EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
TAXATION AND CUSTOMS UNION
Resources directorate
Management of programmes & EU training

Brussels,
taxud.r.1(2015)2338270

Subject: **Call for tenders TAXUD/2015/AO-01 (BTRAIN3) – replies to questions**

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Enclosed you will find the replies to the questions received from 19/05/2015 up to 01/06/2015 (questions 2 to 29).

This letter is being posted on the website of the Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union, at the following URL ("Questions & Answers" section):

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/tenders_grants/tenders/ao_2015_01_en.htm

Questions received subsequently will be answered in further letters which will be placed regularly on the same website. Prospective tenderers are invited to monitor this site attentively.

As mentioned in the invitation letter (ref. Ares(2015)1739171 date 24/04/2015) published with the tender documents, requests for additional information received less than five working days before the closing date for submission of tenders, i.e. after 10/06/2015, will not be processed.

Yours faithfully,

(e-signed)
Michèle Perolat
Head of Unit

Question no. 2

My question relates to the tender: Open call for tenders TAXUD/2015/AO-01 (BTRAIN3) for the provision of services covering multifaceted EU training support programmes, eLearning development and communication services in the field of customs and taxation. My company is head officed in India. (though I am based in London). All development work happens in India. As an Indian company are we allowed to respond to the tender.

Reply

As indicated in the contract notice under the section II.1.7, this procedure is covered by the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA). The GPA is a multilateral agreement within the framework of the WTO, meaning that not all WTO members are Parties to the GPA.

In conformity with the contract notice, only those companies/corporations registered in one of the EU countries or in a country having ratified the GPA can participate in this call for tenders.

India has not ratified the GPA. Since 10/02/2010, it has only an observer status in the GPA Committee.

Question no. 3

In the document named "a1_questionnaire.doc" and more precisely in the paragraph "3. Selection of the Tenderer/ Economic and Financial Capacity"- , it states that "A statement of the overall turnover and the turnover related to the scope of the contract, during each of the last three financial years, which establish that they are equal or superior to EUR 7 million and EUR 2 million respectively. In the case of a tendering group, the turnover figures will be assessed at the level of the tendering group and not in relation to each individual member of the tendering group." We do understand that is EUR 7 million in total for the 3 years and EUR 2 million in total for the 3 years in the scope of this present contract. Please confirm our understanding.

Reply

Your understanding is not correct.

As stated in section 3 of the questionnaire, the tenderer must provide a statement of the overall turnover and the turnover related to the scope of the contract, ***during each of*** the last three financial years, which establish that they are equal or superior to EUR 7 million and EUR 2 million respectively.

In the case of a tendering group, the turnover figures will be assessed at ***the level of the tendering group*** . This means that **each year of the last three years** (2014, 2013 and 2012), the overall turnover of the whole group is equal or superior to EUR 7 million and the turnover relative to the scope of the contract is equal or superior to EUR 2 million.

Question no. 4

In the document named "a1_questionnaire.doc" and more precisely in the paragraph "4.2.2. CV', It state profile "P12 Proofreader English minimum CERF C2 level": what do you mean with CERF, please? Is not CEFR standing for Common European Framework of Reference, please? Thanks for clarifying.

Reply

Indeed, it should read "CEFR C2 level".

Question no. 5

References (p. 13, 14, 15 & 16 in annex 1): Client references (4.3.1.1): do we understand correctly that:

(a)   this is an unlimited list of projects, similar to those within the scope of the tender?

(b)   for this section there are no limitations in numbers of projects performed for the European Commission and Institutions?

(c)   there is no fixed template for client references?

Reply

(a)   As indicated in section 4.3.1.2. of annex 1 (questionnaire), it is mandatory to provide 5 (no more, no less) valid client reference contacts.

(b)   As indicated in section 4.3.1.2. of annex 1 (questionnaire), the references should be from different organisations (departments, divisions, directorates, etc. are regarded as the same organisation) other than the European Commission.

(c)   Please use the form which is provided on page 14 of annex 1 (questionnaire).

Question no. 6

Client reference contacts (4.3.1.2). Can you please confirm that the reference contacts (4.3.1.2) can differ from the project references in 4.3.3.1?

Reply

Reference contacts and project references can indeed differ.

Question no.7

Project references (4.3.3.1)

(a)   Can you please confirm that all European Commission DG's should be considered as 1 organization?

(b)   Can you please confirm that each EU Agency/Institution can be considered as 1 organization, different from the European Commission DG's?

Reply

(a)   Yes, we confirm.

(b)   Yes, we confirm.

Question no. 8

The tasks described in section 5 of the tender specifications (work packages), are not fully consistent with the CVs that are requested in section 4.2.2 of the tender questionnaire (e.g. the 3 levels of consultants for Consulting services & the 3 categories of Communication consultancy). Is there a correlation between these 2 sections?

Reply

CVs for communication consultancy, as requested in section 4.2.2, have to be representative for the coverage of consulting services as described in section 5 of the tender specifications (work package 3).

