#) when they chose option 4 eBooking, then the Call centre agent call them

No	Question	Answer
	contact centre solution? (Who is the Contact Centre?) 3) Is there an existing Bot/AI capability SARS wish to retain, or is the requirement to start from scratch?	back. There is another channel for SMS (47277) which TP's can send and the Contact Centre agents call them back to make an eBooking. 3) Yes, we have an existing chat bot. No need for a new one to be developed
7.	On mandatory evaluation, do you still qualify if you have implemented a client of more than 100 sites but for an example 50 sites only on SD-WAN	The Bidder will not qualify to tender, the requirement is clear "*similar in size to SARS for the past 1 (one) year, to at least 1 (one) South African customer, covering 100 (one hundred) or more sites.*" The SARS network is far larger than 100 sites / branches, the actual requirement was adjusted to adapt to the minimum for large enterprises.
8.	Tab 1: Refers to Pricing being Valid for 180 Days - In the event where SARS does not Adjudicate and Award within those days - Will be the bidder be allowed to adjust pricing in the event SARS asks for extension of the validity days from the Bidders?	If SARS does not adjudicate and conclude the tender within 180 days, SARS will request all the bidders that would have responded to the tender to extend the validity period.
9.	For TC3, how do we cater for ONCE-OFF integration versus monthly subscription	Complete TC1 – see note - 1. The pricing provided in this template TC.1 is for all services required to affect the transition (SMS, USSD, MMS, URL Shortner).
10.	We'll we receive the recordings of these briefing sessions?	SARS will publish the slides presented at the Briefing session and answers raised at the meeting on both SARS' website and National Treasury E-Tender platform.

No	Question	Answer
11.	The following are indicated as requirements but with no provision in the pricing templates: Tower D: BRS section 6.4.2.1 Private 5G: indicates that "The Service Provider must provide a reliable, high-bandwidth, and low-latency private 5G solution, with the ability to support multiple enterprise use-cases on a single network." Tower V: The BRS section 7.1 states "The Bidders in Tower V must supply a proposal for a Contact Centre as a Service that will support 1 000 agents with integration into Microsoft Teams."	Tower D (Private 5G), Pricing template TD.8 supplied. Tower V (Contact Centre Proposal), the Bidder must attach their own proposal with costs as part of the TRT Submission for Tower V, as a supporting document for Capability, # 1.3 , "Bidder's Strategic Direction". Same for the MS Teams integration proposal excluding E5 licenses as this is out of scope.
12.	6.4.1.1 - 6.4.1.2 **Context:** Under 6.4.1.1.1 of the BRS 02-2024 2-1 we note an EXPLICIT instruction that satellite circuits must be integrated into the SDWAN Architecture. We did not notice the same instruction for other site categories. **Question:** Which sites are in scope for inclusion under SDWAN? Is SARS able to provide an explicit indication of this.	The following WAN services are included as part of the requested SD-WAN solution: 1. MPLS sites 2. Satellite sites The following WAN services are excluded from the requested SD-WAN solution as stipulated in the BRS: • **External/Public Network** Connectivity (Network services required to connect Third-Party providers, hyper-scalers, cloud providers, and any co-location facility. The network connectivity must include Layer 2 and/or Layer 3 options and not be limited to a specific technology.) • **Third-Party Circuits** (These circuits terminate in the DMZ at the Brooklyn Data Centre.) • **Private Network Connectivity Service (**Private network connectivity refers to a specific need and service that SARS requires to establish and maintain private network connections.)
13.	Site list **Context**: We want to ensure that we solution for the correct sites and that we have the correct commercials	WAN Inventory must be used as the Master list, the final site list will be updated during the transition period.

No	Question	Answer
	Question: Which is the overriding master site list? When we compare the 02-2024 2-4 WAN Inventory list to the 02-2024 2-2 SARS Site Classifications, we find that there is not a 100% MATCH.	
14.	Site list **Context:** We want to ensure that we solution for the correct sites and that we have the correct commercials **Question**: Is it possible for SARS to provide the SITE CODES in 02-2024 2-2 SARS Site Classifications in the 02-2024 5-3-D Tower D Pricing Response Template as well? This will ensure a 100% alignment.	Bidder must not make any changes on pricing templates, SARS will amend the pricing templates where necessary to ensure that Bidders' price submission is comparable to others.
15.	Site list Will SARS, please provide geographic co-ordinates for all of the sites. We have used the addresses provided and have not been able to plot some locations. Please can you share a list of co-ordinates as well, we want to ensure that we have absolutely accurate locations.	Yes, the SARS' Site Classifications will be updated accordingly with co-ordinates, Bidders must continue vising the website and NT E-Tender for updates.
16.	6.4.1.1 **Context:** "The data centre sites will be the aggregate of the remote sites with an assumed concurrency ratio. This also relates to the question on sites ""in-scope"" for SDWAN as it would affect the aggregate bandwidth required at the data centres."	As per BRS, SARS is in the planning phase to migrate the current MPLS network to a more cost-effective underlay network, which will include internet broadband, fibre, wireless, LTE, and any similar physical network infrastructure. A managed SD-WAN service is then required as a virtual overlay.

No	Question	Answer
	Question: Is Cisco Meraki the only option for the SDWAN layer? Reason for this question - there may be a bandwidth limit for Cisco Meraki devices that would typically be deployed at head-end or data centre sites?	**It is important to note that SARS has selected Cisco Meraki as the preferred vendor and solution for all SD-WAN components of the network infrastructure. All proposed services and solutions must be based on the mentioned OEM. SARS largest WAN links @ Brooklyn is only 1 gb/s, the Meraki MX450 supports bandwidth required. Also refer to question # 12.**
17.	7.1 "There is a requirement for proposals on certain services and there is no provision for these services in the pricing sheet? 1 - Do we need to quote on these services? 2 - How do we accommodate for these services in the pricing templates Contact Centre as a Service (7.1 of 02-2024 2-1) 5G private networks Security elements e.g. firewalls"	Same answer as question # 11. Other Security elements must be included as part of SASE pricing in TD.10, as part of Cisco Secure Connect components in line with # 18 below.
18.	6.4.1 Functional requirements for IT Security - firewalls, IPS/IDS. Is there a requirement to quote for these devices and services? Must this be read in conjunction with 6.4.1.1.3 and must it be quoted for?	This must be included as part of SASE pricing in TD.10, as part of Cisco Secure Connect components in compliance to below indicatives from the BRS: • DNS-layer Security • Secure-web Gateway • Cloud-delivered Firewall • Cloud Access Security Broker • Data-loss Prevention • Integration with the SARS QRadar SIEM

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19.	All Price Lists There are once off charges for different speeds, terms and products and the pricing will differ per product offering, site, and SLA. We would need guidance on how to handle present this once off setup/install pricing.	Installation / setup pricing will be amortized over the initial term of 5 years or remaining term as per MSA. SARS has added TD11.1 for Bidders to supply installation charges per technology.
20.	TC1 to TC7 Instructions in index indicate that each tab is optional, we require guidance on how we indicate that we are not responding to a tab without invoking the assumption that a blank or zero is a non-response and not a zero charge.	Kindly note that all relevant price sheet that the bidder will be responding to, must be completed in full. If the bidder will be responding to certain sub-category on Category A, can the Bidder refer to page 5 of 76 in the _SARS RFP 02-2024 Main Document_ for further guidance as to which taps must the bidder complete.