Invitation to tender

MOVE/C2/2013-994 for a service contract regarding "Continuation of the Transport Research & Innovation Portal"

Contract notice in OJEU S 2014/S 134-239685 of 16/07/2014

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Latest update on 19/08/2014

Question 1:
With reference to Section 2.3.1 titled 'Economic and financial capacity criteria and evidence' (page 6), if the bid is submitted by a consortium formed by two (or more) operators, is the aggregate of their overall average annual turnover for the last two financial years to exceed €1,200,000 or does each individual operator within the consortium need to exceed such €1,200,000 threshold individually?

Answer:
It is the aggregate turnover of tenderers - sole tenderer or consortium members in the case of joint tender - and subcontractors (if any) that must comply with the minimum threshold.

The text should be read as follows: if a tender is submitted by a consortium formed by two or more operators, the tender is considered as a joint tender where it is the combined capacity of all tenderers and identified contractors that shall meet the above mentioned criteria, thus the aggregate of their overall average annual turnover for the last two financial years shall reach EUR 1,200,000.

Question 2:
With reference to WP3 (page 13) the Commission requests the bidder to provide ‘technical’ services including: (I) the possibility for users to submit project-related information, news and links as well as user-feedback, and (II) preparation and distribution of a monthly electronic newsletter, using the existing format.

May the Commission therefore clarify: (A) On what CMS structure is the site presently built, (B) What newsletter tool/software is presently being used to send our newsletters, and (C) How many users/subscribers presently exist in the newsletter database?

Answer:
(a) – Regarding the Content Management Structure (CMS) of TRIP, it shall be underlined that all the overall work shall be carried out building on the results of the current website and project database.

As stated in the tender specifications (page 11), TRIP shall continue to provide information covering projects, programmes and the organisations involved in a well-structured way.
At the moment TRIP showcases over 7404 transport research related projects, their associated documents as well as more than 300 European, national and international transport research programmes. The current information database of TRIP contains mainly the following:

- Country overviews, with useful links to national programmes or website (regularly reviewed and updated)
- Programmes on research and innovation in transport, searchable by country, organisation or advanced search. The number and content of programmes and the related project database shall be updated regularly.
- Project database of 7,704 transport research related projects, including thematic definitions, project forms with browse function by funding origin, partner, transport themes and database search option. New projects shall be included following a 3-level approach: short profile, profile and results.
- Current publications: Policy Brochures presenting results of transport research according to policy topics and Transport Research Summaries on 24 transport themes
- TRIP support community registration form
- Events calendar: current and planned events, as well as geographic (country) and date (period) search functions.
- Newsroom, including monthly e-newsletters and flash reports.

For more information, please have a look at the structure of the current website: [http://www.transport-research.info/web/index.cfm](http://www.transport-research.info/web/index.cfm)

As stated under section 3.7 of the tender specifications, material with high external visibility will have to be agreed by the Commission, thus new information on projects, programmes or events shall be uploaded on the public website following the approval of the European Commission.

(b) – The newsletter tool/software to send out newsletters is the choice of the tenderer. The current newsletters are sent out in a PDF format. Under the current contract, monthly TRIP newsletters are prepared in English. They are sent via email to all contacts and uploaded on the TRIP website too. There are no predefined requirements for the software to be used in this regard.

(c) - According to the latest statistics, the TRIP mailing list of subscribers to the newsletter (i.e. newsletter database) accounts for 2,380 contacts. The TRIP contacts database counts 3,126 contacts. TRIP portal is based both on traditional communication channels, such as online subscriptions to TRIP newsletter, and new communication channels, with special regard to its engagement with social media (i.e. LinkedIn profile).

**Question 3:**

With reference to WP4 (page 14) is the Commission expecting the bidder (in a future scenario) to migrate all content of the present site to an entirely new site with new functionalities? If so is the Commission putting forward any guidelines (or KPIs/expectations) relating to such future site, technology or function-set especially in view of the fact that such site may be hosted within the Commission’s EUROPA environment rather than the service provider’s data centre?

**Answer:**

The European Commission will put forward some guidelines regarding the future site, technology or function-set, as well as the preferred option for future scenario for TRIP, as soon as more information will be at the disposal of the European Commission, taking into account the options mentioned under WP4 of the tender specifications (page 14). The
handover of the relevant information shall be in accordance with guidance, for example on technical and IT requirements that will be provided by the Commission.

