Minutes of the Pre-Bid Conference in connection with the RFP for selection of an
Outsource Service Provider for Visa, OCI, Renunciation, Passport
and GEP Verification Services

In connection with the RFP floated by the Embassy of India, Washington DC on
10 July, 2020 inviting proposals from experienced and qualified Service Providers for
providing outsourcing services for Visa, OCI, Renunciation, Passport and GEP at the
Embassy of India, Washington DC and at the Indian Consulates at Atlanta, Chicago,
Houston, New York and San Francisco, a Pre-Bid Conference was held on 30 July,
2020 at 1000 hours (EST) at the Embassy of India, Washington D.C. In view of the
COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Pre-Bid Conference was held through Digital Video
Conferencing.

2. The Pre-Bid Conference was chaired by Sh. Sudhakar Dalela, Deputy Chief of
the Mission, Embassy of India, Washington DC, and attended by officials from the
Embassy and the Indian Consulates at Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, New York and San
Francisco. The Pre-Bid Conference was attended by the representatives of following
companies:

(i) BLS International Services Limited
(ii) IVS Global Services Private Limited
(iii) Silver Touch Technologies Limited
(iv) VFS Global
(v) VisaMetric
(vi) Global Vox

3. The representatives of two companies viz. M/s Alankit Limited and M/s Alhind
Tours & Travel Private Limited, that have expressed an interest in participating in the
Tender process, did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

4. In his opening remarks, Sh. Sudhakar Dalela, Deputy Chief of the Mission and
Chairman of the Tender Evaluation Committee, welcomed the participants and invited
the representatives of the bidding companies to make brief remarks before proceeding
to the individual presentations. He welcomed the interest expressed by several
companies in participating in the bidding process, in response to the RFP issued by the
Embassy on July 10. As part of the bidding process, he said that interested companies
were given an opportunity to seek any clarification in respect of the RFP. He said that
responses to all the written queries/questions have already been uploaded on the MEA
as well as the Mission’s websites. He said that if any participant still had any associated
queries relating to those responses and any related question, he and his team would be happy to respond to them. He underlined that the entire process for selection of OSP will be conducted in a transparent manner as per details outlined in the RFP.

5. Dr. Jaideep Nair, Minister (Consular) laid out the format and procedures for the conduct of the Pre-Bid Conference and informed the participants that the minutes of the Conference would be posted on the MEA as well as Mission’s websites.

6. The representatives of the six companies that participated in the Pre-bid Conference made brief introductory remarks. Mr. Nirav Desai from BLS and Mr. Luca Ulcelli from VisaMetric sought clarification on aspects relating to joint venture, Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and extension in deadline for submission of bids. Some of the queries were responded to by Minister (Consular) in a preliminary manner. Taking note of all the queries raised at the meeting, the representatives of BLS, VisaMetric and Silver Touch Technologies were requested to send these in writing to enable the Mission to respond suitably in writing (responses to questions raised during the Pre-Bid Conference and received in writing are placed below).

7. After the introductory session, representatives from BLS, IVS, Silver Touch, VFS and VisaMetric made individual presentation as per the time allotted to them.

8. The Pre-Bid Conference lasted for about two hours and fifteen minutes and ended with a vote of thanks.

... Representatives of the companies participated in the Pre-Bid Conference:

1. Mr. Nirav Desai- M/s BLS International Services Limited
2. Mr. Anil Gusain - M/s IVS Global Services Private Limited
3. Mr. Jignesh Patel & Mr. Mihir Joshi- M/s Silver Touch Technologies Ltd.
4. Mr. Bernard Vijaykumar & Ms. Sonia Dhayagude - M/s VFS Global
5. Mr. Luca Ulcelli & Ms. Monika Sehgal - M/s VisaMetric
6. Mr. Pratik- M/s Global Vox

