



RFQQ No. 2534-877

Title: Forensic Hospital Compliance Consultancy Services

DSHS Administration:
BHHA

Solicitation Quick Facts - Need-to-know summary for vendors

Opportunity Overview	DSHS is seeking a qualified vendor to perform a Gap Analysis of The New Hospital to assess readiness for Joint Commission Deemed Status accreditation. The awarded vendor will conduct construction design drawing and document reviews across a projected timeline to include updated drawings/as-builts. Areas of emphasis for construction reviews include but are not limited to the environment of care, life safety, physical environment, clinic, and compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 101-2012, 99-2012, and Facility Guidelines Institute (FGI) 2018. Additionally, the awarded vendor will perform a comprehensive mock survey aligned with CMS Conditions of Participation (42 CFR Part 482, Subpart E), and Joint Commission Standards and Elements of Performance for Deemed Status accreditation for Hospitals. Deliverables include an assessment of compliance readiness, identification of deficiencies, a detailed corrective action plan, and an executive summary report to guide leadership toward full CMS certification and Joint Commission Deemed Status accreditation for Hospitals.
Minimum Qualifications	Bidder Personnel must have appropriate certifications and/or documented competencies in regulatory requirements for psychiatric hospitals with specialization in architectural and engineering review of the physical environment. Required qualifications include: 1. Demonstrated experience conducting CMS or Joint Commission mock surveys for psychiatric hospitals or behavioral health facilities. 2. Proven Knowledge of CMS Conditions of Participation for Hospitals, and Standards and Elements of Performance for Deemed Status accreditation for Hospitals. 3. Experience developing Plans of Correction and readiness reports. 4. Key personnel with regulatory, clinical, and behavioral health expertise. 5. Ability to produce professional deliverables in MS Word, MS Excel, and Adobe PDF formats. A Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ) is desirable but not required.
Contract Value	\$512,000.00
Project Duration	Three-year terms with the option to extend twice for 1 year each at the sole discretion of DSHS.
Anticipated Proposal Complexity	Moderate – specialized professional services with technical expertise in CMS survey standards.
Ideal Vendor Profile	Experienced healthcare compliance firm, consultancy, or accrediting body affiliate specializing in psychiatric hospital survey readiness. Vendor should demonstrate multidisciplinary expertise in clinical operations, regulatory compliance, and performance improvement.
High Level Timeline	Pre-bid Conference: 11/10/2025 – Bidder must email the Solicitation Coordinator listed under Contact information to request the link to the pre-bid conference. Questions Due Date: 11/17/2025 Proposal due: 12/15/2025 Anticipated Award Date: 02/02/2026
Relevant Experience	The vendor should demonstrate recent (within the past five years) experience conducting CMS readiness or mock survey projects for behavioral health or psychiatric facilities, including related deliverables such as readiness reports, plans of correction, or compliance audits.
Evaluation Process & Blinded Review	This solicitation will use a blinded evaluation to promote fairness and reduce bias. Bidders must not include their company logo, name, or other identifying marks in the body of their proposal (except in required cover pages, certification or licenses). Evaluation panels will not have access to bidder identify during scoring.
Contact Information	Solicitation Coordinator: Amel A. Alsalman: Email: amel.alsalman@dshs.wa.gov
Posting & Advertising Details	DSHS Procurement Website: https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/procurements-and-contracting WEBS Website: https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov/ - Applicable WEBS Commodity Codes: 918-67; 952-43.

Auxiliary Aids and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Services:

DSHS will provide access to this Solicitation document to individuals with disabilities and Limited English Proficient individuals. Please contact the Coordinator to request auxiliary aids and services.

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SECTION A

CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Qualifications and Quotations (RFQQ) is to support the Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in identifying and selecting qualified vendors with the expertise to provide consulting, assessment, and technical support services to assist a state-operated psychiatric hospital in achieving compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) deemed status Conditions of Participation for psychiatric hospitals and Joint Commission (TJC).

The RFQQ seeks qualified vendors or individuals with experience in CMS Certification Readiness, Accreditation Preparation, and Mock Survey Assessments to evaluate current compliance, identify gaps, and develop actionable recommendations to support hospital readiness for initial CMS certification and TJC standards. The work will also include reviewing construction design documents and updated as build to assess compliance with NFPA 101-2012 (Life Safety Code), NFPA 99-2012 (Health Care Facilities Code), and FGI 2018 (Facility Guidelines Institute Standards). The assessment will focus on the environment of care, life safety, physical environment, and clinical operation (42 CFR Part 482, Subpart E).

The awarded vendor will assist DSHS leadership in achieving and maintaining compliance with all applicable CMS regulations, policies, Joint Commission accreditation and certification requirements through delivery of a comprehensive readiness assessment, mock survey, executive summary report and corrective action plan.

2. Background

The Behavioral Health and Habilitation Administration is an administration within DSHS that operate state psychiatric hospitals providing evaluation and treatment services to adults with serious behavioral health conditions.

To ensure alignment with federal certification and reimbursement requirements, DSHS intends to assess and strengthen compliance with CMS Conditions of Participation prior to seeking initial certification for a new psychiatric hospital planned to open in early 2028.

This solicitation supports DSHS's broader initiative to improve care quality, patient safety, and federal compliance across all hospital operations through proactive readiness evaluation and expert consultation.

3. Project Scope

The awarded vendor will provide expert consultation, technical assistance, and implementation support to ensure the planned Forensic Hospital meets and

sustains all applicable regulatory, clinical, and operational requirements for federal certification and state licensure. Implementation support shall include, but is not limited to, performing operational, clinical, and policy-related tasks, providing advisory and consultation guidance as appropriate, and participating in staff training staff and/or performing tasks when necessary. The awarded vendor will collaborate with DSHS leadership, hospital staff as well as applicable staff regarding this project.

3.1 Scope of Work

The scope of work includes, but is not limited to:

a. CMS Certification Readiness and Assessment

- (1) Conduct a comprehensive CMS Certification Readiness Assessment and Mock Survey to evaluate the hospital's current level of compliance with CMS Conditions of Participation and TJC.
- (2) Conduct document reviews, staff interviews, and environment of care inspections.
- (3) Assess compliance across governance, clinical care, patient safety, Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI), infection control, and life safety domains.

b. Deficiency Identification and Corrective Action Planning

- (1) Identify deficiencies and potential Condition-Level findings.
- (2) Develop a detailed Corrective Action Plan that outlines corrective measures, responsible parties, and completion timelines.
- (3) Provide consultation and technical assistance to hospital leadership to support the implementation of corrective actions and sustainable compliance strategies.

c. Reports and Follow-up

- (1) Prepare Executive Summary Reports summarizing key findings, strengths, and overall readiness for the deliverables listed below (3.3).
- (2) Conduct a follow-up validation review to confirm completion and effectiveness of corrective actions.

3.2 Key Personnel

Bidder must identify key personnel proposed to perform the work under this Contract, including their relevant experience and qualifications.

