Answers to Vendor Questions

RFQ #140D0422Q0267

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) Portfolio Management System (OPS) for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), OPRE

1. What is the anticipated start of the period of performance?

   The anticipated award date is June 6, 2022.

2. Who is the incumbent contractor on the current MAPS system? Or is it being maintained by federal employees within ACF? If a contractor, can you please supply the contract number?

   The incumbent contractor is Global Tunnels on contract #75P00120C00090.

3. When is the end date for the current MAPS contract? When would the migration need to be completed by?

   Migration should be done before the current MAPS ends. The reason for migration is so that as we develop OPS, we can have full access to the database for any translations of data.

   There is not a hard deadline for the migration from MAPS to OPS, as the MAPS contract could cover several years of future work. However, OPRE would like to prioritize the migration against other OPS development. OPRE expects to work with the vendor on migration approaches as part of the initial kickoff and discovery.

   We have a goal of ramping down and ultimately ending the operations and maintenance contract for the current MAPS contract as the new system is incrementally being developed, and the applicable data will be migrated. The maintenance contract will have a base year with options that will be considered based on progress of the development work in this contract.

4. ACF says interface with external systems, do they mean expose data to other systems? Or integrate data from other systems into our system?

   OPRE has no current plans for interfacing with external systems. However, any potential integrations would involve pulling data from external systems, not pushing data to external systems. For the purposes of the case studies, assume pulling data from external systems.

5. How many data sources is OPRE currently connecting together?

   MAPS currently accepts user-input data only; it does not connect to APIs. The number of data sources varies as regulations and systems change and is currently around 6-8. Based on this variation, OPRE expects to take advantage of batch upload features to take in data by uploading CSVs but is open to other approaches.

6. Is there any publicized user research materials/pain points for the current system?

   The below information is taken from the product brief prepared for this project. It is not public knowledge, but shared exclusively with bidders in the hope of informing your proposals.

   What is the challenge we're trying to address? Who experiences it?
   OPRE staff plan and manage research, evaluation, and data projects to build evidence to improve the lives of children and families. This work involves administrative responsibilities related to procurement, budgeting, portfolio management, and workforce planning. The information and workflows they need to fulfill these responsibilities are spread out across numerous HHS-owned systems and manually-compiled documents, and require coordination among several people & multiple steps. This is cumbersome, inefficient, and error-prone, taking time and bandwidth away from mission work.

   What's been done before/already?
   MAPS (Management and Accounting of Projects System) is a web application created in 2012 to centralize and simplify procurement- and budget-related activities so that staff could spend more time focused on research. MAPS allows OPRE research, management, operations, and budget staff to communicate about planned and in progress procurement actions and agreements, authorize payments, and track spending.

   What problem are we trying to solve?
   While MAPS is infinitely better than the system it replaced, OPRE has grown and its procurement and budgeting needs have evolved from the time when MAPS was built. In addition, OPRE lacks a comprehensive system to support its portfolio management and workforce planning activities. MAPS was not designed to grow or scale in the ways OPRE needs.

OPRE needs	Current state
Management and research staff **need information about the projects** that are being worked on across OPRE, including the research description, topic(s), population(s), method(s), etc, and the amount being spent so that they can plan their research activities, report on those activities, and make cross-project connections.	OPRE managers and staff currently have to reach out to colleagues individually to provide updated information about their projects because it is not stored in a centralized space. It is difficult to run analytics using these manually compiled spreadsheets; and it is difficult to keep manually compiled information up to date; and it is difficult to know how long the information and analyses can be trusted to be accurate.

