

Quality Assurance: EBT Support through RFPs and Contracts

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RFPs and Contracts

“State agencies use their own applicable State procurement regulations and standards to prepare procurement documents using Federal funds, provided they conform to the Federal standards and ensure that the acquisition is conducted in the most effective and economical matter.”

Per Section 6.0 of the FNS 901 Handbook

Procurement Steps



- ▶ Need Identified
 - ▶ In-house vs Outsourcing
- ▶ Draft the procurement document
 - ▶ Goal of document
 - ▶ Things to think about
 - ▶ Don't reinvent the wheel
- ▶ Develop the evaluation criteria
 - ▶ Scoring

Procurement Steps

- ▶ Submit the procurement document to FNS for review and approval
 - ▶ FNS requires 60 days for review/approval
- ▶ Respond to FNS questions
- ▶ Release the RFP
 - ▶ FNS requires the procurement be posted for 60 days
- ▶ Review/answer questions submitted by potential bidders
- ▶ Receive proposals from bidders

Procurement Steps

- ▶ Evaluate proposals
 - ▶ Team and Instructions
- ▶ Draft contract
 - ▶ Fixed-price contracts
 - ▶ Federal clauses
- ▶ Submit to FNS for approval
 - ▶ FNS requires the procurement be posted for 60 days
- ▶ Receive FNS approval

Procurement Steps

- ▶ Execute contract
- ▶ Administer the contract
- ▶ Closeout the contract



Summary

- ▶ Ask for what you want/need
- ▶ Know what you are asking for
- ▶ Utilize existing resources
- ▶ Allow adequate time for reviews/approvals
- ▶ Include all stakeholders



What can be Accomplished through a QA Contract Scope

What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

Some people believe the QA contractor is a watchdog of sorts, protecting the clients interests and ensuring the implementation vendor is doing a good job



What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

- ▶ FNS requires Quality Assurance be performed on each eWIC implementation
- ▶ PMI PMBOK defines QA as the application of planned systematic activities to ensure the project will employ all processes needed to meet requirements. QA provides the confidence that project quality is being met or has been achieved
- ▶ Purpose and Responsibilities of Quality Assurance Contractor
- ▶ Provide project oversight to ensure consistent quality in each task and deliverable to ensure expected outcomes, such as maintenance of scope and adherence to schedule and budget

Let's all hold hands and sing Kum ba yah



What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

- Quality Assurance in various types of eWIC contracts
- eWIC with MIS upgrades
- eWIC and new MIS simultaneous implementations

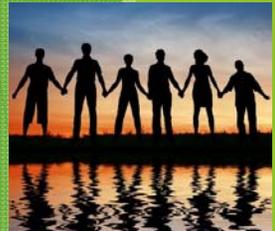
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What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

- ▶ Typical Quality Assurance Responsibilities in an eWIC implementation
 - ▶ Establish a Project Management Plan e.g., schedule, scope, change, stakeholders, quality, risk
 - ▶ Review and comment on project documentation from the various contractors eWIC and/or MIS to ensure completeness and quality documentation
 - ▶ Review/comment on testing preparation, UAT environment, scripts, capacity planning/testing, overall testing process and outcome, retesting if needed

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What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

- ▶ Responsibilities continued...
 - ▶ Post UAT testing recommendation for Pilot go/no go approval
 - ▶ Review and assessment of pilot preparation
 - ▶ Coordination, scheduling, review and assessment of retailer certification and overall enablement
 - ▶ Pilot testing participation, review and assessment - typical is two weeks on-site

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What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

- Typical Quality Assurance Responsibilities in an eWIC implementation
 - Rollout go/no go recommendations to state and FNS
 - Review and Assessment of Rollout preparation, implementing lessons learned from pilot
 - Rollout participation, typical is one week in each rollout area conducting review and assessment
 - Final report for State and FNS

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What can be accomplished through a QA contract scope

