

# NYSERDA RFQ 3183 Bidders' Conference

## Questions and Answers

**Revised March 29, 2016**

### Administrative

1. Is participation in one of the bidders' conference calls mandatory?

*No. Participation is voluntary; a list of questions and responses will be posted to NYSERDA's website following the conferences for those who were unable to join.*

2. Are bidders permitted to submit technical and contractual questions after March 21, 2016? The website specifies that questions for the pre-bid conferences should be submitted to a single contact person by close of business on March 21, 2016; however, the RFQ indicates that technical questions should be submitted to the relevant Project Managers and that contractual questions should be submitted to the contractual staff member, but no deadline is given for submitting these questions.

*Yes. Proposers may reach out to the appropriate NYSERDA contacts following March 21, 2016. The purpose of the March 21, 2016 date was to amass questions in advance of the Bidders' Conferences and provide as much information to potential respondents as possible during those meetings. Questions will still be accepted following this date.*

3. Legibility tends to vary by font type as well as by font size. The RFQ specifies a minimum font size of 11 pt. Can we use smaller font within tables as long as the font is still legible?

*This is acceptable.*

4. We have just one question. The RFQ states that "Each page of the proposal should state the name of the proposer, RFQ 3183, and the page number." Should we start numbering the pages with the proposal checklist (which would mean the cover letter and table of contents are numbered), or with the first page after the table of contents?

*You may begin your page numbering in alignment with the sections outlined in Section IV. Proposal Requirements.*

5. Please confirm that only fully loaded hourly rates are required, not unbundled hourly rates.

*Please only provide fully-loaded hourly rates.*

6. Are there any MWBE set-asides for awards?

*There is no specific or required set-aside for this solicitation.*

7. Although not located in NY State, we are a nationally certified Minority Business Enterprise – is there a place to provide our certification in the proposal? Will this have any impact for evaluation of our bid?

*There is not an evaluation criterion related to MWBE. However, proposers should feel free to highlight these certifications within their proposals.*

8. Does NYSERDA require any professional certifications as part of this solicitation?

*NYSERDA has not specified any professional certifications for proposers under this RFQ. However, if proposers have certifications that are relevant to their qualification to provide services requested under this solicitation, they should feel free to highlight them in their proposal.*

9. Will NYSERDA be using the Office of General Services (OGS) preferred vendors list under this RFQ?

*No, NYSERDA is not required to use the preferred vendors list for the activities covered by this RFQ.*

10. Attachment B asks for the "Solicitation or Agreement Number." What does this refer to? Is it the RFQ number?

*This is the RFQ number – RFQ 3183.*

### **Proposal Format and Structure**

11. Does NYSERDA request one resume per person, even for individuals featured in more than one service area? In general for this RFQ, NYSERDA has requested separate materials for each SOW area. But the RFQ indicates that resumes are to be included "as an appendix to the proposal." Please clarify.

*Please compile all resumes across all Market Research and Evaluation Support areas in one appendix.*

12. On a recent bidders call for the Large Scale Renewables RFQ, NYSERDA's General Counsel instructed bidders not to submit the names of staff in association with titles or labor categories that may change as staff advance over time, and appeared to indicate that this was general NYSERDA policy. Attachment D, however, appears to ask for names of individual staff associated with titles, over a 5 year period. Please clarify. - *See answer to Question 13*

13. Are all staff who might work required to be specified in the personnel form?

*For NYSERDA's planning purposes, please provide a non-exhaustive list of staff, with titles. NYSERDA understands that staff may be added to the team, or titles may change, following contract award; however, for purposes of planning out work in the near-term, it is helpful to know specific staff anticipated to be available should the proposer be deemed qualified. Having specific names and titles within the contract from the outset can help expedite payment, as NYSERDA's Contracts department needs to have this type of documentation on file in order to sign off on invoices.*

14. The RFQ appears to contain boilerplate budget instructions and refers in several places to Exhibit F/budget exhibit. However, this RFQ does not have an Exhibit F, and the budget instructions related to Exhibit F do not appear to be applicable. Please confirm. - *See answer to Question 15*

15. The first page of Attachment F lists all the exhibits to be found within (A-F), but that the document seems to be lacking Exhibits E&F. Were those intentionally withheld?