	OPRE staff, meanwhile, have to remember to update their project information in multiple places, and it is difficult to keep all the sources in sync.
Project Leads, CORs, and Federal Project Officers **need to plan and execute agreements** (contracts, grants, etc) and authorize invoice payments so that they can secure research-related services.	Procurement-related processes are not intuitive and currently require several manual steps and approvals, as well as assistance from the Budget Team to communicate with external systems. It is difficult to remember the steps for processes that are executed infrequently, MAPS provides limited visibility into progress and status, and it requires vigilance to keep things from falling through the cracks. The Budget Team, meanwhile, has to do a lot of manual work to keep external systems and OPRE records in sync.
The Budget Team **needs to allocate fees and shared costs** so that these can be accounted for in budgets.	Shared costs must be calculated across all CANs and contracts collectively, and must be recalculated at multiple times throughout the year as contract and staffing details change and get locked in. Much of this work happens in spreadsheets outside of MAPS and then needs to be inputted. There is no way to update the 50-60 numbers in MAPS all at once, so there are several days when Team Leaders cannot trust the numbers in the system. The system provides no alerts about when this is happening. Updates to shared costs are sometimes skipped because the process is so cumbersome and time consuming. This results in outdated numbers and further confusion for OPRE staff about whether or not they can trust the system. Shared costs and fees are not displayed in all the places a Project Lead needs, so they have to piece together different reports to get an accurate view of their budget.
Project Leads, Team Leaders, Division Directors, and the Office of the Director **need to see how much money is available** and how much has been spent so that they can plan and manage	It can be difficult to figure out how to pull the numbers they track most often from MAPS, and they often need to export and stitch together multiple pieces of data to get the summaries they want. These manually compiled reports can be brittle to maintain.

their budgets to ensure they neither overspend nor underspend.	The Budget Team, meanwhile, is often asked to pull and stitch together these reports for other staff because it is so confusing. Permissions are overly restrictive, making it difficult for people on shared projects to see everything they're responsible for. Statuses are not tracked as granularly as needed, making it difficult to get an accurate read on how much budget is truly available. Staff are not able to propose changes to budget plans in the system, but instead need to email requests to the Budget Team.
Managers **need to see which staff are allocated to which projects** and in which capacities so that they can manage staff workloads and plan for future project staffing.	OPRE managers and staff need to individually maintain information about project staffing because it is not stored in a centralized space. It is difficult to run analytics using these manually compiled spreadsheets; it is difficult to keep manually compiled information up to date; and it is difficult to know how long the information and analyses can be trusted to be accurate.
Staff in general **need the system to be intuitive to use** so that they can easily get the information they need and get through their tasks quickly without needing to read a lot of help documents or reach out for assistance.	Workflows involve a lot of friction and are time-consuming to complete. It also takes a long time to learn how to use MAPS, the help documents aren't comprehensive or up to date, and staff often have to contact the System Administrators (the Budget Team) for help. This leaves staff less time for mission work, and the Budget Team with less time for strategic priorities.

7. When was MAPS originally built? Is the current code stored in version control?

   MAPS went into production in 2012. A snapshot of the codebase was recently saved on ACF GitHub.

8. Is MAPS using Oracle as a database or features like Oracle reports and Oracle APEX?

   As a database

9. Will the Government permit a standard cover page and table of contents outside of the structure described in the table on pg. 3? And in doing so, can the information in Section 1 be the first Section after the TOC?

   A cover sheet, as well as a table of contents, is acceptable. The table of contents may be included before or after the information required in Section 1.

10. “DWD” in the 6th page of RFQ. What is “DWD"?

    That was a typo. It should read “OPRE.” Page 6 updated to reflect this change.

11. "the quoter may add up to 3 sentences to provide any needed context or information" in the 7th page of RFQ: Is "3 sentences” allowed for each finding or entire research findings section?

    We are requesting only 3 sentences of context/information for the entire user research and findings submission. The goal is to have quoters submit existing documentation and not burden them by needing to create additional materials.

12. "Deviations from Pricing Sheet (Attachment 3) are allowed. The reasoning for deviations shall be explained in the Price Assumptions section.” In the 8th page of RFQ Can you explain what “deviations" could be?

    Deviations are using a format other than the provided pricing sheet. The reasoning for providing data in a different format should be explained.

13. Regarding data analysis and system-wide integrity: are there any restraints that OPRE can foresee? Does OPRE have a mitigation plan to address how inevitable conflicts between flexibility and structure? (i.e. scaling, etc.)

    Not at this time. OPRE expects to work collaboratively with the vendor to develop such mitigation plans.

14. What are the projected number of active users, number of user accounts, number of different roles, number of projects, and number of emails sent per project?

    These numbers are likely to change and are provided to give an order of magnitude understanding of the likely scale.

    a. Estimated number of active users/month: around 100 (depending on time of year)
    b. Estimated number of user accounts: around 100
    c. Estimated number of different roles: currently 6 within MAPS; TBD for new system (could be 10-15)
    d. Estimated number of projects: 200-500 active per year
    e. Estimated number of emails sent per project: no estimate because the answer is dependent upon user needs to be discovered during the project

15. Will users be engaging with this system daily as part of their regular workflow, or at key milestones in the project?