- ▶ Responsibilities that are also possible:
 - Oversight of the existing MIS changes to be eWIC functional
 - Oversight and assurance of MIS
 - FNS reports during implementation such as IAPDU
 - Contract closure reports

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What does the Industry Look for in RFPs and Contracts

Scope of Work



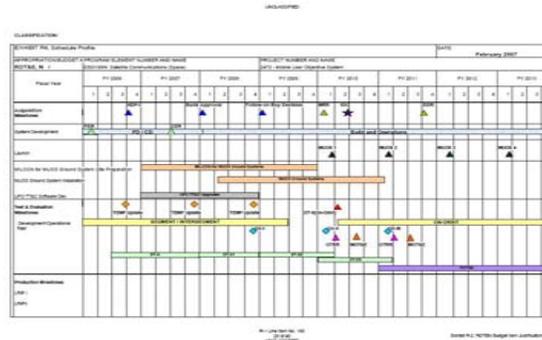
- ▶ Clearly defined scope:
 - ▶ Helpful to define ongoing vs one-time activities
- ▶ Identification of requirements for onsite meetings and support
- ▶ Include program/project statistics:
 - ▶ Households
 - ▶ Vendors and Households by pilot and rollout areas
 - ▶ Schedule

Scope of Work



- ▶ Clear delineation between QA, project management, eWIC service provider and state agency responsibilities
 - ▶ Often support in areas like vendor certification, UAT, pilot and rollout readiness and support will involve multiple groups
 - ▶ Some procurements have not been clear who has the primary role requiring follow up questions

Scope of Work



- ▶ Many RFPs have required the bidder to include a QA schedule and work plan
- ▶ The QA schedule is almost totally dependent on the eWIC service provider schedule and work plan which is typically not available at the time of the bid
- ▶ Any schedule developed by a bidder can be based on project milestones, but any details will be a complete shot in the dark

Pricing



- ▶ Most QA support is ongoing such as meeting participation, oversight and monitoring
 - ▶ It is recommend that an ongoing monitoring task be included in the pricing, billed monthly through the duration of the project
- ▶ Requiring pricing for each deliverable review can create complicated pricing and invoicing
 - ▶ It is recommended that an ongoing task from project start to pilot end be established and billed monthly to address all deliverable reviews

Pricing



- ▶ Tasks like vendor certification where the number to be completed may be unknown may result in higher cost if the bidder has to guess at the number to be undertaken
 - ▶ These should be priced on a per activity basis (i.e., per certification)
 - ▶ When evaluating, a standard number of events should be applied to each of the bidders' cost for the item
- ▶ Many RFPs include an "Additional Activities" task
 - ▶ Since the scope is unknown, pricing should be based on an hourly rate
 - ▶ May choose not to evaluate, but if included in evaluation, a standard number of hours should be applied to each of the bidders' hourly rates



Q&A

- ▶ Bidders are counting on responses to their questions to help them correctly respond and provide accurate pricing
- ▶ It is helpful to have as much information as possible in the responses
- ▶ A second round of Q&A is also recommended as responses to Q&A often result in more questions

Contracts

- ▶ Items that add risk and cost
 - ▶ No limits on liability
 - ▶ Liquidated damages
 - ▶ Retainage on deliverables greater than 10%



Timing



- ▶ QA should start either slightly before or at the same time as the eWIC service provider
- ▶ If too early, there will not be much to do
- ▶ If after to the eWIC service provider starts, the QA contractor will be playing catch up
 - ▶ Decisions will have been made for which the QA contractor could have provided guidance

QA vs. IV&V

- ▶ IV&V = Independent Validation and Verification
 - ▶ Traditionally a hands-off role where scheduled checks and assessment are performed
 - ▶ IV&V staff are generally not integrated into the project, operate from the outside
- ▶ In WIC, most projects called IV&V are actually more like QA projects where the IV&V team is a full participant in the project
- ▶ Several states have procured through IV&V master service agreements and therefore the project was called IV&V, but the support would be closer to QA

Questions?

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