**RFQQ – PNWHUB22**

**Question & Answers – FINAL**

**August 12, 2022**

**Q.** Based on review of the RFQQ, it does not indicate if the Washington Department of Commerce publish a list of potential Offerors. If a listing of potential offerors will be published, can you advise when this listing will be distributed?

**A.** Commerce does not send, post or share the list of potential contractors/consultants without a public records request. However, after an apparent successful bidder is announced this information does become public record, and anyone can reach out to our public disclosure office to request. Please follow the following link for more information: [Public Records Request - Washington State Department of Commerce](https://www.commerce.wa.gov/media-center/public-records-request/)

Q. Please clarify what types of experience would meet the requirements of minimum qualification #2.

Does the applicant or applicant’s team have to demonstrate that it has provided support to one of the

dozen or so potential organizations that are vying for the four regional hydrogen hubs being

contemplated in the US? Currently there are no existing hydrogen hubs in the US, but many groups

are forming teams that will compete for the DOE grants. So does Washington Department of Commerce

want a company to support its efforts that is also supporting another regional hub consortium?

A. An addendum is released to change the minimum qualification for #2. This was worded incorrectly. Should read: Experience in providing comprehensive management services for a consortium including business, finance, and associated support systems.

Q. Section 4.3 states that the Qualifications Section is assigned up to a maximum of 60 points and the Quotation Section 40 points; however, Section 3.1.2 (under 1. Experience) provides points for each area of qualification – 20 points for general, 30 points for proposal development, 40 points for construction, operations, and deployment, and 10 points for additional considerations or capabilities. These total 100 points which seems inconsistent with the 60 points stated in Section 4.3. Please clarify.

A. This is correct the qualifications are scored, and if scored 100 pts., they would receive 60 overall points for the qualifications section. This is basically the breakdown of scoring to reach the full 60 for this section of staffing, experience and schedule.

Q. In Section 3.1.2 Qualifications 1. Experience, it states “\* no more than 5 pages of additional information" with an asterisk by it, but we cannot identify the note for the asterisk. It is not clear what that 5-page limit applies to? Does it only include the materials asked for under the fifth bullet titled “Additional considerations or Capabilities” or does it apply to the entirety of the experience and qualifications information or some other subset?

A. The asterisk means for the additional explanation in 3.1.2.1 Qualification 1. Experience -this can only be 5 pages. This is only for item 1. Experience

Q. The only page limitation referenced is for no more than 5 pages of additional information, does that mean that the other sections – Staffing, Resumes, Schedule, Reference, OMWBE Certification, and Quotations Section are unlimited in terms of pages.

A. They are not limited, only section 3.2.1.1; however, we do ask that you limit your complete submission to only what is specifically required in the RFQQ.

Q. Section 1.2, Minimum Qualifications – Do these minimum qualifications apply to both Phase 1 and Phase 2, or just to Phase 2? It seems that the requirement for $1B in relevant federal agency work with annual budgets of $200M or greater would eliminate virtually all but the largest of federal contractors from applying. We see this as a key issue given that this severely limits potential for competition to very large firms / federal contractors.

A. The minimum qualifications pertain to both Phases of this RFQQ. PNWH2 and Commerce want to ensure the entity contracted with has the successful experience to manage large amounts of Federal funding.

An addendum is issued to change this minimum qualification. It now reads as this is preferred experience, and applicants who do not have this experience must justify how they will address meeting a larger scope.

That being said, if entities do not completely meet the minimum qualifications for both phases of work, we welcome submittals for Phase 1 separately from Phase 2.

Q. I understand that the budget for Phase 1 is capped at $500k. However page 3 of 20 under the Objective header / bullet 1 states $1-4 million for Phase 1. Could you please clarify how this amount relates to the $500k cap mentioned elsewhere? If the project is capped at $500k, how much would the contractor need to support individual project development for the DOE bid, versus assembly of information provided to the consultant by the multiple individual projects / teams working on the application?

A. As addendum is issued to change the total amount of the not to exceed budget for Phase 1 of the RFQQ from $500k to $1.5M.

Furthermore, the $1.5M not to exceed amount is for the contractor to coordinate the development of the application for Phase 1. The $1-4M is actually funding from DOE to support the project development activities after application submittal.