The awarded vendor must not make changes to identified key personnel during the term of the Contract unless requested or approved in advance by DSHS.

3.3 Deliverables Shall include, at minimum:

- (1) Gap Analysis Survey
- (2) On-Call Consultation Services
- (3) Technical Assistance
- (4) Mock Survey
- (5) Construction Reviews (Design Drawing Review)
- (6) Construction Document Review
- (7) Updated Drawings/As-Builts Review for Standards at 50-60% Completion
- (8) Updated Drawings/As-Builts Review for Standards at 100% Completion

3.4 Suggested Projected Timeline:

Bidders must include a proposed project schedule outlining key phases and milestones from contract execution to hospital opening. The schedule should, at minimum, address the following phases:

- (1) Project Initiation and Planning: Kickoff, stakeholder alignment, and initial assessments.
- (2) Regulatory and Compliance Gap Analysis: Evaluation of clinical, operational, and environmental compliance against federal and state requirements.
- (3) Survey Readiness and Mock Surveys: Conducting readiness assessments and identifying corrective actions.
- (4) Implementation Support: Assisting with correction action plans, policy/procedure updates, staff training, and operational improvements.
- (5) Pre-Opening Final Readiness: Final verification of compliance, mock surveys, and preparation for federal/state surveyors.
- (6) Hospital Opening Support: Supporting initial operations and ensuring regulatory adherence.

The proposed schedule should demonstrate a realistic timeline that ensures completion of all deliverables within the three-year contract period while maintaining high-quality standards and compliance with all regulatory requirements.

4. Bidder Minimum Qualifications

All Bidders must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- a. Experience Requirements: (Competency-Based)
 - (1) The bidder must have a minimum of five (5) years' of verified experience conducting CMS and Joint Commission readiness assessments, mock surveys, or accreditation consulting for hospitals or behavioral health facilities, or equivalent experience demonstrated through prior projects. Equivalent experience must be supported by documentation including project duration, scope of work, roles of personnel, and project outcomes or success.
 - (2) The bidder must demonstrate proven competency in hospital regulatory compliance, survey readiness, accreditation, or related consulting services.
 - (3) The bidder must have experience conducting construction-related compliance reviews, including evaluation of healthcare construction design documents and as-build drawings for compliance with NFPA 101-2012 (Life Safety Code), NFPA 99-2012 (Health Care Facilities Code), and FGI 2018 standards, as well as environment of care and life safety requirements.
- b. Certification/Licensure Requirements:
 - (1) Key personnel must hold current and valid professional licenses or certifications relevant to their assigned roles such as healthcare administration, nursing, behavioral health, professional Engineer, or regulatory compliance (as applicable).
 - (2) The bidder and any subcontractors must be authorized to do business and register in good standing with the State of Washington before contract execution.
 - (3) Subcontractors must also hold applicable professional credentials required for their area of responsibility.
- c. Financial Stability and Business Capacity:
 - (1) Bidder must demonstrate their financial capacity to perform the services within the stated value of the contract by DSHS, evidenced by recent financial statements or other supporting documentation upon request or other documentation demonstrating ability to manage contracts of similar size.
 - (2) The bidder must either hold or be able to obtain required insurance coverage (e.g., general liability, professional liability, workers' compensation) prior to contract execution.
- d. Staff and Staff Qualification Requirements:
 - (1) Proposed project team must include professionals with expertise in:
 - (a) Hospital operations,
 - (b) Construction compliance
 - (c) Quality management,

- (d) Infection control,
 - (e) Life safety, and
 - (f) Psychiatric clinical services.
- (2) The proposed team must include at least one licensed architect, engineer, or healthcare safety professional with verified experience in healthcare construction compliance and accreditation readiness.
- (3) The bidder must provide a **comprehensive staffing plan** that includes:
 - (a) Identified roles, responsibilities, and level of involvement for each team member.
 - (b) Credentials, licenses, or certifications applicable to their assigned tasks.
 - (c) Competencies demonstrating ability to support forensic hospital survey readiness and compliance.
- (4) Key personnel must have a minimum of five (5) years of verified experience in CMS or Joint Commission accreditation, survey readiness, or regulatory compliance
- e. Service Location Requirements:
 - (1) Bidder must be able to perform onsite assessments at DSHS facilities located in Washington State and provide remote consultation and reporting as needed.
 - (2) The bidder must have capacity to work in a secure forensic treatment setting, including adherence to all security protocols and operational requirements.
- f. Security and Background Check Requirements:

All onsite personnel must comply with facility security clearance protocols and pass criminal background checks as required by state regulations for forensic hospital setting
- g. Proposal Submission Requirements:

The bidder must ensure that no company name, logo, watermark, or any other identifying information appears within the body of their proposal, including headers, footers, or attachment, except where specifically requested in the solicitation. This requirement is intended to maintain an impartial evaluation process.

Bidders failing to demonstrate in their Bids that they meet these minimum qualifications will be considered nonresponsive and will therefore be disqualified from further consideration.

5. Period of Contract Performance

DSHS intends to award one Contract for the Services described in this Competitive Solicitation. The period of performance under the Contract shall be **02/02/2026** through **02/01/2029**. The term of the Contract may be extended by amendment up to **2** times for up to **1** year per amendment at the sole discretion of DSHS. Additional services that are appropriate to the scope of this Solicitation, as determined by DSHS, may be added to the Contract in a mutually agreeable amendment.

6. Funding

DSHS has budgeted an amount not to exceed **\$512,000.00** for this Project. DSHS may reject any Response more than that amount. Any Contract awarded is contingent upon the availability of funding.

SECTION B DEFINITIONS

Additional definitions for Contract-specific terms are found in the Sample Contract set forth as Attachment A to this Solicitation and shall apply to those terms as they are used in this Solicitation. The following terms have the meanings set forth below:

Agency or DSHS – The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.

Amendment – A unilateral change to the Solicitation that is issued by DSHS at its sole discretion and posted on WEBS.

Apparent Successful Bidder (ASB) – A Bidder submitting a Response to this Solicitation that is evaluated, identified, and announced by DSHS as providing the best value to the Agency. Upon execution of a Contract, the ASB is referred to as the successful bidder or the Contractor.

Authorized Representative – An individual designated by the Bidder to act on its behalf who has the authority to legally bind the Bidder concerning the terms and conditions outlined in this Solicitation and related documents.

Bid - An offer, proposal or quote for goods or services and all related materials prepared and submitted by a Bidder in response to this Solicitation. The terms Bid, Quotation, Response and Proposal are all intended to mean the same thing.

Bidder – An individual, organization, public or private Agency or other entity submitting a bid, quotation, response or proposal in response to this Solicitation.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Certification – CMS Certification refers to the process by which healthcare organizations are evaluated to ensure they meet specific federal health and safety standards set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This certification is essential for healthcare providers to participate in Medicare and Medicaid programs, as it involves state-funded surveys to assess compliance with regulations.

