I. Purpose

This is not a solicitation[1]. As part of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Grants Quality Service Management Office's (QSMO) market research process, this is a request for information (RFI) to assist HHS in planning possible acquisition alternatives for a potential future requirement. More specifically, HHS is seeking industry input related to full lifecycle information technology (IT) systems integration support for developing a Grant Recipient Seamless User Experience (RUX) Portal. This RFI is issued solely for informational purposes.

This notice is published to e-GOS Special Notices SN-88014-SB, SN-88015-8A, SN-88016-DV, SN-88017-HZ, SN-88018-W to communicate directly with the NITAAC small business community. *At this time no small business determination has been made*. This RFI is established to engage one-hour one-on-one meetings with some NITAAC GWAC contract holders to gain industry insights as they relate to the requirement[2] documented in this RFI. While the government will accept written responses from any contract holder, the government intends to set up approximately three one-on-one meetings with selected contract holders. See section IV for more details.

Ultimately, the government intends to award a contract for these services. The government contemplates the task order with a period of performance of a 12-month base period and four one-year option periods totaling 60 months.

After comprehensive market research the government intends to issue a capabilities determination through e-GOS, a draft solicitation for comment and a final solicitation which is currently estimated for FY22Q1.

II. Background

Pursuant to OMB Memorandum M-19-16, *Centralized Mission Support Capabilities for the Federal Government*, OMB designated HHS as the Grants Quality Service Management Office (Grants QSMO) to transform government-wide grants management end-to-end. The Grants QSMO empowers and enables applicants, recipients, and federal awarding agencies government-wide to maximize mission impact through the development and adoption of customer-focused, innovative, and efficient solutions and services for grants management. The Grants QSMO is charged with establishing a Marketplace[3] of shared grants management solutions and operationalizing a vision for federal grants that empowers and enables applicants, recipients, and federal awarding agencies to efficiently and effectively deliver to meet the mission. The Grants QSMO facilitates reductions in applicant and recipient burden, provides greater equity of access

[1] https://www.acquisition.gov/far/52.215-3

[2] https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/procurement/memo/myth-busting-2-addressing-misconceptions-and-further-improving-communication-during-the-acquisition-process.pdf

[3] OMB Memo M-19-16 directs QSMOs to "Offer and manage a marketplace of solutions for common technology, services, or fully managed services to respond to agency needs."

to federal grants, encourages government-wide efficiencies, responds to customer needs, and enables use of data as a strategic asset.

Federal agencies award on average $1.4 trillion in grants and cooperative agreements (hereafter, "grants") annually across 45 awarding agencies, via over 1,500 distinct programs, to over 1 million applicants/recipients[4] – representing one of the federal government's largest annual investments to help drive improvements for the American people. The federal government relies on grant recipient partners to implement the federal grant funding and deliver mission-critical services. As agencies have largely managed their grants internally, there has not been a concerted effort to date to look broadly across the federal grants management systems landscape. This has resulted in a disconnected, aging systems environment, supported by numerous systems with varying levels of maturity and a fragmented experience for applicants/recipients. It also increases administrative burden for applicants, recipients, and awarding agencies. Although recent years have shown increased adoption of shared services for grants management, recipients still routinely interact with an unwieldly array of systems to manage their awards. For example, in FY19 departments within the state of Nevada received funding from multiple federal agencies, requiring the state to interact with 25 unique systems to manage their grants across the full lifecycle.

III. Scope

The scope of the potential requirement covers the full suite of IT services required to develop a single portal and dashboard. The dashboard supports grant recipients in accessing the over 90 public-facing grants management systems (supporting 40+ federal grant-making agencies). It would also eliminate the need for multiple identities by leveraging a single set of credentials via a single sign-on through Login.gov. This portal will equip the Grants QSMO to reduce recipient's administrative burden. Consequently, more resources can be directed towards grants mission delivery; enhance citizens' interaction with government services; and improve the cybersecurity posture of public-facing government systems.

The Grants QSMO successfully built a clickable prototype of the RUX portal and dashboard in FY21. Reactions to the RUX prototype, gathered through human-centered design (HCD) sessions with recipients and demos with federal stakeholders, have been exceedingly positive. We've confirmed the potential value that a fully deployed and scaled RUX solution could provide by creating a seamless recipient customer experience. This can substantially reduce recipient burden, improve cybersecurity through the usage of Login.gov, and encourage collaboration across agencies. For reference, a short demo of the RUX portal clickable prototype can be seen here: RUX 1min Demo (vimeo.com).

Project Technical objectives include:

- Develop a sound implementation plan, aligned to HHS and government-wide policy and best practices (e.g., adhere to the HHS Enterprise Performance Life Cycle (EPLC), incorporating appropriate stage gate reviews and deliverables to reduce risk), that

[4]Based on Grants.gov volume in FY2020.

