RFP 23/2022: THE REQUEST TO APPOINT A SERVICE PROVIDER FOR WHATSAPP BUSINESS SOLUTION PLATFORM FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (05) YEARS

Communication #7

Date of Issue: 16 November 2022

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

Questions	Answers
Do SARS's back-end systems have API's? In other words, when requesting a service, will we be able to consume your API?	SARS uses a best practice appliance to expose APIs. The services will be available for the requesting channel for consumption.
Assumption is that the service will be open to all your customers or taxpayers. There is no onboarding requirement that you must pass before you use the service. Is that correct?	There won't be a campaign to onboard the entire taxpayer base. It will be based on the interaction from the public, regardless of registered status.
Regarding the structured menu which your taxpayers will access when they initiate a WhatsApp conversation with you, should this menu be hosted on your side or should it be hosted on the service provider side and based on whatever menu option they choose, we would then call the respective API?	Hosting of the structured menu will depend on the service provider's solution, whether the solution has the capability of hosting the menu or the menu should be hosted at source. The solution should enable a resource to update the structured menu. The selected option will then be sent through as a message to source, and then SARS will respond with the requested information.
Regarding the API integration, how many points of integration are there or is there just one into one piece of middleware on your side where we can consume whichever service we need?	Integration is planned to one endpoint.
Does SARS have existing WhatsApp numbers?	SARS requires a WhatsApp number for the WhatsApp channel.

Questions	Answers
Does SARS require a support number for internal support or a support number from the service provider. The reason for this is for example if for any reason the envisioned platform and that system(s) go down and consumers can only access the channel and there's no response. The customer would like to know or be informed after a couple of minutes or an hour or something is happening until the problem is resolved, or do SARS envision all support calls and whether the system is up or down to go through to your support centre?	The current call centre number will be used. SARS does have different tiers of support. From a technical perspective SARS will have an SLA with the Service Provider on the level of criticality of the available service and the fault-finding process to get the service up and running again.
In terms of campaigns, will SARS require the Service Provider to set up campaigns, in other words, the Service Providers will access the numbers for your customers and push notifications or campaigns to your end users. The Service Providers need to understand the size of SARS's campaigns over a period of time.	It is important to note the difference between outbound campaigns and normal WhatsApp outbound messages. The normal messages will include self-service options like statement of accounts, Transaction Reference Number (TRN) retrieval, verification status etc and this is something that is initiated by the Taxpayer. Outbound campaigns are initiated by SARS with no input from the Taxpayers and this include reminders of filling season dates, PAYE submissions due etc. SARS at this point is unable to determine how many users are targeted as this will differ from campaign to campaign and if the boundaries are not set by Meta but by the Service Provider. Service Providers need to give SARS an indication on what is allowable and the cost associated to the different options and will need to fit into the boundaries Service Providers have.
The Natural Language Understanding and Natural Language Processing is currently in English, will there be a future requirement to do it in all 11 South African languages?	SARS will have a requirement to assist in additional languages, English is the only requirement for the tender.
Service Provider offers OCR capabilities where they can take a sent image of a bank statement or some form of document and extract the text of those images and send them to back-end systems for verification.	OCR is not a requirement for the tender.

Questions	Answers
Question about the future of the project view and vision and enabling payment option within the channel.	Payment using the WhatsApp channel is not a requirement for the tender.
Meta (Facebook) and WhatsApp HQ would require the Service Provider to get SARS's permission to complete the Government Access Request form.	Completion of all applicable documentation will be done with the preferred/recommended Service Provider following the award of the tender.