Question no. 9

Referring to the PROJECT REFERENCE FORM - can you kindly confirm that the declaration of conformity can be done with the signature of the representative of the tenderer?

Reply

Yes, we confirm.

Question no.10

Can you kindly please confirm that Agencies of the European Union (http://europa.eu/about-eu/agencies/) are not considered to be part of the European Commission - in the context of the question 4.3.1.2 of the Questionnaire?

Reply

We confirm.

Question no. 11

Referring to the Tendering specifications: from page 10 of the pdf document, the web links in the pdf file do not seem to be functional. We would highly appreciate if you could provide us with the mentioned web links.

Reply

A new version of the Tendering Specifications has been published on the web site with the correct web links.

Question no. 12

Could you kindly confirm that par. 6.1 of the Tender specifications contains the whole software infrastructure and content that will be taken-over, and also that no hardware infrastructure will be taken over?

If not, kindly provide us with the list of services that will be taken-over.

Reply

We confirm that section 6.1 contains the whole software infrastructure and content to be taken over (state of play on February 2015). In the meantime, services continue to be delivered which will also need to be taken over. At this moment however, these ongoing projects have insufficiently progressed; the state of play as described in section 6.1 remains valid.

We confirm no hardware infrastructure will be taken over.

Question no. 13

Can you kindly confirm that the services that are taken-over (mentioned in WP1.1 and D1.1-2) consist of the maintenance of the existing content? If not, kindly provide us with the list of services that will be taken-over.

Reply

We confirm.

Question no. 14

Is there any tool currently used for maintaining the digital repository referred in D1.1-1? Will this tool be taken-over as well?

Reply

There is no tool for maintaining the digital repository.

Question no. 15

(a)   Considering that the tender documentation mentions the system PICS (Programmes Information and Collaboration Services) as performing significant communication/collaboration functions within the project - could you kindly provide us with the technical and functional specifications of the system PICS?

(b)   Also, could you kindly confirm that the maintenance and management of PICS are outside the scope of this project?

Reply

(a)   The PICS functional specifications as well as a promotional video on PICS have been published on the website.

(b)   We confirm.

Question no. 16

Please confirm if the online collaboration platform TACTIC (TAXATION AND CUSTOMS TRAINING INTERACTIVE CAMPUS) is still available. If not, please confirm if it was replaced by another system. If yes, can you kindly confirm if it will be part of the take-over, and/or maintained and managed in BTrain3?

Reply

The collaborative platform TACTIC has been migrated as a workspace in PICS. Maintenance and management of PICS do not form part of BTRAIN3 (not included in take-over).

Question no. 17

Reference – A1 Questionnaire – section 3. Selection of the tenderer / economic and financial capacity. We kindly ask for confirmation that the amounts of EUR 7 million and EUR 2 million are related to the sum of the turnovers in the three last three financial years and not as amount related to each single year.

Reply

Please see the Reply to question no. 3.

Question no. 18

In the framework of Btrain 3, it is asked to organize events and provide communication profiles. We'd like to know in which locations these events would take place, namely in Brussels or also across different member states. Regarding the communication profiles, could you elaborate in which locations their services would be needed, please?

Reply

Communication events would normally take place in a Member State or accession country but they could occasionally take place outside of the EU.

Question no. 19

The bidding entity must propose CVs which need to be in conformity with the profile descriptions and minimum requirements. For the Proofreader English, the profile must be minimum certified CERF C2 level by an accredited organization. We don't have such profile in our organization. Our Proofreader owns the Cambridge CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults). For us this last one is equivalent to CERF C2. Please confirm our understanding.

Reply

Your understanding is incorrect.

The minimum level of English required must be C2 on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Question no. 20

In regards to question 5.2.5.1 External Communication support, are tenderers expected to utilise and apply the EC's Visual identity in all deliverables proposed?

Reply

Yes.

Question no. 21

Referring to the tender TAXUD/2015/AO-01 (BTRAIN3) for the provision of services covering multifaceted EU training support programmes, eLearning development and communication services in the field of customs and taxation.

Considering that the deadline for submission is very short compared to other previous tenders of DG Taxud, and that it does not reflect the complexity and size of the current procurement procedure, we kindly ask DG Taxud to extend the deadline for submission accordingly.

Reply

The deadline for submission of tenders will be extended to 30 June 2015. A corrigendum to the contract notice will be published shortly in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Question no. 22

In the tendering_specs.pdf document, it is indicated on page 16 that "Participating countries are responsible for the provision of text translations and the related quality assurance." Likewise in the document a16_translation_process, the responsibility of translations lies with the National Administrations (Translator (National Administration).

However, in the description of the Work packages of the tendering-specs.pdf document, translation activities are to be performed by the contractor. This also stands out from the a3_price_table document.

Could you please clarify the above?

Reply

In general, the translation of eLearning modules will follow the process as described in section 4.1.2.3. Nonetheless, the contractor may be requested to provide translations in function of the circumstances.

