

Questions and Answers Regarding RFP For an Online Integrated and Searchable Campaign  
Finance Filing and Reporting System  
RFP # 2022-1

(Questions in black text, answers in red text.)

**Received January 12, 2022**

1. Whether companies from Outside USA can apply for this?  
(like, from India or Canada)

A foreign company may submit a response to the RFP so long as it is not disqualified from doing business in Arkansas or the United States for national security or other reasons. Any company contracting with the State of Arkansas must be registered to do business in Arkansas before engagement.

2. Whether we need to come over there for meetings?

Travel to Arkansas is not specifically required to submit a response to the RFP, however, the Secretary of State may require oral interviews of RFP respondents. Zoom (or other similar technologies) may be utilized. Because intensive engagement with Secretary of State staff, and perhaps potential system users and funding agents, will be a critical component of system design, development, and implementation, it is imperative that frequent, interactive communication be maintained throughout the project. While in-person meetings are not required by the RFP, RFP responses must ensure that the means of communication are clearly defined to ensure that input from all state participants is timely collected, properly analyzed, and thoroughly implemented by the vendor.

3. Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA?  
(like, from India or Canada)

Yes, in accordance with the considerations outlined in response #2 above.

4. Can we submit the proposals via email?

Yes, email submittals of proposals are acceptable.

**Received January 26, 2022 (a.m.)**

1. Regarding Detailed Specifications, item 19 (page 11):  
Regarding the “comprehensive user support services” described in item 19, to which of these groups is the vendor expected to provide support services?
  - (a) state employees
  - (b) filers (such as candidates and committee treasurers)
  - (c) the general public
  - (d) other users not listed above (please specify)

Users of the system who have registered with the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office to file documentation online. This includes registered online filers and state-employed administrators of the system.

2. Regarding "Purpose" section (page 5):

What is the scope and type of legacy data required to be converted to "provide search and reporting capability for all currently existing data, including legacy data, previously filed within the existing system"? Please include information on which specific documents (item 1 a-w) are included, the data formats used for those documents, and a brief description of the sources of that data.

Any data that is currently available through the existing electronic system must be converted, be searchable, and be downloadable. This will include data from all of the documents identified in RFP items (1 a-w). The RFP does not mandate specific formats for extractable data. The Secretary of State will consider multiple types of formats based on vendor's proposed solutions so long as they are cost-effective and generally available to most system users.

3. Regarding "Detailed Specifications" section, item 11 (page 7):

"Uploadable document formats shall include electronic word processing files, portable document format files, Excel spreadsheets, or equivalent formats that may be saved in a read-only format and combined into a single document that is available to the public in an electronically-searchable format."

(a) Does "electronically-searchable" for this requirement refer to searching only the document metadata (such as document name and date), OR does it refer to searching the content of the documents as well?

(b) If "electronically-searchable" refers to the content of the documents as well, what specific file formats and file extensions are required to be supported for this content search (i.e. Microsoft Word .docx, etc.)?

The Secretary of State will consider multiple types of formats based on vendor's proposed solutions so long as they are cost-effective and generally available to most system users. We anticipate a Word or pdf format where all content can be searchable but are open to creative, cost-effective proposals.

4. Regarding "Detailed Specifications" section item 14(d) (page 9): "All reports created shall be exportable to multiple formats."

Does the SoS have specific requirements for what export formats are required? If so, please list the export formats required.

We prefer standard formats such as Word, Excel, pdf, etc. but will consider creative solution proposals.

**Received January 26, 2022 (p.m.)**

1. Could you please elaborate on the uses for the three environments in Requirement 8? Would the data load and number of authenticated user accounts be similar across the three environments?
  - a. Development environment where the developer/vendor tests code and checks whether the application runs successfully with that code, help with demos and conceptual models. (Max 5 to 7 users.)
  - b. Test Environment is exactly like production environment, the application is tested before releasing newer versions and can be used for internal training. (Max 7 to 8 users)
  - c. Production Environment with regards to users – approximately 2,150, however, numbers may increase or decreased based on particular filings.

**Received January 28, 2022 (Set 1)**

General Questions

Q: Internet Explorer has been deprecated by Microsoft and they no longer support the browser. The RFP asks that we support the latest two versions of Internet Explorer. If there is an issue with IE, what are the expectations of support or will this remain a requirement of the application?

