

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

Statement of Work (SOW) Managed Services - College and Career Advising

SOW No. 781-4-30061

**Questions and Answers
January 12th, 2024**

1. Section 3.02 (1), Pg: 06 -

"Can you please provide details on current/expected support volume of work in terms of:
- Hourly/daily /weekly requests
- Number & type of bugs or issues reported
- Tickets or requests received from end users or other stakeholders for the 3 applications in scope."

RESPONSE: THECB expects to establish capacity limits with the selected vendor and will prioritize accordingly within the available resources. The highest need for helpdesk support will come from ApplyTexas. My Texas Future has not yet received helpdesk tickets from end-users. Helpdesk support will be required to scale during the peak ApplyTexas application period which extends from July through January. From January to December 2023, the ticket quantity for ApplyTexas across all three user types (student, admin and counselor) was 32,369. Highest volume days of the week tend to be Mondays and Tuesdays. THECB expects for helpdesk support to be available M-F 8-5pm CST.

2. Section 3.02 (1c), Pg: 06

Regarding the point "Light upgrades/redesigns that respond to user roadblocks",

(a) Can you describe the current process for identifying and reporting user roadblocks, with examples?

(b) What are the procedures for proposing and approving upgrades or redesigns?

(c) What are the stakeholder roles responsible for approving these changes in each of the three applications?

3. RESPONSE: THECB will leverage insights from user testing and user feedback to identify roadblocks and other opportunities for the products. The vendor will work collaboratively with the THECB to propose and execute upgrades and/or redesigns. There is an established RAPID that lays out and defines roles for all involved parties within THECB.

4. Section 3.02 (1d), Pg: 06 -

Regarding one of the in scope activity mentions - Analytics monitoring :

(a) Does this only include web analytics or do others like functional data or support performance analytics, as expected to be in scope as well ?

(b) What specific analytics tools are in use?

(c) Are there any particular metrics or KPIs to monitor?

RESPONSE: THECB will need the selected vendor to help set up analytics, however, THECB internal team will monitor product analytics. Current analytics tools THECB uses are Google Analytics and Looker. Specific metrics and KPIs will be shared upon contract execution.

5. Section 3.02 (1e), Pg: 06 - Regarding the point "Chatbot management",

(a) What is the technology stack of Chatbot solution?

(a) What functionalities are expected from the chatbot and in which application?

(b) How will chatbot performance be evaluated and what are the key KPIs to be monitored and improved?"

RESPONSE: THECB is currently under contract with a managed chatbot vendor, Mainstay until September 2024 with the opportunity to extend for three years. They provide us access to their proprietary cloud-based application. Our roadmap includes enabling a web chatbot into My Texas Future and Apply Texas leveraging our ADVi chatbot. Our dedicated managed chatbot vendor will be responsible for chatbot performance and associated KPIs.

6. Section 3.02 (1f), Pg: 06 - Regarding the point "Salesforce integrations through THECB's Enterprise Service Bus", Is there a need for new implementation of ESB integration, or are there existing issues with the current integration that need to be addressed?"

RESPONSE: ESB Integration with Salesforce is complete but there are periodic production issues. However, if any configuration changes are made to the Salesforce, corresponding changes are needed on the ESB side. Regression testing is recommended. Also, this needs to be tested if as THECB pushes updates to our existing Salesforce tenant.

7. Section 3.02 (1g), Pg: 06 - Regarding the point "Data refactoring (resolving technical debt and building processes that synchronize application data objects with the source of records in THECB data warehouses);"

(a) What technology is currently being used for data synchronization, and what challenges are encountered in data migration?

(b) In addressing technical debt through data refactoring, please elaborate on it in terms of its impact (architecture, technology, etc.) and extent (i.e. which of the three applications has this technical debt, given 1 of them is not live yet and being developed)"

RESPONSE:

(a) My Texas Future and Apply Texas consume data from enterprise data warehouse (EDW). THECB currently has various ETL jobs to load data from various input sources to EDW. More details can be provided during onboarding Knowledge Transfer.

(b) MTF, AT apps consume data from enterprise data warehouse (EDW). EDW is Azure SQL server DB. THECB envisions refactoring data in EDW for use by other THECB applications.

8. Section 3.02 (2), Pg: 06 - Please provide more details on the nature/type of backlog items, specially under enhancements section, i.e. what are you expecting as a broad set of transformations during this engagement?

RESPONSE: An example of a potential broad set of transformations includes developing new direct admissions functionality within My Texas Future to allow the site to consume student data and evaluate against institutional admissions parameters to deliver admissions decisions. This would require back-end and front-end design and implementation.

9. Section 3.02 (3a), Pg: 07 - Regarding the point "Migrate MTF, MMP to Azure hub and spoke",

(a). What are MTF and MMP in this migration project, and can you briefly detail their roles or functions within the existing system?

(b). Is ""hub and spoke" referring to a specific Azure network topology in this context?"