*Attachment F of the RFQ is an example Sample Agreement that will be developed and customized to qualified contractors upon contract award. The latest version of NYSERDA's Report Format and Style Guide will be included in the Agreement at that time as Exhibit E. Exhibit F will be generated from Attachment D (the Project Personnel and Rates Form required as part of this RFQ).*

16. Section IV. Proposal Requirements subsection 5 Cost Proposal states that "escalation rates must be identified for the full five-year contract term," and Attachment D requires rates by year, but they not specify a base period for year 1. Would NYSERDA like to specify a period for all proposers to use for rate year one, such as "calendar year 2016" or "July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017," for example?

*The timing for when contracts are actually awarded and work is officially underway is subject to change. For purposes of your proposal, please provide annual rates with calendar year 2016 serving as Year 1.*

17. The RFQ proposal requirements state that we submit a "separate section for each Market Research and Evaluation Support Area where services are being offered." Please provide proposal requirements if we are offering qualifications and services for the Survey Data Collection area.

*Section II. Services Requested and Qualifications provides overarching qualifications across all Market Research and Evaluation Support Areas. Area 3: Survey Data Collection within Section II details the qualifications for Survey Data Collection area specifically.*

### **Example Project Summaries**

18. Are we correct in assuming that "access to the final study" refers to final reports or presentations and that hard copies of these can be redacted or blinded as needed to maintain confidentiality of information, etc. – *See answer to Question 19.*
19. One requirement of the RFQ is to provide examples of the final reports for similar projects. Given that most of work is proprietary and owned by our clients, we are likely to be able to provide only a small number **if any** examples of actual final reports, and will not be able to fully represent our capabilities with examples of actual reports. Will this mean that we are not likely to qualify as a potential partner for work with NYSERDA?

*To the extent the summaries can be anonymized and redacted appropriately to ensure the confidentiality of the work, please add applicable context regarding methodologies and skills. Please take advantage of other components of the proposal (e.g., the Personnel Qualifications and Qualifications Matrix section) to further describe and demonstrate capabilities and skills that cannot be disclosed through individual summaries. Please mark any client-related documents as Confidential.*

20. Three project examples is rather limited in demonstrating all the capabilities firms might have that can satisfy the wide variety of activities NYSERDA is going to be pursuing. Can you please provide guidance on what specifically you hope to learn about the firms from the three project descriptions?

*The purpose of the project summaries is to substantiate contractor quality and completeness of work, choice of methodologies, ability to concisely and clearly convey key study findings, and demonstrate critical thinking to effectively show the relationship between data and conclusions.*

21. Some examples of our most relevant work are ongoing projects. For ongoing projects, can we submit interim deliverables in lieu of final reports?

*This is not acceptable. It will be challenging for NYSERDA to assess the success of a project outcome based on interim (i.e., not final) deliverables. Please mark any client-related documents as Confidential.*

22. Increasingly, evaluation clients request final presentations or memos in lieu of final reports. Thus, for example projects, is it acceptable to submit these other forms of final deliverables?

*This is acceptable.*

23. Increasingly, evaluation clients request shorter memos to convey method-specific findings, combined with a short memo, report, or presentation as a final deliverable. With this approach, the final deliverable typically does not repeat the detail of interim deliverables. Thus, for example projects, is it acceptable to submit multiple deliverables?

*This is acceptable.*

## **Page Limits**

24. If a proposer seeks to submit under more than one area, should they submit separate proposals for each Area? Might the proposer instead use 3-4 pages to describe Overall Experience and Capability for each Area they are proposing on (resulting in up to 12 pages if submitting on all three Areas) with a separate 1-3 page personal qualification section for each Area, etc.? - *See answer to Question 26*
25. Please confirm that the page limits for the area-specific sections are the page limits per area where services are being offered, and not the total number of pages a bidder must use for that section. For example, if a bidder wishes to offer services in two areas, the bidder will have 2-4 pages to describe overall experience and capabilities in one area and 2-4 pages to describe overall experience and capabilities in the other area. - *See answer to Question 26*
26. Section IV. Proposal Requirements shows page limits for subsection 3, Overall Experience and Capabilities (2-4 pages), and subsection 4, Personnel Qualifications and Qualifications Matrix (1-3 pages excluding resumes). The TOC requirements section specifies “a separate section for each Market Research and Evaluation Support Area.” Do the page limits apply separately for each bid support areas (e.g. 4-8 pages allowed for Section 3 if a firm bids 2 areas), or are they the overall limit regardless of the number of areas bid?