Contract – A written agreement entered into between a successful Bidder and DSHS as a result of this Solicitation.

Complaint – A process that may be followed by a Bidder prior to the deadline for bid submission to alert DSHS of certain types of asserted deficiencies in the Solicitation.

Coordinator or Solicitation Coordinator – An individual or designee who is employed by DSHS within the DSHS Central Contracts and Legal Services Office and who is responsible for conducting this Solicitation.

Debriefing – A short meeting a Bidder may request with the Coordinator following the announcement of the Apparent Successful Bidder for the purpose of receiving information regarding the review and evaluation of that Bidder's Response.

Inclusion plan - a detailed plan showing a Bidder's actions toward meeting Washington Small and Diverse Business goals on a specific competitive procurement.

Procurement - The broad process of identifying goods and services for purchase or acquisition, of effecting the purchase or acquisition, and of managing the purchase or acquisition. This Solicitation is a part of an overall Procurement process. Despite the broader meaning attributed to “procurement”, for purposes of this Solicitation, the terms Solicitation, RFP/RFQ/RFQQ and Procurement are interchangeable.

Project - The undertaking or work for which contracted Services are being requested pursuant to this Solicitation.

Protest – A process that may be followed by a Bidder after the announcement of the apparent Successful Bidder to alert DSHS to certain types of alleged errors in the evaluation of the Solicitation.

RCW – The Revised Code of Washington. All references to RCW chapters or sections shall include any successor, amended, or replacement statute.

Responsible Bidder – An individual, organization, public or private Agency, or other entity that has demonstrated the capability to meet all the requirements of the Solicitation and to meet the elements of responsibility. (See [RCW 39.26.160 \(2\)](#))

Responsive Bidder – An individual, organization, public or private Agency, or other entity who has submitted a Bid that fully conforms in all material respects to the Solicitation and all its requirements, in both form and substance.

RFP/RFQ/RFQQ – The request for proposals, qualifications, quotations, or qualifications and quotations set forth in this Solicitation document.

Services – Labor, work, analysis, or similar activities provided by a contractor to accomplish a specific scope of work.

Small Business – An in-state business, including a sole proprietorship, corporation, partnership, or other legal entity, that certifies under penalty of perjury that they are Washington Small Business as defined in [RCW 39.26.010\(22\)](#).

Solicitation or Competitive Solicitation – A formal process providing an equal and open opportunity for bidders culminating in a selection based upon predetermined criteria. A Competitive Solicitation requests the submission of bids, quotations, or proposals for the consideration of DSHS in contracting to meet its needs. This RFP/RFQ/RFQQ is a Solicitation.

Solicitation Document – This RFP/RFQ/RFQQ document, including all attachments and all amendments that are issued by the Coordinator.

Statement of Work – The detailed description of services to be performed by the Contractor and outlined in the Contract.

Subcontractor – An individual or other entity contracted by Bidder to perform part of the services or to provide goods under the Contract resulting from this Solicitation. Subcontractors, if allowed, are subject to the advance approval of DSHS.

The Joint Commission (TJC) – TJC accreditation is a national recognition for healthcare organization who has complied with all of the standards set for by TJC. Joint

Commission accreditation is the objective evaluation process that can help health care organizations measure, assess, and improve performance in order to provide safe, high quality care for their patients.

Veteran-owned business – A business that is certified by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in the state of Washington. (See [RCW 43.60A.200](#))

WEBS – Washington's Electronic Business Solution, the Bidder notification system found at <https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov/> and maintained by the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services.

SECTION C EXPLANATION OF SOLICITATION PROCESS
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1. Solicitation Schedule

The Solicitation Schedule set forth below outlines the tentative schedule for important events relating to this Solicitation. Except as modified in an Amendment issued by the Coordinator, the dates and times listed through the Response Submission date are mandatory deadlines. The remaining dates are estimates and may change without the posting of an Amendment. Failure to meet the Response deadline will result in Bidder's disqualification.

Item	Action	Date
1.	DSHS posts Competitive Solicitation.	10/31/2025
2.	Prospective Bidders should register as a Vendor on WEBS using one of the commodities codes on the cover page of this Solicitation as soon as possible to receive notifications.	As soon as possible
3.	Bidders must RSVP for the Pre-Bid Conference by 10 a.m Pacific Time.	11/10/2025
4.	Pre-Bid Conference at 1:00 p.m. Pacific Time.	11/10/2025
5.	Bidders may submit written questions or requests for change in Solicitation Requirements until 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.	11/17/2025
6.	DSHS posts responses to written questions.	11/19/2025
7.	Bidders may submit written Complaints by 5 p.m. Pacific Time. [minimum five business days before Response is Due]	12/02/2025
8.	Bidders must submit a Response by 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.	12/15/2025
9.	DSHS evaluates Written Responses.	<u>12/16/2025-12/18/2025</u>
10.	Oral presentations, if requested by DSHS.	<u>12/22/2025</u>
11.	DSHS announces the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) on WEBS and begins contract negotiations.	<u>12/23/2025</u>
12.	DSHS notifies unsuccessful Bidder(s).	12/23/2025
13.	Bidders may request a Debriefing conference until 5 p.m. Pacific Time. [minimum three business days after ASB Announcement]	<u>12/30/2025</u>
14.	DSHS holds Debriefing conferences, if requested.	<u>01/05/2026</u>
15.	Deadline for submission of Protests by Bidders who participated in a debriefing conference.	Five business days after the date of the Debriefing

Item	Action	Date
16.	DSHS considers Protests, if any, and issues determination.	01/26/2026
17.	Contract Execution/Start Date.	02/02/2026

2. Posting of Solicitation Documents

DSHS shall post this Solicitation, and all amendments and announcements relating to this Solicitation, on WEBS. WEBS can be accessed at: <https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov/>. In order to inform the largest number of potential bidders about this opportunity, DSHS shall also post documents relating to this Solicitation on the Procurements page of the DSHS website, found at: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ffa/procurements-and-contracting>

All Bidders must register as a vendor on WEBS, using an appropriate commodities code listed on the front page of this Solicitation, and download this Solicitation from WEBS. This should be done as soon as possible in order for Bidder to receive notifications automatically generated on WEBS, but no later than the date set forth in Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule for Announcement of the Apparent Successful Bidder(s).

3. Amendment, Cancellation/Rejection of Bids, Reissuance of Solicitation

DSHS may amend or add to, retract from or cancel this Solicitation at any time, in whole or in part, and without penalty. DSHS may reject all bids and cancel or reissue this Solicitation. All amendments and notifications of cancellation shall be posted on WEBS. In the event of a conflict between amendments or between an amendment and this Solicitation Document, the document issued latest shall control.

4. Communications regarding Solicitation

Upon the posting of this Solicitation, all communications concerning this Solicitation must be directed to the Coordinator listed on the cover page of this Solicitation document. With the exception of the Response, which shall be submitted as provided in Section D, Instructions Regarding Content, Format and Submission of Written Responses, communications with the Coordinator should be sent via email. DSHS may disqualify any Bidder who communicates with anyone in DSHS other than the Coordinator regarding this Solicitation.