Question no. 23

In the tendering_specs.pdf document, Work Package 1, D.1.1-2 Infrastructure on page 20, it is stated "Purchase and set-up of appropriate servers, hardware and software licenses in order to take over and continue the provision of the existing services according to the agreed migration plan (see D 1.1-1)."

We have thoroughly examined all documents provided, including section 6.4 Infrastructure requirements of the tendering_specs.pdf document and we could not find a description of the existing infrastructure which is to be taken over by the contractor

Is it possible to have a description of the AS IS situation to take over, in particular which infrastructure if any is hosted within the Commission data centre versus the infrastructure currently hosted by the current contractor?

Reply

There is no take-over of any existing infrastructure. You will have to build and propose your own infrastructure in order to take-over the inventory (section 6.4) as part of your technical offer.

Question no. 24

In the tendering_specs.pdf document, it is specified that the contractor must provide Helpdesk services (1st, 2nd and 3rd line support).

Can we have more detailed information on the Helpdesk function: call/incidents statistics, volume, SQIs if any, support language, availability of the Helpdesk etc.

Reply

The helpdesk services under the future BTRAIN 3 contract relate to the deployment of the eLearning courses in the national administration of the Participating Countries (see section 6.2) only, which will be addressed through 'Quoted times & means' contract arrangements ('per required service days'). Due to the very limited number of required interventions in the past, there is currently no helpdesk issue tracker tool in place that would allow providing more detailed information. New additional helpdesk requirements may occur under BTRAIN 3 as part of new projects, such as the future European Learning Management Environment (section 4.2.2.), should it be agreed at European level.

Question no. 25

Given the new message on the TAXUD website This site is currently undergoing a new look, which will be operational on June 1st we would like to request a 2- week submission extension given that tenderers' responses regarding EXTERNAL and INTERNAL communication campaigns are likely to include and be affected by the TAXUD website and its information architecture. These changes far along the tendering process hinder the production of competitive high quality responses.

Reply

The deadline will be extended to 30 June 2015, although the revamp of the Europa site has no impact on information availability related to any of the BTRAIN3 services.

Please also see the Reply to Question no. 21.

Question no. 26

In this present CFT, the bidder must present 5 project references. In the document named "a1_questionnaire" page 13 it states that "It is mandatory to provide 5 valid client reference contacts of organisations that are making use of services similar to the service requirements of this call for tenders. These references should be from different organisations (departments, divisions, directorates, etc. are regarded as the same organisation) other than the European Commission". In the same document page 15, it states that "It is mandatory to enclose a completed Project Reference Form for each of 5 recent projects in the area of the required services, each done for a different organisation. Departments, divisions, directorates, etc. are regarded as the same organisation. For example, a specific European Institution or ministry or company is considered as one organisation." Our interpretation is that the bidder is not allowed to submit the European Institution as a valid client reference contact but can submit the European Institution as a Project reference. Could you please confirm our interpretation or provide us with the correct interpretation.

Reply

Your interpretation is incorrect.

A client reference coming from another European Institution than the Commission could be valid.

Two or more Project References coming from different departments/divisions/directorates, … of the same European Institution or ministry or company will be considered as one Project reference.

Please also see the Reply to Question no. 5 b.

Question no. 27

Can you please explain what is meant with conflict of interest with other contracted activities in question 2.3 p. 8 of the questionnaire? Can you please indicate what risks the Commission has in mind here and give an example of any measures the Commission has in mind?

Reply

It is up to the tenderer to determine if there could be a potential conflict of interest.

If that is the case, the tenderer will have to provide the Commission with evidence of compensatory measures that they commit to take to segregate duties regarding the services and/or products to be provided under TAXUD/2015/AO-01 – BTRAIN3, as opposed to the services and/or products to be provided under (an)other procurement procedure(s) launched by the Commission.

It is the tenderer's responsibility to describe in detail, clearly and factually, the compensatory measures he intends to take and explain how each compensatory measure is going to prevent any potential conflict of interest.

Tenderers are reminded that a conflict of interest could arise in particular as a result of economic interests, political or national affinities, family or emotional ties or any other relevant connection or shared interest.

Tenderers are also reminded that they will inform the contracting authority, without delay, of any situation considered as a conflict of interest or which could give rise to a conflict of interest.

Moreover, the Commission reserves the right to check the information related to the declaration of absence of conflict of interest and to the compensatory measures.

Question no. 28

The tender specifies "up to 22 languages" + English although the EU has 24 official languages. Which language can be considered out of scope?

Reply

Irish and Maltese translations are by default not required under BTRAIN3.

Question no. 29

Are legacy translations memories available in XTM? If not in other formats (xlif, tmx, …)?

Reply

Legacy translation memories are available in XTM (for all eLearning courses produced with Smartbuilder, see Inventory); for eLearning courses produced with other authoring tools, other formats are available (eg. xlif, tmx…).