RESPONSE:

(a) My Texas Future (MTF) and Map My Path (MMP). The objective is to move them from the current Azure tenant to the Hub and Spoke model subscription/tenant. Most likely like a re-platforming work and requires a scope analysis with current vendor. MTF is a web portal that provides Texas students with a clear path to career opportunities through credential attainment. Map My Path help students better navigate processes like credit transfers, switching degree programs, and changing schools. It shows students what classes are recommended for graduation from Texas institutions of higher education. Apply Texas provides a centralized means for both Texas residents and non-residents to apply to many outstanding post-secondary institutions available in TX.

(b) "Hub and Spoke" refers to Azure network topology. THECB implemented hub and spoke architecture for Apply Texas project. URL For reference: [Hub-spoke network topology in Azure - Azure Architecture Center | Microsoft Learn](#)

10. Section 4 (4.02), Pg: 08 - Can you provide details on the "prescribed format" mentioned, for the report(s) expected?

RESPONSE: The exact report format would be determined in collaboration with the selected vendor but will include a description of the sprint output, the resources utilized, and the remaining resources available.

11. From L1 support / helpdesk support standpoint , are we expected to provide a 24X7 or 24X5 or 8X5 coverage?

RESPONSE: The current helpdesk operates from 8-5 CT M-F. THECB anticipate continuing with this approach. Please see more in question 1.

12. What are the expected turnaround times / SLA for different bug/issue categories, for the 3 applications in scope?

RESPONSE: For critical bugs/issues (core to site functioning), THECB would expect them to be addressed immediately. For critical bugs/issues, THECB would expect an SLA of 24 hours. For Medium to low bugs/issues, THECB would expect to be addressed as available during sprints

13. What is the current user load/traffic for the applications in scope - per hr, day or week etc., for the applications in scope?

RESPONSE: The projected annual web usage for MTF is 135,000. The projected annual web usage for ApplyTexas is 3,750,000, however, usage fluctuates depending on the season with the most site visits generally occurring between August through January.

14. During the knowledge transfer and discovery phase/activities - broadly, what is the stakeholder landscape and expected availability from THECB side?

RESPONSE: THECB will provide access to K12 and institutional stakeholders and users aged 18+ as necessary. The THECB team will consist of agency leadership, subject matter experts, instructional designers, content writers, product managers, UX designers, and communications professionals.

15. What is the expected date for the start of the Maintenance services?

RESPONSE: Immediately upon contract execution for My Texas Future. THECB is currently under contract with Deloitte for ApplyTexas until September 30, 2024.

16. It is mentioned that Deloitte is working on upgradation of applytexas.org and that would be go live on May 2024 so do we need to start support post go live or we need to initiate support to existing site as well and post go live there will be KT session to be planned to understand the new site?

RESPONSE: The selected vendor would not provide support for the current ApplyTexas. The helpdesk support would initiate for go-live in May. The product maintenance support would initiate post contract end date with Deloitte after September 30, 2024.

17. In Existing websites of <https://www.applytexas.org/> & <https://www.mytexasfuture.org/> it seems like Vue.js and Next.js is used as a JavaScript framework respectively so do we need to consider that as a support tech stack as well?

RESPONSE: The existing site is managed by University of Texas (UT) and may have used Vue.js and Next.js is used as a JavaScript framework. The framework developed by Deloitte is in the final stages of development and only those stacks would require

support, not the website hosted by UT. The SoW (Statement of Work) provides the target state tech stack.

18. Who is/are the current incumbent supporting the three websites and the current support team size? Also is there any cut off date of the current incumbent vendor.

RESPONSE: ApplyTexas is currently supported by UT Austin. Deloitte is the vendor responsible for developing the new ApplyTexas. The Deloitte contract ends September 30, 2024. THECB currently manages the My Texas Future support in-house. The team size has fluctuated based on demand, but at minimum consists of

19. What is the code deployment process? Do we have some CI/CD implemented for code deployment?

RESPONSE: Agency uses a robust code deployment process defined as part of the Software Development Process for the agency. CICD is implemented using Microsoft Azure DevOps (Version Dev 19.M231.1). The deployment team is responsible for this task and code deployment for Apply Texas is executed using AzureDevOps_M231_20240104.3).

20. Is the agency open for Helpdesk team in the Offshore/ Nearshore location?

RESPONSE: Helpdesk must be conducted in the US.

21. Does agency have any suggested/ defined Transition timeline to take the services from the current incumbent vendor. Please clarify

RESPONSE: Helpdesk: The selected vendor will work with the THECB on a bank of help content that will provide the basis for the helpdesk. The helpdesk support will transfer to the managed service vendor in May 2024, when the cutover to the new ApplyTexas takes place. General product support: The MTF would begin immediately as THECB is managing this internally. The ApplyTexas transition would occur after contract end date on September 30, 2024.