DSHS considers all oral communications unofficial and non-binding on DSHS. Bidders should rely only on written statements issued by the Coordinator. Email shall be considered an official method of communication unless otherwise specified in this document.

5. Pre-Bid Conference

Bidders are invited to attend a Pre-Bid Conference, which shall be held **virtually** at the **date and time set forth below**. The Pre-Bid Conference is an opportunity for Bidders to learn more about the conditions under which a Contract will be performed and to discuss

the inclusion plan, especially when subcontracting opportunity may be a part of the Contract. At the Pre-Bid Conference, Bidders will have an opportunity to ask questions and to hear presentations from knowledgeable DSHS personnel. DSHS shall summarize the information shared at the Pre-Bid Conference and post that summary on the DSHS procurement web page and on WEBS as an Amendment to this Solicitation. Bidders may only rely upon information that is included in this Amendment in preparing their Responses.

A pre-bid conference will be held on November 10th, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. P.T. Via Microsoft Team. Attendance is optional.

To receive the meeting link, interested bidders must send an email request to the Solicitation Coordinator listed on the front page of the RFQQ no later than 11/10/2025 at 10:00 a.m. PT. The solicitation coordinator will provide the meeting link and any relevant instructions by return email.

6. Questions and Answers

Bidders may send written questions concerning this Solicitation to the Coordinator by the date and time set forth on the Solicitation Schedule in Section C.1. for submission of Questions. Questions should be sent via email and should include the number and title of this Solicitation in the subject line.

DSHS may consolidate Bidder questions and shall respond by posting one or more Amendments on WEBS and on the DSHS Procurement website on or around the date specified in the Solicitation Schedule. Only Bidders who have properly registered and downloaded the original Solicitation directly via the WEBS system: <https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov/> will receive notification of Amendments and other correspondence pertaining to this Solicitation.

7. Request for Change in Solicitation Requirements

If Bidder believes that this Solicitation contains requirements which would unreasonably prohibit or restrict Bidder's participation, or believes that different requirements would provide better value to the State, Bidder shall submit a written explanation of the issue together with proposed alternative requirements to the Coordinator no later than the deadline for Bidder Questions as stated in the Solicitation Schedule outlined in Section C.1. The Coordinator shall not be required to consider requests for changes after this date. If any changes are made to the Solicitation requirements, an Amendment setting forth those changes will be posted on WEBS.

8. Complaints

In the event a Bidder believes that this Solicitation either: (a) unnecessarily restricts competition; (b) contains an unfair or flawed evaluation or scoring process; or (c) contains inadequate or insufficient information to permit preparation of a Response, the Bidder shall submit a written complaint to the Coordinator. The Coordinator will forward the complaint to the DSHS Chief of Central Contracts and Legal Services for review. The complaint shall include a proposed remedy and shall be submitted no later than five (5) business days prior to the date when Responses are due. DSHS shall post its Response to the Complaint on WEBS and on the DSHS procurement web page.

Should a Bidder's complaint identify a change that would be in the best interest of DSHS to make, DSHS may issue an Amendment modifying this Solicitation. The DSHS decision regarding a complaint is final and no further administrative appeal is available. If no complaint is filed, a Bidder cannot later file a protest based on any of the above complaint criteria.

9. Minority & Women's Business Enterprises (MWBE) and Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises

In accordance with the legislative findings and policies set forth in RCW 39.19, 43.60A.200, 39.26.240 and 39.26.245, the State of Washington encourages participation by Veteran-owned, Minority-Owned, and Women-Owned businesses either self-identified or certified by, respectively, the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE). While the State does not give gender or race-based preferential treatment, it does seek equitable representation from Washington Small Businesses as well as the veteran, minority, and women-owned business communities.

According to Chapter 39.26.010 RCW, to qualify as a Washington Small Business, Bidder must meet three (3) requirements:

- a. Location: Bidder's principal office/place of business must be located in and identified as being in the State of Washington. A principal office or principal place of business is a firm's headquarters where business decisions are made and the location for the firm's books and records as well as the firm's senior management personnel.
- b. Size: Bidder must be owned and operated independently from all other businesses and have either: (a) fifty (50) or fewer employees or (b) gross revenue or less than seven million dollars (\$7,000,000) annually as reported on Bidder's federal income tax return or its return filed with the Washington State Department of Revenue over the previous three consecutive years.
- c. WEBS Certification: Bidder must have certified its Washington Small Business status in Washington's Electronic Business Solution ([WEBS](#)).

According to Chapter 43.60A.190 RCW, to qualify as a Certified Washington Veteran-Owned Business, Bidder must meet four (4) requirements:

- a. 51% Ownership. Bidder must be at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned and controlled by:
 - (1) A veteran is defined as every person who at the time he or she seeks certification has received a discharge with an honorable characterization or received a discharge for medical reasons with an honorable record, where applicable, and who has served in at least one of the capacities listed in RCW 41.04.007;
 - (2) A person who is in receipt of disability compensation or pension from the

Department of Veteran's Affairs; or

- (3) An active or reserve member in any branch of the armed forces of the United States, including the national guard, coast guard, and armed forces reserves.
- b. Washington Incorporation/Location. Bidder must be either an entity that is incorporated in the State of Washington as a Washington domestic corporation or, if not incorporated, an entity whose principal place of business is located within the State of Washington.
- c. WEBS Certification. Bidder must have certified its Veteran-Owned Business status in Washington's Electronic Business Solution ([WEBS](#)).
- d. WDVA Certification. Bidder must have certification documentation to the Washington Department of Veteran's Affairs (WDVA) and be certified by WWSA and listed as such on WDVA's website ([WDVA](#) – Veteran-Owned Businesses).

DSHS encourages Washington Small, Veteran-owned, and MWBE Bidder participation both directly in Response to this Solicitation and as subcontractors to a Prime Bidder.

Bidders may contact the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) at <http://omwbe.wa.gov/> and/or the Department of Veterans Affairs at <http://www.dva.wa.gov/program/veteran-owned-business-certification> in order to obtain information on certified firms for potential subcontracting arrangements or for information on how to become certified. Nothing in this section is intended to prevent or discourage participation from non-MWBE firms or non-Veteran-owned businesses.

10. Auxiliary Aids and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Services:

DSHS will provide access to this Solicitation document to individuals with disabilities and Limited English Proficient individuals. Please contact the Coordinator to request auxiliary aids and services.

If an individual believes that the Department has discriminated against them based on a protected status, please contact the DSHS Investigations Unit for the Nondiscrimination Policy Brochure and complaint process. The brochure can be found at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Non-discrim%2022-171.pdf>

11. Cost to Prepare Response

DSHS will not be liable for any costs incurred by the Bidder in preparing, conducting a site assessment, or submitting a Response to this Solicitation.