*Yes. As discussed in Section IV Proposal Requirements, for each Market Research and Evaluation Support Area offered (Market Research, Impact Evaluation/Field Verification, Survey Data Collection), the proposer shall provide overall experience and capabilities, personnel qualifications (including the qualifications matrix), a cost proposal and any relevant attachments. The page number limitations apply to each Market Research and Evaluation Support Area offered. An overarching cover letter shall be developed by the proposer that 1) References RFQ 3183; 2)*

*specifies each Market Research and Evaluation Support Area(s) where services are being offered; 3) summarizes the proposer's ability to perform such services; and 4) is signed by someone with authority to enter into an agreement with NYSERDA.*

27. The RFQ states that bidders have 1-3 pages to provide details of personnel qualifications and the Qualifications Matrix form. Does the page limit include the Qualifications Matrix form?

*No. Completion of the Qualifications Matrix is separate from the page limit in the Personnel Qualifications and Qualifications Matrix section of the proposal.*

28. The RFQ states that bidders have 1 page to provide the names, titles, and rates (Attachment D - Project Personnel and Rate form) of all individuals in the proposal who will perform work under the agreement with NYSERDA. Does the page limit include the Project Personnel and Rate form? Is there a page limit to Attachment D itself?

*The one page limit of the Cost Proposal section is exclusive of Attachment D; there is no page limit to Attachment D.*

29. The RFQ indicates that bidders should submit 2-4 pages of text on experience and capabilities for each service area, but a maximum of one page for each example project submitted. Please confirm that the maximum of 1 page for each project is in addition to the 2-4 pages for each service area. We are concerned that if the example projects fall within the maximum of 4 pages of text for each area, that may not be enough text to adequately communicate firm capabilities, and support information provided in the qualifications matrices.

*The Overall Experience Capabilities section of the proposal is 2-4 pages, per area, and includes up to three one-page project summaries.*

30. Should the RFQ response include any other sections and pages limitations beyond those specifically mentioned in section IV-Proposal requirements (1. Cover Letter; 2. Table of Contents; 3. Overall Experience and Capabilities; 4. Personnel Qualifications and Qualification Matrix; 5. Cost Proposal; 6. Required Attachments; and 7. Submittal).

*No. Section IV. Proposal Requirements outlines the requisite components of a proposal.*

## **Project Development/Task Work Orders**

31. How does NYSERDA define "theory of change"? - *See answer to Question 32.*

32. Please provide further definition/operationalization of theory of change (beyond "(i.e., how early and intermediate accomplishments lead to long-range results)") and "theory of change evaluation" as we are unfamiliar with this usage and what is expected of the market research provider in that regard.

*Theory of change refers collectively to the market barriers identified, the hypotheses as to how a particular market intervention (or program) will address these barriers through specific activities, and how early and intermediate accomplishments are expected to lead to long-range results. Market evaluation will assess the theory of change, including whether the intervention is having the intended outcomes in the market.*

33. Please further define or operationalize “development of streamlined logic models” that will be used among other things “to identify the theory of change”.

*A logic model is a graphical description of an intervention showing the logical relationships between an intervention’s activities and its near-, mid-, and long-term outcomes (see Exhibit A). The logic model is used to develop lists of indicators that are used to track progress toward an intervention’s goals.*

34. For about what percentage of the projects is a competitive bidding process likely to be used to select a partner?

*Given the evolution of our work, we are unable to provide an exact percent at this time, but do believe there will be mini-bidding.*

35. Can NYSERDA please clarify the expected contract type(s) for task work orders issued under this vehicle (e.g., firm fixed price, time and materials, etc.)?