A: We acknowledge the fact the Internet Explorer has been deprecated and will accept alternative solutions provided without penalty to vendors.

Q: Online Help Functions - Will the online help functions be for internal use only such as SOS system administrators or will these functions need to be viewable by the System users as well?

A: Online help functions will be for use both by SOS system administrators and online filers.

Q: What portions of HAVA will apply to this particular software application?

A: As of this date, no HAVA requirements are mandated. This would only apply should Federal HAVA requirements be mandated at a future time, although this is highly unlikely.

Q: Will you require the 'System Risk Plan' outlined in Section 17 with the RFP reply and submission or can it be provided after award?

A: This can be submitted after contract award. It is discussed in the RFP to notify vendors that it is an expected component of the project to be further outlined in the contract award.

Q: What is the expected date to award RFP?

A: The award date will be determined after funding is secured from the Arkansas General Assembly. Our best estimate is in early second quarter of 2022.

Q: Will there be a due diligence period or interview period after selection? Will this be virtual or in-person?

A: We anticipate interviews with finalist(s) vendor(s). Interviews may be conducted either virtually or in-person.

Q: What is the ideal date to begin the project?

A: Project initiation will begin after funding is secured and a contract executed. Our best estimate is in early second quarter of 2022.

### Technical Questions

Q: Can you clarify or provide an example of the requirement: The System shall provide online help functions, editable by SOS system administrators.

A: This will be the ability for SOS administrators (back end users) to view and provide assistance to authenticated users/filers. It is anticipated that the successful vendor and SOS will work together during the design phase to determine specifically what these help functions will entail.

Q: OPTION 2 - HOSTING ENVIRONMENT - SOS: What physical location does the SOS propose to house the on premise server? Would this be housed at the SOS's location or the vendor's?

A: This will be housed at the SOS's location.

Q: If hosting is on premise at the SOS, what type of remote access will SOS require or will on-site staffing be required?

A: The SOS can provide VPN access to specified servers. On-site staffing is not required.

Q: Section 1, 11, A: If the file format submitted is not in a readily machine-readable format such as Excel, CSV, text file, etc... but rather, in a PDF or Word file, for example, is the system expected to perform any level of optical character recognition on those document types? If so, can we be provided examples of such documents?

A: Yes, due to the requirements of Act 1029 of 2021, optical character recognition will be required for Word or PDF formatted documents.

Q: Section 1, 12, F: Please explain more on what creating a new category form entails and the expected changes in the system once an SOS administrator creates a new form. Is the system required to handle all of the necessary steps it would take to generate new data tables and fields,

updated entry methods, and rules for submission of these forms with zero interaction from any party other than an SOS administrator?

A: It is unknown at this time if, or under what specifications, additional documents may be required by the Arkansas General Assembly. Any new forms or reports would require the same functionality as other system forms and reports. The SOS administrator will be the point of contact for any newly-required forms or reports.

Q: Section 1, 11, I: What transactions, notifications, and correspondence between filers and the SOS should occur in the system, more specifically notifications and correspondence. Are there external transactions, notifications or correspondence that would need to be imported to the system?

A: Existing notifications would involve initial system registrations, registration approvals, filing/uploading of forms/reports, error messaging, forgotten user names and passwords, and any other notifications identified by the successful vendor as helpful to the updated system.

Q: The RFP indicates the system shall begin to accept submissions following the November 2022 election cycle. What is the desired time frame for going live with the new system?

A: We anticipate implementing the updated system during the first quarter of 2023.

Q: Will there be a technical administrator or point of contact with the SOS during the design, development, and implementation? If so, are they a consultant/ contractor or SOS staff?

A: Yes, SOS staff will actively engage the successful vendor during every step of the project. We have not, and do not anticipate the hiring of outside consultants, however, the Arkansas General Assembly may request such as a condition of funding.

### Support Questions

Q: In regards to a 'Maintenance and Development Support Plan' providing a minimum of 500 hours, do you want a breakdown of the individual service (maintenance, development, technical support, Tier 1 support, wtc.) per hour for overage or one single hourly rate for hours that exceed 500 annually?

