

January 6, 2021

U.S. Embassy Ottawa

Solicitation Number: 19CA5221R0005

Subject: US Mission Canada Global Medical Coverage, Life and Disability Insurance Services for Locally Employed Staff

Questions and Answers

The Government received questions pertaining to the U.S. Embassy solicitation number 19CA5221R0005. The answers are provided below.

Question 1: Will the Government provide editable version of pages with pricing tables?

Answer 1: The Government will make electronic version of pages with pricing tables available to prospective offerors.

Question 2: Does the U.S. Embassy have a benefits plan currently for the locally employed staff?

Answer 2: The U.S. Embassy currently has a comprehensive employee benefits package provided under the contract with The Canada Life Assurance Company under the contract number SCA52515D0005.

Question 3: Prospective offerors would like to request a list of plan design changes from the current arrangement to the new requirements included in the subject solicitation.

Answer 3: The Government is restricted from conducting comparison of requirements included in the subject solicitation against any alternative solicitations or contracts.

Question 4: Can the Government make a copy of the current employee benefits plan available to prospective offerors?

Answer 4: The Government can make summary of the current employee benefits plan available to prospective offerors.

Question 5: Is the currently existing employee benefits plan the same as requested in the RFP?

Answer 5: The benefit plan included in the subject RFP is different from the current plan. The U.S. Embassy is implementing a new model in solicitation for medical insurance (extended healthcare and dental care plans) which includes the global standard coverages establishing the minimum reimbursement levels to be provided to all locally employed staff by any US Mission in the world. This model eliminates the necessity of the unique employee benefits survey in each country and the need for interested insurance service providers to customize their in-country plans to comply with strictly defined benefit levels. The requirements included in the subject solicitation represent a baseline for proposals, which allows prospective offerors to submit their commercially available off-the-shelf plans, representing the best practices in Canada and complying with local laws, provided that the proposed plans meet (or exceed) minimum requirements established in the solicitation.

For this reason, the RFP, Section C. Statement of Requirements – Medical Insurance Service does not list any specific coverages that are normally provided in Canada and may list some of the services that are funded by public healthcare plans. The examples include coverage of paramedical services (chiropractor, osteopath, massage therapy, etc.) that is part of the current health insurance plan but not specifically listed in the RFP.

On the contrary, the levels of Life, Death and Disability insurance coverages listed in Section D. “Statement of Requirements - Life Insurance and Disability Benefit Services”, are fixed predetermined levels and must be strictly adhered to in the proposals. The new requirements are comparable to the current coverages but with improved levels and terms.

The award decision is based on the technical and price factors established in Section M of the Solicitation. The contract shall be awarded to the lowest priced technically acceptable responsible offeror.

Question 6: Can you please provide the name of the current insurer and confirm how many years they have been the insurer on the plan?

Answer 6: The Canada Life Assurance Company is the current local employee benefits insurer for the U.S. Diplomatic Mission in Canada. The current contract number SCA52515D0005 with Canada Life was awarded in 2015.

Question 7: Is the Contracting Office able to provide any indication of the projected date for final vendor/partner selection? If so, what is that projected date?

Answer 7: The Government intends to award the resultant contract in February of 2021.

Question 8: Provided the potential bidder meets or exceeds the procurements technical specifications and requirements and offers a market competitive financial offering, would there be a preference given for a U.S. based insurance partner?

Answer 8: No specific preference is included. The award decision will be made by the Contracting Officer on the basis of evaluation factors included in Section M of the subject solicitation.

Question 9: Will the prospective offerors have another opportunity to ask additional clarifications questions after the pre-proposal conference?

Answer 9: The offerors may ask additional questions. The Government requires a minimum of 5-7 business days to provide answers.

Question 10: Please describe the makeup of the group to be covered from a citizenship standpoint, i.e. are these all Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada, or does the group consist of a combination of Canadian nationals, U.S. citizens, residents and non-residents?

Answer 10: Employee benefits form part of locally employed staff compensation package extended to Canadian citizens, Canadian permanent residents and open work permit holders.

Question 11: Are members eligible for Provincial Healthcare across all locations, in all Provinces.

Answer 11: Yes, the medical plan is intended to supplement coverages provided by public provincial healthcare plan. U.S. Embassy current medical plan policy requires provincial plan coverage for enrollment eligibility. This represents a typical requirement in the private health plans sponsored by employers in Canada.

Question 12: Please define eligibility for the Retiree class.

