

State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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JUDGE MICHAEL BRENNAN
Chair

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A Request for Information

Issued by the

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

For

Wisconsin's Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS):
**Maintenance, Replacement,
Hardware Management and Redistricting**

GABRFI-090818

Date Issued: August 18, 2009
Responses Due: **September 18, 2009**



Questions Regarding this RFI should be Directed in Writing to:

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Government Accountability Board
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I. Introduction

The Government Accountability Board's (The Board) Elections Division is charged with administering transparent, fair, and efficient elections for the citizens of Wisconsin. The Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) is one of the key tools used by the Board to carry out its critical election business practices.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) required all states to set up a single, uniform, centralized and computerized statewide voter registration database. The system is required to link with other State databases, including the Department of Corrections to obtain information on felons, the Department of Health Services to obtain information on deaths, and the Department of Transportation for validation of driver license and social security numbers.

The system is accessed by over 1,600 users in 700 separate locations across the State. Users connect to the system using the internet. Some locations in Wisconsin do not have high-speed internet access available, in which case, the municipal clerk relies on another clerk (usually the county clerk) to perform data entry functions. The system includes several confidential fields, including driver license numbers, dates of birth, partial social security numbers and voters who are under a protective order, which must be protected by statute. Providing security for the system while allowing users to connect using the public internet is a high priority.

The system was originally a commercial product that was licensed from a vendor. The vendor began development of the system in 2003. The first version of the SVRS was released for use in 2005. In early 2008, the Board became solely responsible for the operation and maintenance of the source code, and the system has since been supported in-house at the Board. The Board needs a plan for on-going, cost effective maintenance and support of the hardware and software while maximizing application performance.

As a result of the 2010 census, the boundary lines for election districts will be rewritten. The Board is also interested in methods, technologies and services available to assist with the up-coming redistricting initiative.

II. Purpose of the Request for Information

The intention of this Request for Information (RFI) is to gather information in several areas regarding the long-term use of the SVRS. The information gained in this RFI may aid in the development of one or more Requests for Proposal (RFP) to acquire the necessary services to carry out our agency's mission. We are looking for innovative solutions to maximize performance and cost effectiveness, to the benefit of the residents of Wisconsin.

Please note that nothing will be purchased directly as a result of this RFI. This process is only used to gather information. Vendors should also be aware that responses to Requests for Information are a public record, and it is therefore recommended that vendors do not include confidential, proprietary or trade secret information in their response. A

Designation of Confidential and Proprietary Information form is attached in the event that vendors choose to request that information be kept confidential, however the Board cannot guarantee that the information will remain confidential if a legal challenge occurs.

III. Overview of the SVRS Application and Technology

The SVRS is a complex, multi-tiered application that is used by over 1,600 users in approximately 700 locations across the State of Wisconsin. The system was developed using the Microsoft .NET platform with a SQL Server database. It is a client-server application delivered to users over the internet via Citrix Metaframe. Citrix provides the necessary security to allow the system to be accessed using the public internet, and still provide adequate system response times and “thick client” type functionality.

The SVRS is not only a voter registration list, but a full elections administration package. For an overview of the functions of the SVRS, please refer to Appendix A. For a chart showing the number of voters in the system, please refer to Appendix C.

The SVRS is a centralized technical architecture built on Microsoft Windows Server 2003 and .NET framework. It runs on an n-tier application with a web presentation layer, business logic components in the application layer and a clustered database in the backend layer. The run-time environment includes the .NET framework version 1.1 and 2.0, IIS version 6.0 and ASP.NET version 1.1 and 2.0. The database was originally written for SQL Server 2000 and has been upgraded to SQL 2005. SVRS utilizes Citrix Metaframe to deliver the application to users over the internet. Infrastructure services include Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services, Microsoft Clustering Services, Active Directory and Terminal Services. Most of the application code is written in VB.NET with a small set of code in C++. The application was originally written for Visual Studio 2003 and .NET framework 1.1, and is in the process of being upgraded to VS 2008/.NET 3.5.

The Production environment is scaled for 1,000 concurrent users in locations across the State of Wisconsin. The environment consists of three (3) web application servers, four (4) Citrix Secure Gateway servers, two (2) SQL Reporting servers, one (1) batch processing web server, eighteen (18) Citrix Metaframe Presentation application servers, four (4) database servers (the first two configured as active/active and the other two as active/passive), two (2) Active Directory Domain Controllers, one (1) Certificate Server and one (1) Citrix Management server. The SVRS hardware consists of IBM BladeCenter components and a Storage Area Network. All servers in the Production environment are physical, with the exception of the three web-servers used for the Voter Public Access website (which allows residents to look up their voter registration information). These servers are virtual to allow for greater flexibility in scaling up and down as needed. The Voter Public Access website had 65,000 user sessions in a single day, the day prior to the November 2008 Presidential and General Election, while user sessions for the month of June, 2009, averaged at only 82 sessions per day.