As stated in the tender specifications, the budget allocated to the concrete task of preparing a note on the future scenario for the future development of TRIP under WP 4 shall not exceed 5% of the total budget of the proposal. The deliverable under WP4 is the note on future scenarios as indicated in the tender specifications.

The different options to be assessed may include integration of certain TRIP tasks, content and products into other websites, including new functionalities. A possible modification may concern the modernisation of the technical functionalities and web-interface of TRIP as referred to in the tender specifications.

In accordance with the tender specifications, the future scenarios will be agreed during the inception phase and may include different options. Due to the possible modification (extension/reduction) in the tasks, the tenderer should be prepared to assess also the migration of the content of the present site to a new site with new functionalities. When making a complete financial estimate for WP4, tenderer should take into account the above mentioned possible assessment as well.

**Question 4:**

With reference to WP4 (page 14) (a future scenario): is the bidder expected to present financial estimates (not exceeding 5% of proposed budget) for such future developments in the present tender response or may this be proposed to the Commission following award of the tender and agreement on deliverables and time-frames?

**Answer:**

In line with section 3.3 of the tender specifications referring to tasks, the tenderer is invited to respect the text provided under WP4 (Future scenario for TRIP), thus the budget allocated to the particular task of preparing a note shall not exceed 5% of the total budget of the proposal. As stated in the tender specifications, due to the possible modification (extension/reduction) in the tasks, the tenderer should be prepared to assess also the migration of the content of the present site to a new site with new functionalities. When making a complete financial estimate for WP4, tenderer should take into account the above mentioned possible assessment as well. The tenderer shall present the financial estimate regarding WP4 in their proposals to be submitted.

**Question 5:**

With reference to 3.9 (Page 18) relating to the 'Handover of the existing TRIP Portal’ it is understood that the bidder is expected to support all ‘technical' functions of the present site following the handover. Therefore may the Commission provide additional technical details about the site’s operating environment, code-base and documentation so as to allow the bidder to understand the nature of the site which it will need to take over as the details provided in 3.10.1 (page 18) are too high-level to assess risks and requirements?

Typical details to be provided would generally include: (I) detailed information on the database, such as size and schema, (II) information on the middleware used - if any, (III) information on the front-end design and its limitations/functions, (IV) Any storage requirements and/or backup mechanisms, (V) the present amount of registered users, traffic, bandwidth consumption, load patterns and resource utilisation, (VI) a brief description of main utilities (or functions) built, (VII) any known system limitations, a log of (VIII) crashes,
support requests and system additions in the last 12 months, and (IX) available system and functionality documentation.

**Answer:**
Regarding the technology used in the existing portal, as mentioned under section 3.10.1 of the tender specifications (page 18), the overall work will be carried out on the basis of the results already achieved under the existing TRIP contract, thus building upon its legacy. The existing TRIP Portal is divided into a public internet site and a content management system that requires a log-in. It is installed on the consortium's web server, operated under Microsoft Windows 2003 Release 2 and Internet Information Services 6.

The Internet site is running on Adobe ColdFusion 9, served by a Microsoft SQL Server 2008 database release 2. The open source 3rd party tool TinyMCE is used for HTML editing in the content management system (www.tinyMCE.com). Another 3rd party component is Image library.

As stated under section 3.10.2 of the tender specifications, the tenderer may come up with a limited number of proposals on how to improve the content and structure of TRIP in order to ensure user-friendliness of the portal, especially in terms of structure, navigation and search functions. Technical modifications are allowed provided that these improve the user friendliness of the portal. Any proposals on changes shall be detailed in the Communication and Dissemination Plan and must be agreed in advance with the Commission. The tenderer shall be responsible for the maintenance of the portal and its appropriate protection.

One month after the signature of the service contract, the backup of the website and extranet files, the entire database, alongside with the details of the registered domain name and e-newsletter database will be made available by the European Commission on DVD format.

**Question 6:**
In the context of WP2, one task is: "analysing and cross referencing information on transport research projects at national level and other projects (and programmes), ensuring that this information remains distinct and can be searched separately from information on EU-funded projects;" In this context it would be useful to know how the term "searched" is to be understood. Does "search" in this context mean that the information needs to be retrieved by a user on the Portal, or does it mean that the information needs to be retrieved by the TRIP II consortium from an internal knowledge base?