Answer 12: The current health plan includes an Early Retiree benefit allowing a retiring employee to maintain health care insurance under the same terms as an active employee with the employer’s regular premium contributions until they reach the age of 65 or 69 (depending on benefit class). It does not include dental care or any other insurance plans. The retiree benefit will no longer be provided under the new medical plan. However, all retired employees in receipt of this benefit at the time of the new plan inception will be grandfathered and included. Presently, the U.S. Mission has 18 individuals receiving this benefit.

Question 13: RFP Section C 1. 1. 16 Please expand on the catastrophic benefit. Can you provide claims experience separately for this benefit?

Answer 13: The U.S. Mission does not have the catastrophic coverage included in the current benefits plan, as it is based on global norms. It will provide with an additional annual maximum amount (105K) to the employee and eligible dependent in the case of a medical crisis.

Question 14: RFP section C.1.2. An annual maximum of \$105K seems low if the plan replaces Provincial Healthcare. How many members have reached the limit over the past 3 years?

Answer 14: The required plan is not intended to replace but supplement provincial healthcare plans funded by the Canadian Government. The annual maximum limit is not a requirement in the current medical insurance plan, but U.S. Embassy had any member exceeding this amount in the past three years.

Question 15: Is waiver of premium on Life insurance currently offered?

Answer 15: Yes, Life insurance premiums are waived in conjunction with Long Term Disability insurance policy for employees who are totally disabled and in receipt of LTD benefit.

Question 16: Is a conversion privilege currently offered on the Life insurance benefit?

Answer 16: Yes, Life insurance conversion to the private Life insurance plan is offered for eligible employees without evidence of good health at the time of employment termination.

Question 17: RFP Section E.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SURVEILLANCE PLAN – can you please provide additional guidance or descriptive information/definition on what you will deem to be a “complaint” for contract administration purposes?

Answer 17: The management approach to delivery of insurance services is unique to each service provider. Introduction of a more specific quality assurance plan represents a risk of establishing a restrictive requirement, potentially limiting the competition. It is the responsibility of the offeror to explain management approach to quality assurance based on the offeror’s internal quality assurance policies.

Question 18: Would the Embassy consider a more formal/structured Performance Guarantee arrangement?

Answer 18: The offerors may propose a more formal/structured Performance Guarantee arrangement as an addendum to the RFP, which will be evaluated by the Technical Evaluation Panel. The award decision is based on the technical and price factors established in Section M of the Solicitation. The contract shall be awarded to the lowest priced technically acceptable responsible offeror.

Question 19: Will there be actual employee census data available prior to proposals being submitted, such as DOB, gender, rating tier, home/host country, occupation, and salaries (no names). In order to provide a valid/binding Life, AD&D and Long Term Disability (LTD) benefit proposal the offerors require a census with employee participants.

Answer 19: The Government will make this information available to prospective offerors.

Question 20: Is there more detailed claims data available? Ideally it would be broken down by Medical, Dental, Life, AD&D and LTD. Please provide claims experience along with membership and rate history for each of the past 3 contract years as follows:

Medical – total claims paid by month with corresponding premium;

Dental – total claims paid by month with corresponding premium;

Life and AD&D Insurance – listing of individual life insurance claims by year;

LTD claims – total claims paid by year and individual claimant information including age of claimant and their monthly benefit amount in each of the past 3 years. Also note which claims are currently ongoing;

Membership for each category (Employees, Retirees, ORE) by month for past 3 years;

Rates by line of benefits by year for past 3 years.

Answer 20: The Government will make this information available to prospective offerors.

Question 21: What kind of rate guarantee is desired/required.

Answer 21: Insurance Premium Rates shall be guaranteed for the duration of Base Year of the contract. Estimated forecasted rates are required for all Option Years and will be used by the Government for the purpose of establishing the magnitude, the maximum and minimum amounts for the resultant contract. The offerors may guarantee rates for Option years at their discretion.

Question 22: Is the employee benefit plan included in the RFP intended to replace Provincial health care plans for employees who do not qualify for OHIP Ontario and similar provincial coverage?

Answer 22: The plan required in the RFP is not replacing, but rather supplementing Provincial health care plans for all Canadian employees of the U.S. Diplomatic Mission.

Question 23: Will the Government accept electronic proposals?

Answer 23: Proposal for requirements exceeding USD \$250,000 shall be submitted in form of a hard copy signed in ink. It is understood that under the current circumstances, courier deliveries may be delayed due to COVID-19 safety measures and holiday backlogs contributing to mail handling delays. The Government will accept and evaluate offers signed and submitted electronically to ContractsOttawa@state.gov. The offerors are required to follow through by sending hard copies of offers signed in ink by courier to the address indicated in the solicitation. Any inconsistencies between the electronic and printed proposals may be evaluated as technical deficiencies. The award decision will be made based on evaluation of printed proposals signed in ink.