A: For purposes of the response to the RFP, vendors are requested to provide one average hourly rate for the first 500 hours of services because there is no way for us to determine how many hours will be allocated to the various levels of support (development, maintenance, user support, etc.) Specific hourly rates can be stratified by differing types of support services for services in excess of 500 hours whenever a contract is executed with the successful vendor.

Q: Telephone and on-site (as needed) support to SOS - "Peak" hours of forty-eight (48) hours prior to each filing deadline. Does the support and/or software engineer need to be available 24/7 over that period or is there a specific time frame 48 hours prior to filing for telephone support to

SOS and Users? Same question for on-site support ? If on-site is needed for 24/7 support, what type of access or credentials will they need outside of SOS standard business hours of 8 am - 5 pm.

A: A customer support representative, or similar person, shall be available during peak periods beginning 48 hours prior to filing deadlines. A software engineer does not need to be available during this period, but is expected to be available during normal business hours to respond to “help tickets” compiled by the customer support representatives and submitted, as usual, following normal off-peak protocol between the successful vendor and the SOS.

Q: Are there any expectations for Vendor to support the public domain regarding use of the publicly searchable application or will the SOS handle public support?

A: The SOS will handle this public support.

Q: If a support person is on call for 48 hours prior to 16 filing deadlines in even years, that exceeds the minimum 500 hours of support maintenance alone without consideration of development, maintenance and non-peak support. Should we still price the 500 minimum with hourly overage or would you like any further or supplemental breakdown?

A: No, see previous answer regarding the initial 500 hours of support services.

Q: How many members of the SOS staff provide support to or for the campaign finance reform software currently in place? How many staff members are expected to continue to be providing support on the new system?

A: There are currently two (2) full-time and two (2) part-time support staff from the Elections Division. The SOS Information Technology Director provides technical assistance, as needed, on technology issue.

Q: Approximately how many support calls and then total hours are provided to Users annually in the current system?

A: We do not have this information at the current time but have reached out to our current vendor for response. We will provide additional information as received.

## **Received January 28, 2022 (Set 2)**

1. General: Can the state confirm how many SOS back office users will need to perform the workflow associated with candidate filing reviews/approvals?

A: There are currently two (2) full-time and two (2) part-staff Elections Division staff that administer the daily operation of the system. For system design and implementation and ongoing log-in purposes, it is estimated that eight (8) SOS users be granted access to allow for IT staff and Election’s staff backup to interact.

2. **(Section Project Team - Key Staff):** Is the SOS looking for actual names of Key Personnel? Or are Job titles / roles sufficient for this information?

A: No actual names are need except for the primary contact. Job titles/descriptions will suffice.

3. Could Arkansas SOS please tell us if there is a preferred solution for this RFP, and / or whether a vendor assisted in the creation of this RFP?

A: The SOS does not have a particular design in mind for the updated system and will evaluate proposals based on finding the optimum solution. SOS staff prepared the RFP issued January 9, 2022.

4. In what format are the contributions and expenditures data currently kept?
  - a. Do they contain each transaction?
  - b. If so, does each transaction contain:
    - i. The associated filer?
    - ii. Office the filer was seeking?
    - iii. Legislative district (if applicable)?
    - iv. Party affiliation?
    - v. The dollar amount?
    - vi. (For contributions) The type of contributor (individual, lobbyist, PAC, etc.)?
    - vii. The geographic location of the contributor or recipient entity?
    - viii. Election year?

A: The contributions and expenditures data does contain each transaction. Some of these items are specific to the filer and some of the data is specific to the donor however all fields will be relatable to the form/report. For example, the donor will not be identified by his/her party affiliation or legislative district, however, the donation is relatable to the candidate's party affiliation or legislative district.

5. Is the Secretary of State's Office willing to migrate the existing data to the selected solution, or does the legacy data need to be kept in its current format?

A: The SOS is willing to migrate the existing data to the selected solution.

6. In which database engine is the legacy data stored - Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, etc.?

A: MS SQL server.

7. To confirm, this is this the system your office is looking to replace, correct? <https://financial-disclosures.sos.arkansas.gov/#/index>

A: Yes.