12. Acceptance of Solicitation Terms

In submitting a Response, Bidder must include a signed Bid Submission Letter in the form set forth on Attachment B, as well as signed Bidder Certifications in the form set forth on Attachment C. Bidder must acknowledge that in submitting a Response, it

accepts all terms of this Solicitation Document, including all of its Attachments, and that Bidder's Response constitutes a binding offer. Bidders may not alter or redline the solicitation terms or requirements in their Response. Submitting altered or redlined solicitation terms or requirements in the Bidder Response may result in bidder disqualification. Bidders may request that DSHS consider exceptions and/or revisions to the sample contract language found in Attachment A as part of their response in the Bidder Response form. DSHS shall be under no obligation to agree to any requested changes and will not consider changes to contract language or negotiate any new language not identified in response to this question.

13. Joint Proposals

If Bidders submit a joint Response with one or more other persons or entities, these persons or entities must designate a prime Bidder. The prime Bidder will be DSHS's sole point of contact through the Procurement process. If selected as the Apparent Successful Bidder, the prime Bidder shall sign the Contract and any amendments and will be liable and responsible to DSHS for all performance under the Contract.

14. Withdrawal of Responses

After a Response has been submitted, Bidders may withdraw their Response at any time up to the Response due date and time as specified in Section C.1, Solicitation Schedule. A written request to withdraw the Response must be submitted to the Coordinator. After withdrawing a Response, the Bidder may submit another Response at any time up to the Response submission date and time.

15. Ownership of Responses

All materials submitted in response to this Solicitation become the property of DSHS, unless received after the deadline in which case the Response shall be returned to the sender. DSHS shall have the right to use any of the ideas presented as part of the process in any manner as it deems appropriate or beneficial, regardless of whether it is contained in a Response that results in selection for a Contract.

16. DSHS Award Options; Improvement of Bid Offers

After Responses are received and written evaluations are completed, DSHS may (but shall not be required to) request best and final offers from one or more Responsible and Responsive Bidders. The written Responses of Bidders invited to provide a best and final offer may be re-evaluated and the point values may be adjusted based upon changes to pricing or proposed services, deliverables or methodologies that are included in a best and final offer, prior to DSHS' determination of the Apparent Successful Bidder.

Alternatively, after reviewing all Responses, DSHS may enter into negotiations with the highest ranked Responsive and Responsible Bidder in order to determine if the Bid may be improved before identification of the Apparent Successful Bidder.

DSHS shall not be required to request best and final offers or to enter into negotiations and reserves the right to make a Contract award without further discussion of the Response. Therefore the Response should be submitted on the most favorable terms that Bidder intends to offer.

17. Announcement of Successful Bidder(s)

DSHS shall announce the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) on WEBS on the date indicated in Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule. All announcements of Apparent Successful Bidders are subject to the negotiation of a Contract satisfactory to DSHS.

Bidders may request a debriefing conference with the Coordinator to discuss information regarding the review and/or evaluation of their bid and may, under certain circumstances, file a formal protest requesting that DSHS provide an identified remedy if Bidder believes certain types of errors occurred. A more detailed description of these processes is set forth in Section F, Debriefing and Protest Procedure.

18. Ethics, Policies and Law

This Solicitation, the evaluation of Responses, and any resulting contract will be made in conformance with applicable Washington State laws and Policies.

Specific restrictions apply to contracting with current or former state employees pursuant to RCW 42.52. Bidders should familiarize themselves with the requirements prior to submitting a Response. Bidders must include, in their Letter of Submittal, information regarding any current or former state employees who are employed by, or subcontracted with, Bidder.

SECTION D
INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING CONTENT, FORMAT AND SUBMISSION OF
WRITTEN RESPONSES

Bidders shall submit their Responses utilizing the forms set forth on Attachments B, C, D, and E to this Competitive Solicitation. Each Attachment represents a separate section of the Response. Failure to complete and submit all required Attachments, and to sign them, if applicable, may result in Bidder disqualification. Responses should be typed in 12-point font and should be submitted in the following order with each section of the Response clearly labeled.

1. Attachment B: Bid Submission Letter (Required, not scored)

All Bidders must submit a completed bid submission letter in the form and with the minimum contents set forth on Attachment B, which must include all of the required acknowledgments and information. The Bid Submission Letter must be signed by an individual authorized to bind the Bidder contractually. Bidder's completed and signed Attachments B, C, and E, together with any documents that are required to be attached, and Bidder's answers to administrative questions set forth on Attachment D, Bidder Response Form, comprise the Administrative component of the Response.

2. Attachment C: Bidder Certifications and Assurances (Required, not scored)

All Bidders must submit the Bidder certifications and assurances form set forth on Attachment C, signed by an individual authorized to bind the Bidder contractually. Bidders may not alter or redline the Bidder Certifications and Assurances form in their Response. Submitting altered or redlined solicitation terms or requirements in the Bidder Response may result in Bidder disqualification.

3. Attachment D: Bidder Response Form (Required, Portions Scored)

Using Attachment D, Bidders must provide answers to the questions set forth on the Bidder Response Form to demonstrate satisfaction of administrative requirements and, as applicable to this Solicitation, their qualifications, approach and proposed pricing to provide the services as outlined in this Competitive Solicitation, including the Sample Contract set forth on Attachment A. The number of points allocated to each answer is indicated next to the question.

The Bidder Response Form is posted separately from this Solicitation document in Microsoft Word format. Except for limits that are noted on the Bidder Response Form, Bidders may utilize as much space as is reasonably required to respond to each question, provided all questions are repeated and remain numbered and ordered as set forth in Attachment D. If additional pages are needed, they should be attached to the page containing the initial portion of the Response to a question and should be marked clearly to indicate that they provide a continuation of Bidder's answer to a specific numbered question. Bidders should not submit product brochures, white papers, customer testimonials, cut sheets, or other pre-prepared materials in Response to any of the questions unless specifically requested.

Bidders must submit complete, well-organized explanatory answers that address all of the specific questions asked in the Bidder Response Form. Bidders should not assume that evaluators will be familiar with their businesses before conducting the evaluation.

Use of Attachment D assures that Bidder responds to specific questions in space immediately below those questions and helps to avoid confusion among evaluators about the question that is being responded to. In awarding points, evaluators shall not be obligated to search through the Bidder's answers to questions other than the one being reviewed in order to locate text that is responsive to the question being reviewed. Failure to use the form set forth on Attachment D (with the applicable questions set forth immediately above Bidder's answers), failure to respond to all questions and/or failure to submit any documents requested in the Bidder Response Form may result in Bidder disqualification.

If Bidder is awarded a Contract, DSHS may require that Bidder's Response to the Bidder Response Form be incorporated, in whole or in part, into the Contract.

4. Attachment E: Contractor Inclusion Plan (Required, not scored)

All Bidders must submit the Contractor Inclusion Plan form set forth on Attachment E, signed by an individual authorized to bind the Bidder contractually. DSHS requires that Bidder submit this inclusion plan template as part of their proposal. Once submitted, the Inclusion Plan template becomes part of the Contract if awarded to the Bidder.