**Responses to Questions asked by Prospective Bidders during the Pre-Bid Conference**

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<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>RFP Clause</th>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Chapters IV - Eligibility criteria, Chapter V - Mandatory criteria</td>
<td>We are a joint venture between two companies, which can independently meet the eligibility criteria but not directly through the joint venture company. Could you please confirm that we can bid through</td>
<td>The bidder must fulfil the Eligibility as well as Mandatory Criteria as per the RFP. If bidder is a Joint Venture, it must fulfill the Eligibility as well as Mandatory Criteria as per the RFP. If bidder is an individual company, the individual entity must fulfill the Eligibility as well as Mandatory Criteria as per the RFP.</td>
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<td>the joint venture, providing supporting documents demonstrating that each of the parent companies meet the eligibility criteria?</td>
<td>Attention is also drawn to Chapter V: Mandatory Criteria, Para 7 a, c, e, f and q, Chapter XII: Guide to Bidders, Para 17 g, Annexure-D: Mandatory Criteria and Annexure-F: Declaration by the Bidding Company.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Chapter V, 7.o - The Bidding Company must deposit a Bid Security (EMD) of US$235,000.00, [...]. Due to the very short deadline to submit a proposal, it would be challenging to be able to obtain the bid security Bank Guarantee nor the Demand Draft in time. Would it be possible to accept other kind of guarantee?</td>
<td>EMD should be in the form of Demand Draft or Bank Guarantee.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Chapter 24, 35.e - The proposal must be received by 1500 hours (EST) on Monday, 10 August, 2020. Since our companies are located in countries currently under travel restriction, so the preparation of documents is taking more than usually required. Would you please consider an extension of the deadline for receipt of bids of 30 days, in order to allow all participants to prepare the proposals and the supporting document?</td>
<td>No. On the requests of prospective bidders, they have been given the option to submit bids at Embassy of India, Washington directly or at the CPV Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Patiala House Annexe, New Delhi, which would then be forwarded to Embassy of India, Washington D.C.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>As per Chapter XXI : Timelines after the award of the contract, clause g and h, the VAC should be ready for operation at T+45 days. Considering T which is award of the contract falling on Thursday 10th September 2020, T+45 will fall on Sunday, 25th October 2020. However as per CHAPTER XX: BIDDING SCHEDULE AND PROCESS clause 31, the commencement of operations will start on Monday, 02 November, 2020. Please advise the reason for the lag of 7 calendar days. Is there any specific reason for the lag?</td>
<td>The timeline is only indicative and can be modified by the Mission/Post as per administrative requirements or to meet with the deadline.</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>What shall be the implementation methodology with regards to transfer of work from current incumbent. Kindly advise if as per the current contract, MEA will make incumbent accountable for transfer of work in an orderly fashion. Is there any provision of parallel run of operations between both incumbent and new service provider. From the commencement of operations starting 2nd November 2020, is the new service provider expected to take only fresh applications or the carry forward application from existing incumbent will also be transferred.</td>
<td>It is expected that the new OSP would receive fresh applications. An announcement will be made at least a week in advance that the incumbent OSP will stop receiving applications. However, the OSP will also be requested to take over any pending applications which have not been completed along with any other residual issues.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Kindly provide the volume of call centre and Emails on annual basis in last three years.</td>
<td>Not yet available. Being obtained from current OSP.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Can we do form filling for e-Visa application and what is the norm for e-visa going forward.</td>
<td>E-visa form filling is not allowed.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Please confirm our understanding that the bidder has to provide storage facility at ICAC and how long the bidder will store the data.</td>
<td>The Service Provider should ensure that the data has been transferred correctly and the same has been digitized and indexed and stored as per the requirements of the Mission/Posts.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Kindly explain process for Integration of OCI with NIC platform.</td>
<td>As regards OCI module, OSP need to use MEA/NIC's Software for outsourced services. MEA/NIC's Software is centrally hosted and being used by few OSPs as of day. Hence there shall be no integration efforts by OSP.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>What are the COVID-19 restrictions for ICAC operation.</td>
<td>In view of the pandemic, at present no walk-ins are allowed and all the applications are being received by mail only. A decision to lift restrictions could only be taken keeping in view the local guidelines and in consultation with the Ministry/Consulates General.</td>
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11. **1) CHAPTER V: MANDATORY CRITERIA Clause 7m - The Bidding Company should have ISO-9001-2008 (or equivalent) certification for quality management and ISO-27001-2013 (or equivalent) certification for IT related services and ISO 23026-2015 (or equivalent) for website quality certification.**

We understand that CMMi Level 5 can be considered as Equivalent or Better than ISO 23026-2015, as CMMi 5 is for entire Software Development Life Cycle projects, Website development is a part of entire Software lifecycle, We hereby request MEA / Mission to accept CMMi 5 certificate against ISO 23026 : 2015, kindly confirm.

By equivalent we mean ISO-23026 standards published in 2015 or later or earlier version with valid certificate. This certification refers to Website engineering, website management and Website life cycle.

12. **Annexure D: Mandatory Criteria – Point no. 9 - While In Annexure D: Mandatory Criteria – Point no. 9 : Page 74 states that ISO 23026-2015 (Website Quality certification) (to be submitted before three months from the date of award of Contract or at the time of starting of outsourcing operations). D19**

As per the RFP.

13. **CHAPTER XXIV: SENDING THE BIDS TO MISSION & Corrigendum - We understand that the bid is required to be submitted in physical copy and online submission is not provided.**

Looking to the current pandemic COVID situation, we hereby request you to kindly allow to submit the Technical & Financial bid online, while only the EMD may be submitted in original in physical mode.

No; the bids will need to be submitted, in original, either at the Embassy of India, Washington D.C. or at the CPV Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Patiala House Annexe, Tilak Marg, New Delhi-110001.