*NYSERDA expects TWOs to use a time and materials structure with materials defined as data sets, studies, reports, memos, etc. As discussed within the RFQ, NYSERDA will not reimburse costs associated with the purchase or rental of measurement tools and equipment.*

36. Some Area 2 impact evaluation activities are closely associated with topics in Area 1 - measurement of market change and measurement of behavior change - Would TWOs for energy savings and market impacts associated with market change and behavior change programs be most likely to be requested under Area 1 or Area 2?

*This depends on the techniques NYSERDA requires for the specific evaluation study. It may be one or both of these areas. It may require teaming that we set up or that we ask a contractor to arrange.*

37. Who are the participants?

*Typically, “participants” are those who have interacted with NYSERDA (or other funding entities) directly, e.g. taken advantage of an incentive, good or service.*

38. Who constitutes the “market actors”?

*Market actors are the entities that are directly or indirectly impacted by the activities of NYSERDA (or other funding entities). These entities vary among sectors. For example, one of NYSERDA’s commercial interventions could aim to impact energy service companies (ESCOs), building owners and tenants as market actors within the same strategy. The ESCO may be the entity directly receiving incentives or services from NYSERDA, with building owners and tenants also benefiting indirectly through actions or services provided by the ESCO. In this scenario, the ESCO would be a participant as well as a market actor.*

39. Do you have contact information for those (participants/actors) you want to understand and measure to be used, either a phone number or email address?

*Typically NYSERDA has contact information for participants to support evaluation activities.*

40. Are you looking to understand the barriers to the general public in using clean energy?

*That may be a research area pursued in the future. However, NYSERDA's interventions typically focus on specific segments of the market rather than the general public.*

41. When looking at program efficiency and effectiveness are you looking to all of your participants or do you see the TWOs addressing specific segments of the population?

*NYSERDA anticipates that TWOs will be focused areas of study and likely based on a segment of a targeted market.*

42. Do you conduct real-time data collection and analysis now?

*NYSERDA has historically collected limited real-time data and performed limited real-time analysis; the intention under the Clean Energy Fund is to expand and improve upon this effort with the services provided by the pools of contractors qualified through this RFQ.*

43. Can you give a few examples of "Pilot Activities" that you are engaged in currently?

*Please refer to NYSERDA's June 25, 2015 Clean Energy Fund Information Supplement found [here](#) for a discussion on new potential initiatives that will be implemented via pilots. For example, NYSERDA plans on conducting pilot studies to support its Real Time Energy Management effort in the Commercial sector (page 50 of the Information Supplement) and its On-Site Energy Manager effort in the Industrial sector (page 62 of the Information Supplement).*

44. Please define or clarify "Building Innovation" (specified as a measure in the Impact/Field Verification matrix).

*Building Innovation includes technologies and strategies that improve the energy efficiency and functionality of new and existing buildings. Some examples would be advanced HVAC technologies, organic LED lighting systems, and systems-level controls.*

*Relating to the Impact Evaluation/Field Verification Matrix, please describe how "Engineering Reviews and Analysis" might be applied to "Non-energy impacts". Engineering reviews and analysis could help to assess, both quantitatively and qualitatively, non-energy impacts like water or other resource savings, increased throughput/productivity, etc.*

### **Qualification Criteria**

45. Is a consultant's location an evaluation criterion? - See answer to Question 46  
46. Is there preference given to consultants located in NY state? How much?

*Close proximity to NYS is not a requirement of this RFQ, however, access to consultants to support quick turn-around timelines and firm deadlines will be required. For proposers to the impact evaluation/field verification area who would like to conduct on-site work, that would likely necessitate offices in or close to New York State from a cost and accessibility perspective.*

47. Assuming that a partner is designated as qualified for a particular type of project and a competitive bidding process is then used, what will be the criteria for selecting a partner for the project?