The Bidder shall also include an anticipated list of Washington Small, Minority, Women, and Veteran-owned subcontractors or vendors who may provide services on the project. Responses should reflect the Bidder's sincere efforts to include diverse, Washington Small, and Veteran businesses. Businesses listed in the plan must be certified by OMWBE or DVA, or registered in WEBS as Washington Small businesses. If a company is not certified or registered but may be eligible for certification, the Bidder should encourage the company to become certified.

Inclusion goals are aspirational. No preference is given for inclusion plans or goals in the evaluation of bids. While no minimum level of OMWBE certified, Veteran-owned, or Washington Small Business participation will be required as a condition for receiving an award, the plan must include the actions the Contractor will take to increase subcontracting opportunities for those business types.

5. Proprietary Information/Public Disclosure

Materials submitted in response to this Solicitation shall be deemed public records as defined by RCW 42.56. All Responses and accompanying documentation shall become the property of DSHS upon receipt and will not be returned.

The Bidder's Response must include, in Attachment D, a statement identifying the pages of its Response, if any, which contain information the Bidder considers proprietary (for the purposes of public disclosure). Each page claimed to be proprietary must be clearly marked by stating the word "Proprietary" on the lower right-hand corner. Bidders must be reasonable in designating information as proprietary or confidential. **Bidders may not mark their entire Response proprietary. Doing so will not be honored and will disqualify your Response from further consideration.**

If DSHS receives a request to view or copy a Bidder's Response, DSHS will respond according to applicable law and DSHS's policy governing public disclosure. DSHS will not disclose any information marked "Proprietary" in a Response without giving the Bidder ten (10) days' notice to seek relief in superior court per RCW 42.56.540.

DSHS is required to publicly post the awarded Bidder(s)'s bid(s) and bid evaluation documents, upon completion of the Solicitation. DSHS shall redact these materials for information identified as proprietary and post them on the DSHS website subsequent to the award of a contract.

Bidders may not include any DSHS client information in their Responses. Doing so will result in disqualification of the Response from further consideration. If you wish to include examples of any forms or processes, use a blank form or ensure that all client information is completely redacted.

6. Submission of Responses

Bid Responses must be stored in an acceptable electronic format and, if applicable, hard copy format, as set forth in Section 7, below. Bid Responses must be emailed directly to the Coordinator at the email address provided on the cover sheet of this Solicitation Document. Bid Responses must be received by the Coordinator in their entirety on or before the due date and time set forth in Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule, unless a posted Amendment to this Competitive Solicitation changes this due date and time. Bidder's completed version of each of the Attachments B, C, D, and E, to this Competitive Solicitation shall be included as a separate attachment to the Bidder's email(s).

Bidders assume all risks for the timely submission of the Response. Bidders are responsible for allowing sufficient time to ensure timely electronic receipt of their Response by the Coordinator and, in Solicitation that also requires that hard copies of the Response be submitted, to ensure timely receipt via other delivery methods. DSHS does not assume responsibility for problems with the Bidder's email, network or problems with the mail, parking, traffic or the services of any third-party courier. However, if DSHS email is not working properly, appropriate allowances will be made.

DSHS will not accept late Responses, nor grant time extensions for individual Bidders. DSHS will disqualify any Response and withdraw it from consideration if it is received after the Response submission due date and time.

7. Acceptable Electronic Formats for Submission of Responses

Attachment D, Bidder Response Form, should be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Other Response documents must be formatted in Portable Document Format (Adobe Acrobat PDF) or Microsoft Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. Spreadsheet documents must be submitted in Microsoft Excel and in a live, unprotected file that includes all formulas, macros, and computations that are relied on or used to calculate any rates or values presented therein. When scanning documents to be submitted in PDF format, scanner resolution should be set to at least 200 dots per inch.

NOTE: DSHS cannot receive emails that are larger than 30MB. To keep file sizes to a minimum, Bidders are cautioned not to use unnecessary graphics in their Responses. If your Response approaches or exceeds 30MB, you must break it up and send it by more than one email so that no single email exceeds 30MB.

8. Alternative Submission Methods

Bidders wishing to request an alternative method for submitting their Response must contact the Coordinator at least ten (10) days before the Response Submission Date. No alternative submission method will be accepted unless agreed to by the Coordinator in writing prior to the Response deadline.

SECTION E EVALUATION OF RESPONSES

1. Bid Responsiveness; Administrative Review

All Responses will be reviewed by the Coordinator to determine compliance with administrative and minimum qualification requirements and instructions specified in this Solicitation. DSHS may reject a Response as nonresponsive at any time for any of the following reasons:

- Incomplete Response
- Submission of a Response that proposes services that deviate from the scope and technical requirements set forth in this document and Attachment A, Sample Contract, except as permitted in an Amendment to this Solicitation
- Failure to meet the minimum Bidder qualifications or to comply with any requirement set forth in this Solicitation Document, including Attachments
- Submission of incorrect, misleading, or false information
- History of prior unsatisfactory contractual performance

The Coordinator may contact any Bidder for clarification of the Response. If a Response is deemed non-responsive, it shall be removed from further consideration. DSHS shall notify non-responsive Bidder(s) of this determination and the supporting reasons. Bidders whose Responses are found to be non-responsive shall be disqualified from further evaluation and shall be notified in writing.

If a Response meets all administrative and Bidder qualification requirements and submittal instructions, DSHS shall continue with the Written Evaluation and, if applicable, the Oral Evaluation.

2. Errors in Bidder Response

Bidders are responsible for all errors or omissions contained in their Responses. Bidders will not be allowed to alter Response documents after the deadline for Response submissions.

DSHS reserves the right to contact any Bidder for clarification of Response contents. In those cases where it is unclear to what extent a requirement has been addressed, the evaluation panel may, in their discretion and acting through the Coordinator, contact a Bidder to clarify specific matters in the submitted Response.

DSHS reserves the right to waive minor administrative irregularities contained in any Bidder Response.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring of Responses

Following the administrative review, Responses shall be evaluated and points shall be awarded for the management, technical and cost proposal components of the Response, as applicable, based upon Bidder's responses to the questions set forth on Attachment D, Bidder Response Form. Additional evaluation points may be awarded for specific criteria not included on Attachment D, Bidder Response Form only if set forth in this Section.