22. Can you please share the URL for MapMyPath? In case it is not live, please share the expected Go-live date?

RESPONSE: THECB aims to launch Summer 2024 within My Texas Future.

23. Can the contracted services be performed outside the US? If so, is there any limit on which roles can be and can't be?

RESPONSE: Contracted services must be conducted in the US.

24. If the contracted services can be performed outside of the US, is there a preference for US based resources?

RESPONSE: Contracted services must be conducted in the US.

25. What is the intended contract award date?

RESPONSE: THECB aims to award by March 2024.

26. What is the intended service start date?

RESPONSE: THECB aims to start by March 2024.

27. Is there an incumbent(s) or does THECB currently maintain these applications?

RESPONSE: THECB will end our contractual engagement with Deloitte for My Texas Future in January 2024. THECB will maintain the applications until the managed service vendor is in place. The exception is ApplyTexas which is managed by UT Austin until the cut over to the new ApplyTexas in May 2024.

28. Will THECB or the incumbent be available for the 6 week period (deliverable 1 & 2) prior to the first sprint, to provide technology knowledge transfer? The intention of this question is to properly scope the effort required to come up to speed on the applications and complete the first two deliverables.

RESPONSE: THECB will be available to provide the necessary technology knowledge transfer during this period.

29. Does a full set of regression test cases exist for the three applications and will they be provided to the vendor awarded the contract? If so, are the test cases automated and what tool is used for automation?

RESPONSE: Regression tests exist for released applications (MTF). Full set regression tests do not exist for unreleased applications (ApplyTexas and MMP).

30. What tool(s) is used to track defects, requirements/user stories, test cases, and test executions?

RESPONSE: Azure DevOps and Figma

31. Do the applications currently undergo code quality scans (SONAR, CAST, etc.)? If so, how many quality issues currently exist?

RESPONSE: The vendors bring their own toolsets to support some aspects of development like IDE and code quality tools. However, for security testing static code, THECB uses web inspect and conduct penetration testing using 3rd party vendor.

32. Please provide the year that each application was developed or went through a major technology refresh?

RESPONSE: The majority of development took place in 2023 and continues into 2024.

33. Section 1 - Regarding the following clause: Respondent should staff dedicated resources who will function as Scrum Teams and Helpdesk support, is 24x7 help desk support required? If not, what is the coverage schedule? Can THECB please elaborate on the Helpdesk requirements? Is the expectation that the awarded vendor provide tier 1 help desk support?

RESPONSE: The highest need for helpdesk support will come from ApplyTexas. Helpdesk support will be required to scale during the peak ApplyTexas application period which extends from July through January. From January to December 2023, the ticket quantity for ApplyTexas across all three user types (student, admin and counselor) was 32,369. Highest volume days of the week tend to be Mondays and Tuesdays. We expect for helpdesk support to be available M-F 8-5pm CST.

34. Section 3.02-Is the respondent or THECB responsible for the creation of user stories and story point assignment?

RESPONSE: The selected vendor will be responsible in collaboration with THECB product team.

35. Section 3.02 - What technology is used for THECB's Enterprise Service Bus?

RESPONSE: THECB uses Microsoft MAzure ESB.

**36. Section 3.02 - Will THECB maintain ownership of solution/application architecture?
Should the respondent's response provision for a Solution/Application Architect?**

RESPONSE: THECB will maintain ownership of the solution/application architecture. The respondent should provide a solution/application architect as changes may be recommended regarding Apply Tx/MTF/MMP integration. This is to address any refactoring efforts.

37. Section 4.01 - Can THECB provide examples of the Technical discovery and analysis and End of sprint summary reports?

RESPONSE: See question 9.

38. Section 2.02 - Can you please clarify what type of active DIR contract this qualification is in reference too?

RESPONSE: "DIR Technical Categories" listed on the SOW Title page qualify for this SOW.

39. Section 3.02 - Is the intent of function of this team to truly provide managed services or a hybrid ITSACC approach applicable?

RESPONSE: This is a true managed service with the expectation that the vendor will truly get to know the products. Not ITSAC.

40. Section 3.02 - What is the goal in work that will be accomplished by the outlined team or teams provided by respondent?

RESPONSE: The goal of the work is to ensure the applications meet key user needs and are easy to use leading to strong user adoption, growth, and better outcomes for students. In addition, ongoing maintenance and operations will ensure stability, security, and performance. This will be achieved through the four key functions listed in 3.02.

41. Section 3.02 - Is there a rough quantity anticipation for each role outlined?

RESPONSE: No, THECB expects the vendor to provide a team that can be fully dedicated to this contract and the associated work.

42. Is there a rough quantity anticipation for each role outlined?

RESPONSE: No, THECB expects the vendor to provide a team that can be fully dedicated to this contract and the associated work.

43. Section 3.02 - The teams should provide:

1) Maintenance and support

e) Chatbot management

Can THECB clarify what “chatbot management” entails

RESPONSE: See question 4.