SVRS also includes data interfaces with three state agencies, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Health Services and the Department of Transportation,

which utilize XML and web services. The Board is also in the process of developing interfaces with ballot tabulation software.

Users also utilize various peripheral hardware devices when using the system including bar code scanners (usually manufactured by Wasp), local printers and individual label printers (usually manufactured by Dymo).

IV. Overview of Needs

The SVRS System is now over five years old, and was developed using technologies that were current in 2003 and 2004. We have approximately 58 servers across four environments (development, system test, acceptance and production) with over 35 servers in the Production environment alone. This adds complexity for hosting and server support. Users of the system have requested continuously that the system perform more quickly and efficiently. The Board needs a plan for ongoing, cost effective maintenance and support of the hardware and software while maximizing application performance.

The Board is requesting information from Vendors regarding the types of services offered in relationship to several initiatives that the Board is considering. In Section V, Vendor Responses, vendors are requested to provide information on the services they offer specifically relating to the needs described below. Vendors can respond to one or more of these needs, based on their area of expertise.

1. Maintenance of SVRS

A. Hardware and Infrastructure Optimization

The SVRS infrastructure should be optimized for performance and cost effectiveness. There are 58 servers in the environment, which creates complexity for monitoring and support. The infrastructure should be reviewed with recommendations given to maximize maintainability, efficiency and cost effectiveness.

B. Software Application and Database Management

- (1) The performance of the application should be improved. We are interested in what services are available, including, but not limited to, review of the hardware, system software, .NET code, database tuning or other ways to maximize application performance while maximizing maintainability and cost effectiveness.
- (2) We would like to make several enhancements to the SVRS and are interested in what services are available. Enhancements may include the following:

- (a) The system includes many fields and features that were included as part of the COTS product but are not used by Wisconsin. We would like these features removed to streamline and simplify the application.
 - (b) The application was originally written for SQL Server 2000. While it has been upgraded to SQL 2005, it does not take full advantage of many of the SQL 2005 features. We would like the database upgraded to take full advantage of SQL 2005, and possibly SQL 2008.
 - (c) We would like to improve the reporting functions. Some desired improvements include:
 - Make the user interface for running and modifying existing reports more user-friendly.
 - Make reports in larger jurisdictions that return hundreds of thousands of rows run faster and more reliably.
 - Develop new functionality to allow users to create ad hoc custom reports.
 - (d) The application is written for 32 bit Citrix. The system could be modified to accommodate 64 bit Citrix.
 - (e) The system is written largely in Winforms. It could be converted to Webforms to allow for more true web-based functionality.
 - (f) The system should be updated to allow for on-line voter registration, and possibly for early voting.
 - (g) There are many smaller-scale improvements and enhancements that have been recommended by SVRS users. A listing of these suggested improvements is attached in Appendix B.
- (3) We are interested in on-going maintenance and support of the system and are interested in what vendor services are available on a recurring annual basis, including:
- (a) Debug and fix new issues that are discovered during the support period.
 - (b) Periodic updates and upgrades to the system to maintain technology currency.

2. Replacement SVRS

The Board may also consider replacing the SVRS with a new software package, if a package exists that could meet our needs and is cost effective. We are interested in information regarding voter registration systems that have been designed to work in the statewide post-HAVA environment, using a top-down model where all users utilize a single statewide system. The system must also accommodate the uniqueness of Wisconsin, including (but not limited to) voter registration performed at the municipal level in 1,850 separate municipalities, Election Day registration, open partisan primaries and fire number or coordinate-based residential addresses. The Board is not interested in losing any functionality that the SVRS currently has. Please refer to Appendix A for more information on the functions of the current SVRS.

3. Hardware and System Management

The Board is interested in the types of remote system management that vendors offer. The SVRS servers will remain co-located in the State datacenter, which would offer racks, uninterrupted power, climate control and physical security. The Board is looking for a vendor to provide remote management of the hardware and systems, to ensure smooth infrastructure operations and maintenance, in order to maximize uptime and cost efficiency. The vendor would be given all the necessary access and permissions to the servers in order to fulfill these responsibilities. The Board is particularly interested in:

- (a) What service levels are available.
- (b) What services are included in those services.
- (c) What types of monitoring, alerting and notifications are available.
- (d) What costs are affiliated with the different levels of service that vendors offer.

4. Redistricting

As a result of the 2010 Census, district boundaries will be redrawn statewide for ward, aldermanic, county supervisory, state legislative and congressional districts. The SVRS currently maintains district boundaries through address ranges. The Board is interested in what tools, technologies, best practices and services are available to convert the new districts into SVRS and update the voter information with the new boundaries once they are finalized.