*As discussed in the Task Work Orders portion of Section III. Contractual Arrangement and Responsibility, mini-bid requests will be issued to all qualified contractors in a specified Market Research and Evaluation Support Area. These requests will likely include a description of research questions/needs and require a detailed response on the approach by the qualified contractors. Mini-bids will be reviewed by NYSERDA and a contractor will be selected to implement the TWO. If, following proposal review, but before implementing the project, the selected contractor is unable to implement the work due to workload, expertise or other similar considerations, NYSERDA will select the second-ranked consultant to implement the work. The selection process will likely be based on criteria such as responsiveness to the request, budget proposal and timeline. If a complete scope of work would require more than one qualified contractor, NYSERDA will issue separate Task Work Orders to each contractor and coordinate their interactions.*

48. At the end of the discussion of Area 1 Market Research, the RFQ asks for firms with existing data collection resources within their firms to identify and briefly describe the qualifications of those resources within their Area 1 Market Research proposals. What characteristics of capabilities would lead one to also propose within Area 3. Survey Data Collection?

*NYSERDA envisions firms whose primary focus is data collection and analysis methodologies (those who market themselves as “survey firms”) to propose to Area 3. The qualifications that NYSERDA seeks for Area 3 are detailed in that section of the RFQ.*

49. Area 1/Market Research covers two subject areas -- Market Characterization/Market Progress Studies and Market Insights. Can proposers choose to respond to only one of these subject areas or are both a requirement for responding to this area? – See answer to Question 50

50. Could an RFQ response include only Impact Evaluation without Field Evaluation (Area 2)?

*Proposers may respond to the individual subcomponents of the Market Research or Impact Evaluation/Field Verification areas (i.e., the individual “columns” in the qualifications matrices) rather than the total subject area.*

51. Is a CATI survey house required for a firm to be qualified for the Survey Data Collection area? Can a firm qualify for the Survey Data Collection area if it can provide some but not all of the services listed in the RFQ? – See answer to Question 52

52. Is it necessary to have centralized telephone interviewing facilities to apply for qualification in Area 3: Survey Data Collection? The RFQ seems to suggest so in referring to this and the other data collection approaches described as “overarching contractor qualifications.”

*CATI capabilities are not a requirement of Survey Data Collection proposers, but NYSERDA anticipates future data collection activities to use such resources. A firm can qualify for Survey Data Collection area if it can provide some, but not all, of the services described in Section II. Services Requested and Qualifications.*

53. It is necessary to have software expertise with SPSS, SAS or similar packages to apply for qualification? The RFQ seems to say so but we just want to confirm.

*As discussed in Section II. Services Requested and Qualifications, this is one of the minimum contractor qualifications across all Market Research and Evaluation Support Areas.*

54. The Area 3 narrative of Page 11 of the RFP lists specific Technology Areas which the bidders are supposed to respond to. Are these technology areas specific to only Area 3, or do they apply to Area 1 and 2 also? The technology areas I am referring to include these:-

#### Technology Areas

- Energy efficiency retrofit or replacement measures
- On-site energy management practices (e.g., real time energy management)
- Renewable energy generation and renewable thermal
- Other on-site generation (e.g, combined heat and power)
- Demand management/reduction
- Emerging technologies (e.g., LEDs and OLEDs)
- Zero Net Energy buildings
- Transportation (e.g., demand management, smart mobility, electric vehicles, transit and freight)
- Smart grid (e.g., distribution and transmission systems, microgrids and community grids)
- Energy storage (e.g., standardized products, enabling storage technologies)

*The Evaluation Topic Areas listed in Section II. Services Requested and Qualifications of the RFQ apply across all three Market Research and Evaluation Support Areas: Market Research, Impact Evaluation/Field Verification and Survey Data Collection.*

55. The RFQ references '...innovative approaches and solutions and approaches to monitor indicators...' Can you please elaborate on what you mean by innovative solutions and provide examples?

*Innovative approaches are those that fall outside of the realm of the evaluation activities that NYSERDA has typically carried out. Examples could include social network analysis, media analysis, and real-time data mining and trend analysis. NYSERDA anticipate that proposals could include approaches that NYSERDA staff are inexperienced or unfamiliar with but that could address NYSERDA's needs.*

56. We have areas of expertise that are not listed in the Qualifications Matrix form but that we believe would be beneficial to NYSERDA. Would it be acceptable for us to add column(s) to the form and provide content in the body of our proposal to demonstrate this additional expertise?