The maximum number of points available for each Bidder is One thousand two hundred (1200) Points. The maximum number of points that may be assigned with respect to specific questions is set forth on Attachment D, Bidder Response form. The overall breakdown for assignment of points in evaluating Responses to this Solicitation is as follows:

Management (Qualifications) Response	510 Points	_____	maximum points
Technical Response	350 Points	_____	maximum points
Cost Proposal (Quotations)	100 Points	_____	maximum points
(*Optional) Oral Interview/Presentation	100 Points	_____	maximum points
Total 1	1060 Points		
EO 18-03 Response	40 Points	_____	maximum points
Certified Washington Veteran-owned Business	50 Points	_____	maximum points
Washington Small Business	50 Points	_____	maximum points
Total 2	140 Points		
Total Possible Points	1200 Points	_____	maximum points

4. [*Optional] Evaluation of Cost Proposal/Quotations

The Bidder who offers the lowest cost for each question of the Cost Proposal shall receive the maximum number of available Cost Proposal points. Bidders offering higher costs will receive proportionately fewer Cost Proposal points based on the lowest cost as follows:

$(\text{lowest bid} / \text{higher bid}) * \text{available points} = \text{total cost points awarded}$

Bidder	Low-Cost Calculation <i>EXAMPLE</i>			Calculated Quotation Score
	Quotation Quest. #1	Low Cost %	Points Available	Points Awarded (Max 20 Points)
Bidder A	\$40.00	1.00	20	20
Bidder B	\$50.00	0.80	20	16
Bidder C	\$80.00	0.50	20	10

5. Written Bid Evaluation Process

The evaluation for this procurement will be conducted through a Blinded Review process to ensure objectivity, equity, and the highest standards of transparency. In this approach, evaluators will assess bidder responses without any identifying information that could create bias, including company names, logos, or other branding elements. Bidders are required to submit their proposals with all organizational identifiers removed, except where legally required (e.g., cover pages, certifications or licenses). The evaluation team will review the content strictly on its merit and alignment with the scope, qualifications, and technical requirements. This method promotes fair competition, enables small and diverse businesses to compete equitably, and ensures that contract award decisions are based solely on demonstrated capability, proposed methodology, and value to the state.

6. Written Bid Evaluation Process

DSHS shall designate an evaluation team of at least three (3) evaluators to review, evaluate, and score the written question responses. These evaluators will be selected based on their qualifications, experience, capability and background. If oral interviews or presentations are conducted, additional evaluators may supplement or replace some or all of the individuals performing the written evaluation.

Evaluators shall assign scores up to the maximum points available. Individual evaluator points will be totaled and the average points for each Bidder will be calculated. The Bidder's average points earned for each question will be added together to determine the Bidder's total written evaluation points.

7. Evaluation Points to Washington Small and Veteran-owned Businesses

In accordance with [DES Policy 090-060](#) Supplier Diversity, DSHS shall consider awarding evaluation points to Certified Washington Veteran-owned and/or Washington Small Businesses.

DSHS will evaluate bids for best value and provide a bid preference point in the amount set forth on Attachment D, Bidder Response Form, to any Bidder who certifies that they are a Washington Small Business (as defined in [RCW 39.26.010\(22\)](#)) or Certified Washington Veteran-owned Business (according to [RCW 43.60A.190](#)).

8. Evaluation for Executive Order 18-03 (Firms without Mandatory Individual Arbitration for Employees)

Pursuant to RCW 39.26.160(3) (best value criteria) and consistent with [Executive Order 18-03 – Supporting Workers' Rights to Effectively Address Workplace Violations](#) (dated June 12, 2018), DSHS will evaluate bids for best value and provide a bid preference in the amount set forth on Attachment D, Bidder Response Form, to any bidder who certifies that their firm does NOT require its employees, as a condition of employment, to sign or agree to mandatory individual arbitration clauses or class or collective action waivers.

Successful bidders who certify that their employees are NOT required to sign these clauses and waivers as a condition of employment will have an EO 18-03 section added to their Contract incorporating this Response and requiring notification to DSHS if they later require their employees to agree to these clauses or waivers during the term of the Contract.

9. Bidder's References

Once the written evaluations are completed, DSHS may contact the references provided by the top-ranked Bidder(s) in order to investigate past performance and validate information in Bidder Responses. In submitting a Response, Bidder agrees that it shall hold harmless DSHS and any individuals identified as references from and against liability resulting from the provision of information or the receipt and use of that information in evaluating Bidder's Response.

While additional points may be awarded for superior performance and reliability as demonstrated through references (see Section E.3. above), references are generally evaluated on a pass/fail basis. DSHS may reject a bid and consider a bidder as non-responsible if a reference provides negative information about a Bidder's past performance.

DSHS may, at any time, require additional or substitute references to determine the Bidder's experience and level of responsibility. If the reference check process reveals information that should properly be considered in evaluating Bidder's responses, DSHS may, in its sole discretion, reconvene the evaluation panel to reconsider the evaluation scoring in light of the information obtained.

10. Facility/Site Assessment

DSHS reserves the right to visit and assess the facilities proposed to be used by top-ranked Bidder(s) in delivering services. Unless otherwise noted in this Solicitation document, this assessment shall be evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

If DSHS deems the facility assessments are necessary, the Coordinator will notify the top ranking Bidder(s) of the date and time for their facility assessment. DSHS expects the facility assessments will take place on the dates specified in the Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule.

11. Selection of Apparent Successful Bidder

The eligible Bidder that receives the highest total number of possible points will be presented to DSHS management for consideration as a finalist for the Apparent Successful Bidder. In the event multiple Contracts will be awarded, the applicable number of top-scoring eligible Bidders will be considered.

The selection process shall determine which Bidder provides the best value in meeting the needs of DSHS. Selection of the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) depends upon DSHS' assessment of multiple factors, including Bidders' qualifications, capabilities, efficiency, experience, reliability, responsibility, integrity, quality of proposed services and deliverables, timeliness, cost and potential impact on DSHS' needs. DSHS may consider whether the Response encourages diverse contractor participation; whether the Bid provides competitive pricing, economies and efficiencies; whether the Bidder considers human health and environmental impacts; whether the Response appropriately weighs cost and non-cost considerations; and life cycle cost, as applicable. DSHS may also consider a Bidder's performance on prior State or other contracts and may reject Responses of any Bidder who has failed to perform satisfactorily under any previous contract with the state or another party. DSHS reserves the right to select a Bidder whose Response is deemed to offer the best overall value and that is in the best

interests of DSHS and the State of Washington.

DSHS management shall make the final determination as to which Bidder(s), initially designated as finalist(s), shall be officially selected and announced on WEBS as the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) on or about the date and time set forth in Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule. DSHS may also notify the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) and the unsuccessful Bidder(s) of its determination via email on or about the date and time specified in Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule.

DSHS' decision will be subject to the execution of a Contract satisfactory to DSHS within a reasonable period of time following the announcement of the Apparent Successful Bidder on WEBS. In the event the parties are unable to reach agreement on the final details of a Contract, consistent with Attachment A, Sample Contract, DSHS shall have the option of negotiating with the next highest ranked Bidder and of revising the announcement of the Apparent Successful Bidder.