- a. Could you please describe some of the motivations for moving away from this system?
8. Could you please provide some estimated dates for milestones in a successful implementation project?

A: The contract with the existing vendor is set to expire this year. As a matter of business practice, and after consultation with our funding provider (the Arkansas General Assembly), the RFP was issued.

9. **(Requirement 1, Part D)** Could you please advise on what time period the State and District Candidate Final Campaign Contribution and Expenditure Report needs to cover? Is it meant to be a final list for each campaign or simply for each filing deadline?

A: In even-numbered years, reports are filed monthly. In odd-numbered years, reports are filed quarterly. Each report is filed separately and may be considered unique.

10. **(Requirement 1, Parts I and J)** Are the Lobbyist Registration Report and Lobbyist Termination Report simply reports, or are they forms similar to the Political Action Committee Registration Form and Termination Form (Parts F and G)?

A: These are of similar-nature forms.

11. **(Requirement 3)** Could you please elaborate on what file management functionality will be needed?

A: The SOS desires one system by which all filing and reporting functions can be accessed by users. The system itself shall be proposed by the vendor.

12. **(Requirement 7)** Could you please provide examples of some of the variables (relative to filers) that would need to be recorded in the audit history? Who should be the audience of this audit history - the general public, filers, and/or internal SoS users?

A: This functionality is mainly for use by SOS staff to record the date, nature, and identity of the particular filing. The specific variables will be determined in consultation with the successful vendor.

13. **(Requirement 9)** Could you please advise if this requirement relates to disaster recovery and system integrity or a need to roll back to previous versions of data assets?

A: Technically both. The greatest concern is for disaster recovery. Roll back would be primarily to recover documents that may have been lost.

14. **(Requirement 11, Part F)** What determines if a document was successfully filed? Does the filing need to be approved by a staff member in order to be considered successful, or is it that the upload itself simply succeeded?
- a. Is the user who would receive this notification the internal staff or the filer themselves?

A: SOS staff would have to verify that initial filers have a signature card on file. The other reports are currently not reviewed by SOS staff. Successful uploads are documents/data that has been received by the system.

15. **(Requirement 11, Part G)** In reflecting the differences between filed reports, would it be acceptable to show the differences between datasets? If not, could you please elaborate on this requirement?

A: Yes.



16. **(Requirement 11, Part H)** The data that is required to generate these reports (contributions, expenditures, loans, and outstanding obligations) will be available to the general public, correct?

A: Yes.

17. **(Requirement 14, Part A)** Who would be the audience for these reports (internal staff, filers, or general public)?

A: All users of the system.

18. **(Requirement 14, Part D)** Could you please advise which formats need to be supported for export?

A: Unlike the import of documents, the format of export documents is open to vendor suggestion, however, CSV is preferred to allow data formatting into spreadsheets, etc.

19. **(Requirement 14, Part E)** Could you please elaborate on what is needed from the Outstanding Obligation Report and how its values are calculated - is it meant to show the total debts for each filer or is it more granular? (If you could please provide an example that would be great.)

A: This data is reported as debt retirement and must be itemized. An aggregate value is calculated by the system but needs to be available individually.

20. **(Requirement 14, Part E)** Who is the intended audience for the Report Not Received?

A: SOS.

21. **(Requirement 15)** Could you please elaborate on which requirements of the Help America Vote Act are most pertinent to this solution?

A: As of this date, no HAVA requirements are mandated. This would only apply should Federal HAVA requirements be mandated at a future time, although this is highly unlikely.

22. **(Requirement 18)** Is a draft Support Plan and Risk Plan something we can include as an appendix not included against page count?

A: Yes.

23. **Security-related questions:**

- a. Is there a defined template for the requested security risk plan per Requirement 17?
- b. Would the Secretary of State's Office accept industry-standard security assurance (e.g. FedRAMP Moderate, SOC-2) validation of security and risk management practices in lieu of the requested risk plan per Requirement 17?

A: SOC-2 is acceptable, but prefer SOC-1.

**Additional Questions Submitted January 27, 2022 were submitted via Excel Spreadsheet. For a list of these questions and answers, please reference this separate document at <https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/news/detail/rfp-for-online-integrated-and-searchable-campaign-finance-filing-and-report>**