*In order to maintain an “apples-to-apples” scoring approach for the RFQ, we will not allow any additional columns to be added to the Qualifications Matrices. However, describing these additional services and qualifications within the written portion of the proposal would be acceptable.*

57. Would it be desirable to fill out the official Attachment C – Qualifications Matrix form with some form of gradation in an addition to the check mark toggle, or should strictly check marks alone be utilized?

*Please use the checkmarks, but provide any additional context within your proposal.*

58. Will the “mini-bid” process be different from the competed TWO process discussed on the previous page?

*NYSERDA does not foresee the TWO process to be implemented too differently from what is discussed in the RFQ. Some TWOs will be assigned outside of the mini-bid process; tasks that exceed a dollar threshold of \$300,000 will require the mini-bid process (with interested contractors submitting brief project proposals) to assign TWOs.*

### **Teaming Arrangements**

59. The RFP says NYSEERDA prefers that proposers not form teams. Will it be possible to form teams in response to any TWO that might occur after the pool of contractors is selected? If so, can team members come from outside the approved pool? – *See answer to Question 61*
60. Will it be possible to use experts who did not go through NYSEERDA’s qualifying process in responses to mini-bids? – *See answer to Question 61*
61. For field measurement research projects, we regularly use a number of technical experts who are sole proprietors. Given the RFP language about subcontracting, would we be expected to ask such technical consultants for a competitive bid for each field measurement task order on which we are invited to bid? Or, would it be more useful to NYSEERDA to see the team of technical consultants that we use as part of our bid?

*Yes. As discussed in the Task Work Orders section of Section III. Contractual Agreement and Responsibility, during the development of a work scope, NYSEERDA may consider partnering and teaming arrangements between qualified consultants and other expert entities as necessary. These expert team members may come from outside the approved pool. Instances of these additional team members will occur on a case-by-case basis for small components of the work with consultation and approval by NYSEERDA, and likely with NYSEERDA coordinating the interaction among contractors.*

62. Will NYSEERDA reimburse contractors that must outsource data collection approaches/tools such as those outlined in Area 3, namely telephone/call centers, mail houses and other third parties required i.e., printers, Internet/Web research tools and platforms, as well as those such as, research panel and list providers and social media monitoring platforms or are these considered 'measurement tools and equipment'?

*Qualified Market Research and Impact Evaluation/Field Verification contractors will not be responsible for outsourcing data collection activities; firms selected through the Survey Data Collection area will conduct those activities for NYSERDA collaborating with the qualified Market Research or Impact Evaluation/Field Verification contractors. However, and as discussed in the RFQ, qualified consultant teaming arrangements may be considered on a limited case-by-case basis during the development of a work scope. Should such a teaming arrangement be approved, the consultant will be reimbursed the cost to obtain such services.*

63. In order to respond on Area 3, what is defined as in-house? If a third-party subscription service is utilized to conduct online surveys for example, but is fully controlled and managed by the contractor, is that considered in-house? If a contractor can design, develop and implement a survey but requires a third party for telephone administration or mail processing does that preclude inclusion for Area 3? –  
*See answer to Question 64*

64. Our company regularly conducts survey data collection. For many projects, our in-house interviewers are sufficient to complete the project. However, in some cases, the requirements exceed the capacity of our available staff. When that happens, we get bids from three survey research companies, and supervise one or more on data collection based on the price and quality of their bid. Based on the language in the RFP related to subcontractor agreements, is it expected that a survey data collection contractor will be able to get competitive bids from survey research companies to bid on larger projects? Or, would we need to team with a data collection contractor in this bid to demonstrate that we have the capacity to conduct large-scale survey research projects? And, would it be useful to NYSERDA to see the data collection companies with whom we normally partner as part of the bid?

*This situation seems to describe a typical teaming arrangement between a primary contractor and a subcontractor, with the primary contractor coordinating the interaction and work products. As discussed in the RFQ, qualified consultant teaming arrangements may be considered on a limited case-by-case basis during the development of a work scope, but are discouraged in the proposal process for this RFQ. NYSERDA envisions that when teaming arrangements are necessary for a specific work scope, NYSERDA will coordinate the interaction between the contractors in lieu of the standard primary/subcontractor teaming arrangement.*

Exhibit A – Logic Model

**LOGIC MODEL: [Pilot/Intervention Name]**

