

# ICON System Modernization Project: RFP Questions & Answers



**Q:** Our company specializes in writing proprietary software for Unemployment Systems specific to a state's laws and business processes. As such we do not own the software or have the license to share it to satisfy the git repository requirement. Will our response be considered without a corresponding git repository?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Is it possible to demonstrate technical competence without providing a git repository?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Can you describe the function and process of the "workflow engine" referenced on the diagram on Figure 1: High Level Current Communications?

**A:** The workflow engine refers to the existing necessary logic in which the IB delivery process workflow is managed regarding task/type and order of operations.

**Q:** What role are you expecting the technical lead to fulfill as far as the RFP process is concerned?

**A:** To function as a Project Manager and Point of Contact (POC) for technical questions and coordination.

**Q:** Can there be more than one technical lead (such as one for Infrastructure and one for applications)?

**A:** Your staffing plan can be structured as needed so long as we have designated POCs for respective areas.

**Q:** Can you expand on what you are looking for in resource requirements for "open-source development"?

**Q:** For example, are you looking for developers who have used open-source libraries to develop proprietary code?

**A:** Yes, that would be a sufficient aspect.

**Q:** Or are you looking for developers with open-source code contributions used by the open source community?

**A:** This would be an additional benefit but is not mandatory.

**Q:** If actual open-source code contributions, how do you anticipate this project will incorporate open-source development?

**A:** It is preferred to use open-source solutions where appropriate.

**Q:** For the "Open-source login/authentication services" resource requirement are you referencing OpenID authentication or something else?

**A:** Yes. There could also be other qualifying open-source protocols and solutions

**Q:** Is it safe to assume that all non-awarded bids will remain private and not released to the public?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** How much of the timeframe do you expect to be spent in discovery/development?

**A:** We anticipate 30-90 days discovery, encompassing 4-7 transaction types.

**Q:** The RFP referenced front-end processes. Focus is on mainframe. What do you foresee this looking like in the next two years?

**A:** The goal is to streamline process logic and applications for SWAs and Federal agencies while removing the dependency on the mainframe and improving data quality.

**Q:** The RFP references many front-end processes and tools. Since the main requirement seems to be replacing the mainframe backend processes, what front end work do you foresee this project needing?

**A:** During the initial Period of Performance, front-end work should be minimal – only requiring additional logic to interface with new applications.

**Q:** Concerning the SWA container referenced in section 2.2.2 on page 7. Does this imply a Docker container or is it a more general definition meaning an application or dll (like SIDES)?

**A:** We require the software code, dependencies, and necessary libraries to be packaged together. The preferred solution would run on any infrastructure with the software making as few external calls as possible to function.

**Q:** Given that the initial phase of the project involves extensive discovery and then infrastructure build up, how many applications do you expect to be able to convert/complete in the 2 years and do you have an idea which ones you would likely start with?

**A:** We would expect the conversion of 4-7 transaction types. The transaction types we start with will be determined after discovery is complete. The results of discovery will yield the complexity of applications required to process related transactions.

**Q:** Will NASWA reimburse the selected vendor the AWS expenses for the development/staging environments?

**A:** AWS expenses should be built into the bid.

**Q:** The RFP requires the response to be in a 12-point font. Does this apply to section headers as well or are they allowed to be larger?

**A:** Headers may be larger.

**Q:** The RFP notes that each invoice requires actual hours worked (and reimbursable travel expenses). How does that fit with a fixed price contract?

**A:** Detailed invoices assist us with cost breakdown and analysis throughout the lifecycle of the project. However, the invoice included in the RFP was merely a sample and is subject to change. The final, required invoice will be developed after contract signing.

**Q:** What database(s) does the mainframe currently use?

**A:** The current mainframe uses VSAM and connects to MySQL.

**Q:** Do you envision the modernized software intercepting existing SNA connections and rerouting to the modernized system or was the thinking that existing SNA connections would be maintained and handled outside of that environment while encouraging and helping states to upgrade?