    The time spent engaging with the system varies widely amongst users of different types. We heard from users that their current use of MAPS ranges may be from once a month to most of the workday, depending on the user's role and function.

16. Will the contractor need to keep and display different versions of budgets?

    This is not an established requirement. There will only be one "official" budget; however, we have heard interest from users in being able to "play" with the numbers in order to explore possibilities for funding allocation when planning their spending. In addition, there may be budget items that are in different states of approval, e.g., the "official" budget, and edits to that budget that have not yet been approved by the budget officer.

17. Can we assume that any CSV imports will be based on common templates and encapsulated datasets so that there won't be simple errors? (which interfere with importing the data)

    Any CSVs will be exports from other systems, and thus can be expected to be consistent.

18. What data export formats will be required?

    CSV/Excel format and PDFs

19. What data will be uploaded and where will it go? Is it consistently produced?

    See #4 and #5

20. To support shutting down MAPS, are there distinct pieces which could be moved over to an OPS platform while it is still being developed? Some will be easier to develop for OPS than others.

    Potentially yes. The plan is for distinct pieces or modules of functionality to be moved from MAPS to OPS one at a time. The actual order of conversion will be determined very early in the engagement, but will remain flexible as the project progresses.

21. Will resources need to be allocated between multiple teams, or is there a clear siloed nature to product information and user rights?

    All system information can be available to all users.

22. Scheduling events can be simple if it is just a matter of publishing, but "planned procurement actions" could involve multiple steps. Could the client describe the nature of these actions?

    "Entering planned procurement actions" refers to the need to initiate new procurements in the system by creating a new budget item that can be tracked against.

23. Who has the right to see budgets and staffing requirements? Will we need to ensure that there is a tight management of who within OPS is able to access specific data?

Overall, the concern is less around limiting the ability to view data as it is controlling different roles' ability to edit or approve changes in the system. For example, non-CORS/contractors cannot authorize invoice payments; only CORS can authorize. However, a goal for the new system is giving everyone in the organization easier access to data about projects across divisions.

It should also be noted that in some instances one team member might have multiple roles. In the current system a team member who for example serves as both a Division Director and a COR would be forced to choose one of the roles and rely on a colleague to handle their other role(s). In the new system personnel who hold multiple roles will need to be able to complete all functions for each of their roles using their own login.

For a bit more information on different users' responsibilities, see below:

a. Project officers who are CORS track budget and input and allocate invoices. They direct and review the contractor's work and liaise between program offices and the contractor.
b. Team leaders track annual spend against appropriation/budget for multiple projects.
c. Division Directors are responsible for budget oversight and management to direct and forecast spending across projects over multiple years. Division Directors must also account for every penny for the current fiscal year. They also supervise staff in the division and oversee the team of CORs and the portfolio of research projects.
d. System Admins manage lists of vendors along with projects lists and contract/grant names.
e. Budget Officers forecast spending and pull grids to track office wide spending. They're responsible for balancing the budget, allocating money, categorizing spending consistently across the org, monitoring drawdown of money and reporting to OPRE management.

24. Is there a maximum file size that you will be allowing to be uploaded to the site? What file types will be allowed? Will it require virus checking as part of the process?

Not at this time. We anticipate a desire to import data via CSV uploads in the future and to upload documentation related to contracts, invoices, and projects, likely in PDF, Excel, or Word format.

Requirements around virus checking will be determined in collaboration with OCIO. The current system does not require virus checking.

25. The proposal states "ownership/copyright belonging exclusively to OPRE" which may conflict with the desire for an open-source web framework. Would OPRE consider that the software be licensed under an appropriate open-source license to the web framework? We would likely use Drupal, which uses the GPL. If we develop a general purpose module or patch to Drupal that we want to contribute back, the hope is that we would be contractually free to do so.

    In the case of software custom-developed for the OPS application, OPRE expects to own the code, which would then be dedicated to the public domain.

    In the case of software developed for use beyond OPS, OPRE would not consider such software to be “produced under this contract” and the author(s) would retain ownership. In such cases, however, the vendor should be able to demonstrate that OPRE would retain access to and use of the code into the future.

    Additionally, OPRE is open to and encourages the use of open-source frameworks.