Q. Section 1.2, Minimum Qualifications -- Also the requirement for prior experience providing comprehensive management services for a H2 Hub consortium also appears to be problematic, as there has been essentially zero activity in the US until DOE’s announcement of the Hydrogen hubs funding, and very minimal activity globally.

A. A. An addendum is released to change the minimum qualification for #2. This was worded incorrectly. Should read: Experience in providing comprehensive management services for a consortium including business, finance, and associated support systems.

Q. RFQQ Section 1.1 references a history of working with federal subcontractors “in the fields of construction logistics and production, industrial H2 applications, transportation, agriculture and institutionalizing hydrogen.” What is meant by “agriculture and institutionalizing hydrogen?”

A. The area referenced and within Section 1.1 Objective should read as follows: “Specifically, our desired Contractor will have a history of working with Federal subcontractors in the fields of construction logistics and production, industrial, transportation and agriculture H2 applications and other activities aimed at institutionalizing use of hydrogen.”

Q. RFQQ Section 1.1, OBJECTIVE, sets forth a Phase 1 and Phase 2 project schema that reflects what US DOE presented in their Request for Information (RFI) # DE-FOA-0002664.0002, Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs Implementation Strategy, dated February 15, 2022.  On June 6, 2022 US DOE issued [Notice of Intent (NOI) to issue: Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) No.: DE-FOA-0002779 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Additional Clean Hydrogen Programs (Section 40314): Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs (H2Hubs)](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Feere-exchange.energy.gov%2FFileContent.aspx%3FFileID%3D936dc92a-09f1-4e3d-9158-596db0a3653f&data=05%7C01%7Cjaclyn.perez%40commerce.wa.gov%7C469a9196f7404aa5b3bb08da7a47d6ae%7C11d0e217264e400a8ba057dcc127d72d%7C0%7C0%7C637956746222880046%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=1nTUP9FTC4kZoOXUku3741AFuJApzkwwMxqQTj3oy%2F0%3D&reserved=0).  The June 6th NOI purports to represent the DOE’s latest thinking as to the structure of the upcoming H2Hubs FOA, and includes a completely different project phasing schema as compared to the February 15th RFI (see Figure 1 on p. 7 of the NOI).  DOE states “This Notice of Intent (NOI) provides a high-level draft plan for ***DOE’s current vision*** to meet the BIL requirements for the H2Hubs program,” emphasis added.  We take this to mean that DOE’s June 6th NOI supersedes the Phase 1 and Phase 2 project phasing approach contained in their February 15th RFI.  The last paragraph of RFQQ No. PNWHUB22, Section 1.1 states “Consultant/Contractor(s) may respond to this RFQQ for completion of solely Phase 1 or solely Phase 2, and will be scored based upon their individual submission. Or, Consultant/Contractors may submit their response for both Phase 1 & Phase 2. Scoring will be based upon the Contractors qualifications for each Phase.”

Observation 2.a  - We encourage COMMERCE to consider the merit of revising Section 1.1 of the RFQQ to reflect the most recent H2Hubs project phasing schema DOE sets forth in their June 6, 2022 NOI.

A. PNWH2 & Commerce are aware of the June 6 NOI; However, at this stage we do want to stay with the Phases as outline within the RFQQ. Phase 2, is inclusive of 2a, b, & c, which is comparable to Phase 3 & 4 listed in the updated NOI from Jun 6th.

Question - 2.b  - Please specify in the RFQQ instructions in Section 3 where in the response content Offerors should include their intent to propose on which phases.

A. Within the Letter of Submittal the Offeror should outline which Phase (s) they intend to propose.

Q. US DOE’s June 6, 2022 H2Hubs NOI also states “The FOA will likely request that concept papers be submitted 6-8 weeks after the FOA is released, followed by DOE notification encouraging or discouraging submittal of full applications approximately four weeks later…Full applications will likely be requested approximately four months following such notification.”  Is it COMMERCE’S intent that the awardee of the contract resulting from this RFQQ lead the development of a Concept Paper and possible full FOA application for the PNWH2 Association’s envisaged Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub?