**A:** The former is preferential. However, the latter will be required as we cannot force every SWA to migrate away from existing SNA technology at the same time.

**Q:** If connections should be re-routed via a facade, would it need to be installed in the same data center as the existing mainframe or be given access to that mainframe remotely?

**A:** It is not required to be installed in the same data center. Remote access is allowed assuming all security requirements are satisfied.

**Q:** How much travel do you anticipate will be necessary in the 2-year period?

**A:** Likely no more than once per quarter.

**Q:** On Page 2, line 14 – Can we clarify the minimum dollar amount?

**A:** No, as the RFP states we will **not accept** a proposal requiring a minimum dollar amount.

**Q:** On Page 8, line 34 – Can we clarify who is actually going to own the contract w/ the vendor?

**A:** CESER/NASWA will own the contract with the selected Contractor.

**Q:** On page 8, line 34 – Can we get a clarification on who is going to pay the vendor for their services?

**A:** The vendor will be paid by CESER/NASWA from a grant funded by DOL.

**Q:** On Page 11, line 1 – Can you clarify the front-end gui standard that was provided?

**A:** There is a hyperlink on line 1 which references standard disciplines that have been defined. DOL requires these standards.

**Q:** On Page 15, line 6 – Will NASWA be open to subscribing to certain licenses for the overall solutioning of the scope of work.

**A:** CESER/NASWA is open to multiple solution offerings. All proposed solution-related licensing shall be itemized, specified, and priced by the Contractor.

**Q:** Can an extension to the deadline be granted due to the holidays and due to the current COVID-19 situation?

**A:** No.

**Q:** On Page 21, line 7 – can you clarify the pricing structure? Is it based on services, travel OR deliverable-based artifacts (e.g. project plan, requirements document, etc)?

**A:** The pricing structure is based on all of the factors listed in the RFP, as well as the examples you have stated in this question.

**Q:** Do you currently have an API Management capability through which API's are published and used?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Which integration middleware tools and platforms do you currently have?

**A:** We have SOAP/CICS as a layer on the mainframe and SOAP/XML on midrange servers.

**Q:** More specifically do you have likes of IBM Integration Bus (formerly WebSphere Message Broker) to integrate with mainframe systems incl SNA support?

**A:** We do not utilize a message broker like IBM Integration Bus. However, we utilize message queueing for certain applications.

**Q:** If not, do you expect the contractor to propose integration tools and platforms?

**A:** Yes, the Bidder should propose and justify whatever it feels is needed in their solution to address the RFP requirements.

**Q:** Can you provide a list of existing tools and platform you use for EDI gateway, batch processing, data integration incl ETL?

**A:** For SWAs that do not communicate mainframe to mainframe, we utilize a mix of XML, SOAP, and CICS.

**Q:** Can you share any volumes of data the above need to support in a day, month, year?

**A:** The system processes hundreds of thousands of transactions per day across multiple communication methods. These vary depending on the number and type of transactions from each state that are not communicating mainframe to mainframe.

**Q:** Are your business applications built custom? Or you use platforms like Salesforce, ServiceNow, Microsoft Dynamics etc.?

**A:** Our mainframe applications are mainly custom, with the ability to interface with COTS platforms like those mentioned in the question.

**Q:** What is your preferred web framework stack for building web applications? E.G: React + Node.js?

**A:** We are not prescribing the stack to be used by the contractor. React and Node.js would be an acceptable combination.

**Q:** Do you have a preference towards using AWS native platform services?

**A:** We do not have a preference, but the solution must have the capability to be migrated to another cloud provider if the need arises in the future.

**Q:** Do you have a common messaging model that your API's and integration flows use?

**A:** XML is the common input, which may be converted to EBCDIC/ASCII for ingestion by the mainframe.

**Q:** You mention containerization and containerized components. Which container orchestration service (EKS, OpenShift etc) do you currently use and prefer?

**A:** EKS (and similar) would be preferred over OpenShift, as OpenShift requires additional licensing.

**Q:** Which other platform services on AWS (incl DevSecOps) would you like us to consider and factor in?

**A:** You should consider whatever you deem necessary to the success of this project. We are not going to be prescriptive.