**Answer:**
The reference to "search" in the above mentioned context under WP2 means that the information needs to be retrieved by a user of the Portal.

**Question 7:**
In the context of WP3, one task is to prepare: "upon request of the Commission, ad hoc strategy papers and notes, including on input to policy and planning processes inside the Commission, which may also include the definition of R&I work programmes." For planning and budget estimates it would be very useful to have a (maximum) number of such requests per year.

**Answer:**
With reference to Question 7, the task envisaged under WP3 regarding the preparation of "ad hoc strategy papers and notes, including on input to policy and planning processes inside the Commission, which may also include the definition of R&I work programmes" refers to a maximum number of 4 (four) requests per year. The expected average length of the ad hoc strategy papers and notes does not exceed 20 pages.
**Question 8:**
WP2 foresees tenderers to organise up to two thematic workshops per year. In this connection we have the following questions:

a) Are we correct in assuming that these are expected to be one-day workshops?
b) Are tenderers expected to identify suitable workshop locations (anywhere in Europe) or are these workshops expected to be held in a central location, e.g. in Brussels?
c) Are tenderers expected to cover the costs of venue, catering and equipment or will these costs be covered by the Commission, e.g. by providing Commission venues and services?
d) Are tenderers expected to identify and invite potential workshop participants or will names of participants be provided by the Commission?

Can you also please clarify whether tenderers are expected to identify and compensate up to 4 experts/speakers per workshop?

**Answer:**
The workshops are *one-day or two-day* workshops. They would take place in central locations in Europe, including Brussels. Tenderers should cover the costs of the venue, catering and equipment. Tenderers expected to identify potential workshop participants, who will be validated by the Commission, and invite them. Tenderers are expected to identify up to 4 experts/speakers per workshop, who will be validated by the Commission, and compensate them. Further details will be agreed during the inception phase.

**Question 9:**
Could we please have answers to the following questions:

1. To help support the response to WP3, please can you provide the google analytics information in the ‘audience overview’ dashboard (when you first login to google analytics)?
   a. Number of users
   b. Page/Session
   c. Average session duration
   d. Bounce rate
   e. % New Sessions
2. What are the current TRIP portal back-up (frequency and type) and disaster recovery processes?
3. When was the last test of the portal restoration/disaster recovery process performed?
4. Has the platform been security-hardened and have all the latest patches/ infrastructure and application updates been applied?
5. What is the current Database size and the growth rate in the last year?
6. What is the total file size i.e. file size of documents, images etc stored on the server?
7. How quickly do the pages load (this can be found under google analytics – Behaviour > Site Speed > Page Timings)?
8. How many new projects are added to the website per month?

**Answer:**
Based on the Google analytics for the time period 01.08.2013-31.07.2014, the following statistics were extracted:

a. Number of users: 71181
b. Page/Session: 3.06
The current database size is 219 Mb and the growth rate between 01.01.2014 and now is 27%. The total file size on the server is 11.4 Gb. Since 01.01.2014 there were 285 projects added and published online, giving an average of 35 projects/month for this time period.

The Commission doesn't want to comment on the existing situation of portal restoration, disaster recovery, security hardening and page loading. These are responsibilities of the current contractor and not relevant for the tender. However, tenderers could address such issues in their tender.

**Question 10:**
Can you please provide further clarification concerning your response provided to answer 8 in your Q&A document? If tenderers are required to cover venue, catering and equipment costs, as well as accommodation and subsistence for speakers and own staff, you will appreciate that it makes a difference for the budget if these are one-day or two-day workshops, particularly where a total of six workshops have to be organised over the course of the project. Can we assume that there will be an even split between one-day and two-day workshops? Or will tenderers be free to make their own choice? Also, can you please specify the average number of participants expected to attend such workshops, in order to gauge the required catering and size of venue?

**Answer:**
The Commission will define the length of the workshops and expects an average number of 25 participants. As indicated before, further details on the workshops will be agreed during the inception phase. Sufficient resources should be allocated in the tender.

**Question 11:**
Können Sie Näheres zu den Kriterien mitteilen, die Sie an einen entsprechenden Dienstleister stellen?

(Could you elaborate further on the criteria which you would an appropriate service provider expect to fulfil?).

**Answer:**

(The exclusion, selection and award criteria are described in detail in section 2 of the tender specifications. The Commission cannot provide additional explanations).