  - Uses a Human-Centered Design (HCD) approach to development
  - Considers strategic on-boarding/integration of systems with the RUX portal – including an approach that can be implemented with a minimal impact on integrated grant systems' operations (e.g. external API development)
  - Implements the solution to enable incremental investment and measurable benefits while mitigating implementation risk
  - Supports implementation of necessary policy and business process changes, leveraging opportunities to increase standardization of systems, process, and data

- Develop a grant-recipient facing portal that:
  - Leverages Login.gov for shared authentication
  - Uses U.S. Web Design Standards (https://designsystem.digital.gov/)
  - Meets FISMA Moderate security standards/controls
  - Is a Cloud-native application
  - Complies with 508 standards
  - Complies/Aligns with Grants Standard Data Elements defined via the Federal Integrated Business Framework (FIBF) (https://ussm.gsa.gov/fibf-gm/#standard_data_elements) for elements involved in metadata defined in the prototype
  - Leverages a flexible architecture to allow for future enhancements beyond the initial recipient portal (e.g., potential digital intake of forms, alert microservices, etc.)
  - Leverages Agile methodology for development beginning with a minimum Viable Product (MVP) that connects to prioritized recipient-facing systems within the first 6-9 months of the project based on the prototype
  - Agile methodology and approach leverage USDS Playbook (https://playbook.cio.gov/)

- Develop a long-term data strategy that supports interoperability and trust in the data/data security
  - Build data exchange services, determining an optimal frequency of exchange that considers business needs, system performance, and interface constraints
  - Maximize accuracy, consistency, and completeness of data by executing appropriate data harmonization, ensuring data integrity issues are resolved

- Deploy the solution ensuring that stakeholders and required organizational, business process, and technical changes are ready to use the RUX portal
  - Gain user acceptance and operationalize the RUX portal
  - Stabilize the solution by providing necessary expert technical support and initial Operations and Maintenance following deployment, ensuring system and operational issues are addressed timely

- Develop a solution that can be operated efficiently, effectively, and affordably (e.g., minimizing O&M costs), while meeting current and emerging demands

- Support the Authority to Operate (ATO) process[5]; manage systems maintenance and compliance; and provide help desk support

RUX Program Objectives include:

- Improve grant recipient user experience (based on surveys and user-feedback sessions).
- Increase efficiency, productivity, and engagement from recipients (less time navigating disparate systems, fewer logins, fewer system lockouts, fewer password resets, etc.).
- Realize costs avoidance / savings for federal system owners due to fewer password resets (i.e., Tier 1 help desk support).
- Improve equity and access for recipients with reduced time and difficulty logging into multiple systems.
- Reduce risk through better compliance with reporting and process management requirements.
- Reduce federal grant analyst and program manager's time spent on simple administrative activities.

IV. How to Respond

As part of the initial market research for the RUX requirement, the government desires a one-on-one discussion with a maximum of five interested parties to address the questions in this RFI.

There are two ways to participate:

1. If you are interested in participating **orally**, please provide a response with brief details regarding your interest and experience on similar efforts through e-GOS no later than 12:00 PM on Tuesday October 5, 2021. The oral participant contract holders will be selected at the government's discretion to have a conversation, receive feedback, and address our questions. The contract holder will have an opportunity to ask questions of the government during the discussion. The oral presentations will be scheduled for no longer than one hour on October 12 or 13, 2021. The contractors selected for the presentations will be at the sole discretion of the government based on capabilities, past experiences, and other factors.
2. If you are interested in participating in **writing**, please provide responses to the questions in this RFI through e-GOS no later than 4:00 PM on Friday October 8, 2021.

Please note this market research is meant to be informal. One-on-one's are meant to be conversational. For the oral meetings no written response is required. The contract holder may provide a written response but is not required to do so. During the meeting the

[5] ATO processes are based on NIST SP 800-37 Rev 2:Risk Management Framework for Information Systems and Organizations: A System Life Cycle Approach for Security and Privacy (nist.gov); and NIST SP 800-53 Rev 5: Security and Privacy Controls for Information Systems and Organizations (nist.gov)

government will take notes. If providing a response in writing answers may be informal. The government is not anticipating or seeking the response to tax contract holder resources, merely to exchange information.

V. Information Sought

Please provide the answers to the questions listed below with sufficient level of detail to assist the government in developing and formulating a strategy for meeting the government's goals and objectives:

1. Discuss your company's experience relevant to the scope. In particular, please address each of the key areas and discuss your company's experience with the following:
    a. Developing portals that integrate data from multiple external systems to present users with a unified experience, dashboard, etc. (See Appendix A)
    b. Developing grants management-related solutions, either at the federal, state, or recipient level that reflect an understanding of the grants management landscape, stakeholders, considerations, constraints, etc.
2. The potential solicitation will likely be in a statement of objectives (SOO) format. The government's expectation is to receive services and solutions that are innovative, proven, efficient, effective, and agile. The use of a SOO is to encourage such responses by focusing on the expected and required outcomes rather than the methods, processes, and procedures use to reach those ends. Given that, what information would be needed in a solicitation package in order for your company to develop a sound, complete response to the requirement?
3. What recommendations would you have to make the solution low-cost to operate post deployment (including potential use of existing HHS enterprise software licenses e.g. Power BI)?
4. Having reviewed the RUX prototype (https://vimeo.com/553096795/6c43bded9a), what recommendations would you give the Grants QSMO to meet its critical milestones and objectives above?
5. Given that the operations and maintenance of this portal will be on a cost-reimbursable (Grants QSMO collects this funding from stakeholder users) basis with limited resources; what are low cost similar solutions you've used before? Were there any problems?
6. The government is interested in structuring this contract to support agile development methodology. What more information would you need to price the work conducive to agile development? Given what you know, would your company be able to price this work in a firm-fixed-price approach?
7. What information would you like the government to know? Do you have further resources or guidance on this topic you could point out to the government?

Appendix A

The below technical architecture diagram demonstrates the suggested boundary architectural diagram of RUX and its integrated Phase 1 recipient-facing systems.