**Q:** Have you done journey mapping and user experience design for how the relevant personas will use the business applications?

**A:** We have from a high-level, yes. However, we do not foresee a drastic change in the user experience at this time.

**Q:** Do you foresee a case management workflow as part of the business apps?

**A:** Not at this time.

**Q:** What are the availability and other SLA needs?

**A:** System uptime must maintain a level of 99.99% 24/7/365. Response and resolution times may range from 2-24 hours, depending on severity and service priority. Further details will be outlined in the contract.

**Q:** Is NASWA looking for a turnkey – managed solution that a vendor can build & operate.

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Can we get a clarification on payment terms. Will the vendor be paid based on incremental milestones or upon project completion?

**A:** The selected contractor will be paid based on milestones.

**Q:** Can you clarify what code will be given to the other state/districts? Is it just the code that allows the agency to connect with NASWA's data exchange system?

**A:** We must share a connection-type codebase to interface with state systems as well as the application logic.

**Q:** Can NASWA define the scope of support services? As this is an FFP contract, we will need a clearer idea on what the support services are and what the services entail. As of now, those terms are TBD and will need to be clarified.

**A:** The scope of support will be dependent upon the number of transaction types developed/deliverables provided. This will be outlined in the contract.

**Q:** Can NASWA clarify DOL and CESER's roles in the project?

**A:** CESER/NASWA can be viewed as a singular body managing the outcome of this project, with input from the IB Subcommittee and in compliance with DOL rules and regulations.

**Q:** Any sensitive data requirements (for example PHI/HIPAA) that would need to be satisfied by this solution.

**A:** The Contractor must have the ability to meet the Social Security Administration's (SSA) data security requirements for the handling of PII.

**Q:** Does ICON have storage requirements?

**A:** Yes. However these will need to be reviewed/revise through discovery.

**Q:** Does ICON store transactional data or only the Audit and Log data?

**A:** ICON stores transactional data for a short time, while Audit and Log data is kept as needed to support reporting/troubleshooting.

**Q:** The 36 applications which are mentioned in the RFP do they belong to 36 different APIs/services or standalone applications?

**A:** The 36 applications are a mix of standalone applications, as well as shared logic between multiple transactions/exchanges.

**Q:** There is an inconsistency between Price Submission Section, page 18 and Price Evaluation Section, Page 21. Price submission states that contractor must set forth a single dollar amount that represents Contractor's estimate for the period of performance. Price evaluation section states that contractor should provide itemized breakdown of the deliverables mentioned within the document. Request NASWA to clarify the format for price submission. Please clarify the list of deliverables NASWA plans the vendor to include in the response

**A:** Page 18 defines how to submit pricing. Page 21 defines how NASWA will evaluate the submitted pricing. There may be an option for contract renewal beyond the initial period of performance of 24 months. However, the bid should contain the contractors' best price for the deliverables they believe they can complete within the initial period of performance. For a list of deliverables, please refer to pages 7-8.

**Q:** Request NASWA to clarify if price submission should be included as part of the proposal that includes company overview, project citations, key personnel resumes and technical submissions. If not, can NASWA please provide submission instructions for price proposal.

**A:** Please include price submission as part of the complete proposal. Price submission accounts for 20% of overall proposal evaluation.

**Q:** What is the version of COBOL currently being used today for ICON?

**A:** ICON currently uses 5.2.

**Q:** What is the approximate volume (size) of the application and number of lines of code for all applications?

**A:** This will be determined by the discovery phase, while selecting the transaction types to be reengineered.

**Q:** What are the volumes of the other components in use - JCL, DB2, IMS, VSAM?

**A:** We are not a repository for data, except in limited circumstance for use in processing exchanges. The intent of this project is to reengineer applications/exchanges, not a traditional data migration.