**SECTION F
BIDDER DEBRIEFING
AND PROTEST PROCEDURE**

1. Debriefing Conferences

No later than 5:00 p.m. on the third business day following the posted announcement of Successful Bidder(s) on WEBS, Bidders may send an email to the Coordinator requesting a Debriefing Conference. Unless a different date is agreed upon by the Coordinator, the Debriefing Conference will be held on a date designated in Section C.1., Solicitation Schedule. Discussion at the debriefing conference will be limited to the following:

- If the Bidder's proposal was rejected, the reason for its rejection
- Evaluation and scoring of the Bidder's Response
- Critique of the Response based on the evaluation
- Review of Bidder's final score in comparison with the other final scores

No comparisons between Bids will be allowed during the Debriefing Conference, which shall be conducted by telephone, unless the Coordinator agrees to an in-person meeting, and shall last for a maximum period of thirty (30) minutes.

2. Grounds and Filing of Protests

A Bidder who has participated in a Debriefing Conference may file a formal Protest if the Bidder asserts that there are facts that indicate error in the evaluation of Bids on one or more of the following grounds:

- Bias, discrimination or conflict of interest on the part of the evaluator or in the process
- Mathematical errors in computing the score
- Non-compliance with procedures described in the Solicitation document or in DES policy

Protests must be emailed to the Solicitation Coordinator and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. (Pacific Time) on the fifth (5th) business day following the day of the Bidder's Debriefing Conference. The Protest must adhere to the requirements set forth in this Section or it will not be considered. This Protest procedure constitutes the sole administrative remedy available to Bidders from DSHS under this Solicitation.

Protests must include the protestor's mailing address and phone number and the name of the individual responsible for filing the Protest. The Protest must state the Solicitation number and title, the grounds for the Protest, specific facts to support these grounds, and a description of the relief or corrective action being requested.

Protests not based on one of the grounds set forth in this Section will be rejected. It is not grounds for a protest to question an evaluator's professional judgment on the quality of a Response or DSHS' assessment of its own needs or requirements.

3. DSHS Protest Review Process

The Coordinator will immediately forward any Protest to the Chief of Central Contracts and Legal Services to assign to a Protest Coordinator for review. The Protest Coordinator, an individual who was not involved in the Solicitation, will consider the record and all available facts and will endeavor to issue a decision within ten (10) business days following receipt of the Protest. If additional time is required, the protesting party will be notified of the delay.

In the event a Protest may involve the conduct of or information submitted by another Bidder that also submitted a Response, such Bidder will be given an opportunity to submit its views and any relevant information on the issue(s) raised by the protest to the Solicitation Coordinator.

4. Determination of Protests

The Protest Coordinator shall issue a written determination regarding the Protest. This written determination shall include one or more of the following determinations:

- Upholding DSHS determination of the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) on the basis that there are insufficient facts to establish the alleged error; or
- Upholding DSHS' determination of the Apparent Successful Bidder(s) on the basis that there are only technical or harmless errors in DSHS' evaluation process; or
- Finding errors and identifying actions which may be taken by DSHS, such as:
 - i. Correction of errors and reevaluation of all bids,
 - ii. Cancellation and reissuance of the Solicitation (in which case all the Bidders will be notified), or
 - iii. Other corrective actions as may be appropriate

There is no further administrative process or remedy available within DSHS to appeal the determination that resulted in a Protest. If the protesting party does not accept DSHS' determination, the protesting party can seek relief from Superior Court in Thurston County, WA.

SECTION G CONTRACTING PROCEDURES

1. Contract Execution

The Apparent Successful Bidder(s) is expected to sign a contract with DSHS that is substantially the same as Attachment A, Sample Contract, included with this Solicitation, and to enter into any subsequent Contract amendments that may be required to address specific work or services.

DSHS reserves the right to require that some or all of Bidder's Response be incorporated into the Contract, and to negotiate the specific wording of the Statement of Work, based on the requirements of this Solicitation and the terms of the Response submitted by the Apparent Successful Bidder. If changes are requested as part of the Bid Response, DSHS may consider, but shall be under no obligation to agree to, modifications to the General Terms and Conditions of Attachment A, Sample Contract.

If the Apparent Successful Bidder fails or refuses to sign a Contract within ten (10) business days of delivery by DSHS, DSHS may elect to designate the next highest-ranked finalist as the Apparent Successful Bidder.

2. Insurance

The Apparent Successful Bidder shall provide evidence of its compliance with the insurance requirements included on Attachment A, Sample Contract.

3. Non-Endorsement

The award of a Contract is not an endorsement by the State or DSHS of the Bidder or Bidder's Services and shall not be represented as such by Bidder in any advertising or other publicity materials.

By submitting a Response to this Solicitation, the Bidder agrees to make no reference to DSHS in any literature, promotional materials, brochures, sales presentations or the like without the prior written consent of DSHS.

4. Background Checks

Individuals who will be performing the Contract on behalf of the Apparent Successful Bidder may be required to undergo background checks. Individuals who have disqualifying results (showing crimes and/or negative actions) may not be permitted to provide Services under the Contract.

5. Electronic Payment

The State prefers to utilize electronic payment in its transactions. The successful Bidder will be required to register in the Statewide Vendor Payment system, <https://ofm.wa.gov/it-systems/statewide-vendorpayee-services>, prior to submitting a request for payment under their Contract. No payment shall be made until the registration is completed.

6. Subcontractor / Prompt Payment & Retainage

The Apparent Successful Bidder (ASB) is required to pay each subcontractor for satisfactorily completed work performed under this prime Contract within thirty (30) days from the receipt of each payment the ASB receives from the Agency. ASB further agrees to return any retainage payments to each subcontractor within thirty (30) days after the subcontractor's work is satisfactorily completed and any liens have been secured. Any delay or postponement of payment within this time period may occur only for a good cause following written approval of the Agency. In addition, the Agency will not pay the ASB for subcontractor work unless the ASB can show that a prompt payment method for subcontractors is established.

If the Contract that results from this Solicitation includes the use of a subcontractor(s), the above clause will be added to the Contract requiring prompt payment and retainage for subcontractor(s).

7. Subcontractor Participation Monitoring and Reporting

If the Contract that results from this Solicitation includes the use of an Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) Certified subcontractor, the Apparent Successful Bidder (ASB) and their subcontractors are obligated to complete vendor registration in OMWBE's Access Equity system (B2Gnow). Access Equity is an online vendor management system used by Washington State to track subcontractor payments. **Confidential information (Tax ID, etc.) is not required for vendor registration, and SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED as this information is available to all B2Gnow customers.** Prime Contractors that have previously registered with B2Gnow for any public entity, must verify the system has updated information. Contractors can access the system at <https://omwbe.diversitycompliance.com/> or through a direct link on the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) website at: <https://omwbe.wa.gov/>.

Each month during the contract, the Prime Contractor will report payments to all OMWBE Subcontractors through the Access Equity system. This monthly reporting information includes total payment in dollars made to the Subcontractor, payment dates, and any additional information required to verify payment to Subcontractors. The Prime Contractor will enter this payment information into the Access Equity system, and the Subcontractors will verify this payment information in the system. Online training is available through the Access Equity/B2Gnow system. This requirement applies to both Prime Contractors and Subcontractors.