 A. Yes, this would be Phase 1 of the RFQQ.

Q. RFQQ Section 3.1.2, QUALIFICATIONS.  On June 24, 2022 PNWH2 Association issued a RFI to prospective developers of projects for the envisaged Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub.  Can COMMERCE share any general information that was gathered by PNWH2 Association via that RFI, such as total number of projects, which ones are associated with specific parts of the hydrogen value chain, etc.?  Such information would be helpful to offerors’ in providing response content for:

RFQQ Section 3.1.2, 1. EXPERIENCE (SCORED), Construction, Operations, and Deployment (40 pts), “Key personnel offered for the effort,” and

RFQQ Section 3.1.2, 2. STAFFING (SCORED), “A. Provide a description of the proposed project team structure and internal controls to be used during the course of the project, including any subcontractors.”

A. Due to most of the information contained in the information received from the RFI being confidential or proprietary, the only information we are able to provide at this time is:

76 Projects were submitted. These are in all different stages, some even just a concept.

# of Projects

Q. Section 1.3 FUNDING states “Responses should not exceed $500,000 for the initial Phase 1 of the RFQQ, for managing and working with PNWH2 through the Hydrogen HUBS application development and submission to the DOE. Any Phase 1 responses in excess of $500,000 will be considered non-responsive and will not be evaluated.”   Section 3.2 QUOTATIONS SECTION, sub-section 3.2.1 IDENTIFICATION OF COSTS (SCORED) states “The Quotations section must list all hourly rates for services anticipated under the proposed contract.“  Please confirm that Offerors are only to include hourly rates, and not estimated hours or estimated level of effort (LOE).

A. The hourly rate should be all inclusive of the time, resources and effort needed to complete the project.

In addition, please refer to Addendum 1, the Funding amount has changed to not exceed $1,500,000.

Q. Section 3.2 QUOTATIONS SECTION, sub-section 3.2.1 IDENTIFICATION OF COSTS (SCORED)  also states “The hourly rates are to represent fully weighted costs. This includes the hourly rates of staff that would be assigned to the project, administrative costs, local travel costs, or any other applicable fees that would be charged under this contract.”  Can COMMERCE provide what assumptions Offerors should use to cover travel costs, and any other assumptions that should be used related to other direct charges (ODCs)?

A. We are unable to provide assumptions. We rely on the Contractor to assess the cost of their services, including travel, and any other assumptions and then average them into their total hourly rate.

Q. Section 3.1.1 BUSINESS INFORMATION (MANDATORY), Number 4 states to, “identify any state employees or former state employees…,” and Number 5 states, “If the Consultant’s staff or subcontractor’s staff was an employee of the state of Washington during the past 24 months, or is currently a Washington State employee…” What is the difference between these two requirements, and what does “state” refer to in Number 4?

A. State refers to Washington, in this case, since Washington State Dept. Of Commerce are required by Legislation to support the PNWH2.

The differences are 4, is in reference to who is responding to the RFQQ, and 5 references if the entity responding is currently working with any other consultants of subcontractor’s and will be utilizing them for this work, they will need to identify if they have any state of Washington employees currently or within the past 24 month.

Q. We request COMMERCE extend the due date for proposals to September 7, 2022.

 A. Thank you for your request. We are unable to extend the date.

Q. Since Phase 2 of the project is contingent on Washington State successfully being awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Energy, would the Washington State Department of Commerce consider deferring the procurement process for Phase 2 until after Washington State secures the DOE H2 Hub funds?

A. We are hoping for a smooth transition from Phase 1 and Phase 2. This RFQQ is to help determine the contractor for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 to ensure the Contractor is ready, up to speed and ready to proceed if PNWH2 is designated and awarded for Phase 2. Therefore, we can’t consider deferring the procurement process for Phase 2.

Q. Will the State of Washington Department of Commerce (on behalf of PNWH2) consider providing a two-week extension to the due date of the RFQQ NO. PNWHUB22 response? This would allow small businesses interested in participating on a team time to secure their roles and provide the needed small business inputs to the response development. This would be greatly appreciated.

A. We can’t consider providing an extension to the due date. The DOE is on a timeline, and to allow enough time for a contractor to come on board and get up to speed with the projects prior to the concept paper being needed, this would not be feasible.