**Q:** What is the volume in terms of number of tables, attributes, and records for data migration?

**A:** We are not a repository for data, except in limited circumstance for use in processing exchanges. The intent of this project is to reengineer applications/exchanges, not a traditional data migration.

**Q:** What are the data retention criteria?

**A:** Transactional data is stored for a short time, while Audit and Log data is kept as needed to support reporting/troubleshooting.

**Q:** Are there any archival/purging rules for data? If so, can you please elaborate?

**A:** Yes, there are rules for archiving and purging certain data sets which will need to be reviewed/revised during discovery.

**Q:** Is there any preference for target technology for the API's and the new application to be developed?

**A:** We do not have a prescribed preference.

**Q:** Is there any scope of remediation for the application in .NET and Java, as per latest version (while migrating to cloud)?

**A:** While the focus during the initial Period of Performance is primarily on the mainframe logic, there may be ancillary development/remediation necessary to support the main initiative, including the reengineering of 4-7 applications. Those specifics would be part of the discovery phase, and dependent on the proposed solution to reengineer that logic.

**Q:** Are there any existing CI-CD, Agile, Testing tools, or Application Life Cycle Management tools which the vendor can leverage in the modernization effort?

**A:** There are none provided by CESER/NASWA for Contractor use.

**Q:** Is there a requirement for masking the sensitive data / PII information in the non-production environment?

**A:** Yes, there are requirements. You may also use manufactured data as an alternative.

**Q:** Can you please provide the use cases for the web portal for SWAs?

**A:** This information may be shared (if required) during the discovery phase.



**Q:** Is UCFE (FCCC) interface counted as 1 or 3 or 6 out of the 36 applications?

**A:** FCCC is one application that interfaces with UCFE.

**Q:** Does ICON need to continue supporting the SNA protocol for data exchange with SWAs or with this project? Can the SWAs be moved to a different protocol?

**A:** Initially SNA will need to be supported. SWAs can be moved to a different protocol if there is minimal interruption to their service and must be executed on their schedule(s).

**Q:** What is the peak number of transactions expected for each application of ICON? On a regular business day, what is the average number of transactions for each application?

**A:** ICON processes hundreds of thousands of transactions per day.

**Q:** Does NASWA have a preferred cloud provider for this project? In the RFP AWS GovCloud was mentioned as the current cloud provider. Are there any concerns or issues as to the cloud provider capability which would require evaluation of any other cloud provider?

**A:** NASWA does not have a preferred provider. There is nothing preventing the evaluation of another cloud provider, so long as security and other requirements within the RFP are met.

**Q:** It is our assumption that the agency will procure and provide all the necessary infrastructure, software licenses, networking equipment required to host the modernized solution including production and non-production environment. Can you please confirm?

**A:** The awarded Contractor for this RFP will provide these items.

**Q:** It is our assumption that the agency will provide the infrastructure support for Cloud Infra and Networking. Can you please confirm?

**A:** The contractor (you) and the current vendor will work in tandem to support the infrastructure and networking.

**Q:** The contract period in the RFP is defined for 2 years. What is the expectation from NASWA for the minimum number of ICON applications to be modernized during the 2-year contract duration?

**A:** The expected minimum is 4-7 transaction types.

**Q:** Do you require FedRAMP Moderate or High?

**A:** We require FedRAMP Moderate.

**Q:** Is our current AWS environment FedRAMP certified?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Is there a list of apps to be redesigned or reengineered?

**A:** There is no list at this stage. This will be determined through discovery.



**Q:** Will the app be centralized or reside within the states?

**A:** There will be mix of both.

**Q:** Will code base that's written be owned by NASWA exclusively?

**A:** It would belong to DOL, and CESER/NASWA by extension.

**Q:** Could the code be shareable?

**A:** Yes, it is shareable.

**Q:** Will the code to connect be shared with states?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** From support perspective, is the vendor expected to support after it's consumed by our environment?

**A:** This will be determined in the contract.

**Q:** Does Dev include moving over into UAT and then prod env?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Will the vendor need to host, certify, and transition the environment to NASWA once completed?

**A:** Yes.