V. Vendor Response

Vendors responding to this RFI should answer the following questions. Additional information regarding the vendor and the services offered as they relate to the needs listed

above is welcome. Responses should not exceed 50 pages, and should be organized into the following categories.

1. Company Information

This section should be included for all responses. Any vendor that submits a response to this RFI should provide the information stated below at a minimum. Vendors can and are encouraged to provide information that is relevant to this RFI in addition to what is requested.

- A. Introduce your organization (e.g., parent, age, size, number of customers, offices, number of employees, etc). Please include ownership structure.
- B. Provide an overview of the services and products offered by your company that relate to this request.
- C. Identify contact name(s) and information for questions we might have concerning this information and the products and services you offer.
- D. List any relevant websites for your company and its offerings.
- E. Identify major customers that use your services for similar projects that are willing to serve as references. Provide the appropriate contact information.

2. Response to the Government Accountability Board's Needs

Each of the sections below should be included in your response. If you are not responding to a particular need, please still include that section in the response, with an indication that you are not responding to that section, in order to ensure the clarity of the response.

Responses for each of the sections below should be divided and clearly identified to ensure ease of use and understanding. If you are responding to a given section below, include all of the information requested for that section. Vendors are allowed and encouraged to provide information that is relevant to this RFI in addition to what is requested.

A. Maintenance of SVRS

If you are responding to this section, please provide information that relates to this specific Government Accountability Board need as defined in Section IV, Subsection 1 of this RFI. Be sure to include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Describe the services or products your company offers in these areas.

- (2) Describe your experiences working for other clients specifically related to revising their hardware plan, revising software for performance, and reducing overall operating expenses. Give specific examples.
- (3) Describe the methodologies you use for defining performance problems and improvements.
- (4) Describe your project management skills and techniques.
- (5) Provide information on your standard rates for those services, and any other relevant cost information.

B. Replacement SVRS

If you are responding to this section, please provide information that relates to this specific need as defined in Section IV, Subsection 2 of the RFI. Include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Describe the product that you are offering.
- (2) Describe the services you offer related to deployment and training of the system.
- (3) Describe the maintenance and support services you offer for your product.
- (4) Describe your future plans for the product, including, but not limited to, research and development, future upgrades, technology currency planning and enhancements in response to customer requests.
- (5) Describe other clients similar to Wisconsin who have used your system and services.
- (6) Please describe the estimated hardware needs for the system, as well as the required system software (including but not limited to server software, database software, web server software).
- (7) Provide your standard pricing for the software itself, as well as your rates for deployment, training, maintenance, and support, and any other relevant cost information.

C. Hardware and System Management

If you are responding to this section, please provide information that relates to this specific need as defined in Section IV, Subsection 3 of the RFI. Include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Describe the remote hardware and system management services you offer, including the features and benefits of your services.
- (2) Describe your experience working with VMware.
- (3) Describe your expertise with monitoring and scheduling.
- (4) Describe your release management practices.
- (5) Provide examples of similar applications in size and scope that are managed by your company.
- (6) Describe the costs of the services you offer.

D. Redistricting

If you are responding to this section, please provide information that relates to this specific need as defined in Section IV, Subsection 4 of the RFI. Include the following information at a minimum:

- (1) Describe the services you offer related to redistricting.
- (2) Describe your methodology for converting the new district boundaries into SVRS and associating the voters to the correct new districts. Provide your best practice solution.
- (3) Describe any proposed interfaces or system changes recommended to simplify or improve the process.
- (4) Provide examples of similar projects you have completed in the past for other clients.
- (5) Provide information on your standard rates, and other typical costs for the tools and services you described above.

VI. Submitting a Response

Interested vendors should submit a response following the format specified in Section V Vendor Response. Responses should be no longer than 50 pages. Vendors are asked to submit four (4) printed copies of the response to the mailing address below, and an electronic copy sent to the e-mail address below. Electronic documents should be provided in PDF or using standard Microsoft Office products (e.g., Word, Excel). All materials must be received at the Government Accountability Board no later than 4:00 p.m. CST, on September 18, 2009.

Email responses to:

sharrie.hauge@wi.gov

AND

Mail responses to:

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VII. Vendor Questions

Vendors are encouraged to submit any questions in writing, via e-mail, to sarah.whitt@wisconsin.gov by September 11, 2009. Answers to vendor questions will be posted on the Board's website at <http://elections.wi.gov> for reference by all vendors. The Board may choose to hold a vendor teleconference call if sufficient inquiries or interest is expressed. If vendors are interested in participating in a vendor call, please contact Sarah Whitt.