



**California Beauty Brand Accelerator:
Australia and India
Request for Proposals (RFP)**

RFP Title	California Beauty Brand Accelerator: Australia and India
Issuing Agency	Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)
Division/Program	International Affairs and Trade Unit
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RFP Overview

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), International Affairs and Trade Unit is seeking proposals from qualified organizations to provide services related to planning, recruiting and operationalizing a beauty brand accelerator program for the India and Australian markets.

The purpose of this RFP is to identify a contractor with the expertise, capacity, network, and experience necessary to successfully deliver the services outlined in this solicitation. Proposers must demonstrate the ability to deliver the full scope of work in both Australia and India. A proposer may satisfy this requirement through its own personnel or through a team that includes qualified subcontractors, affiliated firms, regulatory specialists, or other in-market partners. The proposal must clearly identify the prime contractor, the personnel responsible for each market, the division of responsibilities among team members, and the approach for coordinating the Australia and India workstreams as one integrated accelerator program.

GO-Biz anticipates making a single award for the complete scope of work. However, GO-Biz reserves the right to make separate awards for the Australia and India workstreams if no single proposal demonstrates sufficient qualifications, capacity, or value to successfully deliver services in both markets. Proposers must therefore provide market-specific technical approaches and pricing for Australia and India, in addition to the proposed approach and total cost for the integrated program.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute a commitment by GO-Biz to award a contract.

Key Dates

Milestone	Date
RFP Release	August 14, 2026
Deadline for Written Questions	September 2, 2026, 8:00AM PT
Questions and Answers Posted	September 4, 2026, 5:00PM PT
Proposal Submission Deadline	September 16, 2026, 8:00AM PT
Interviews (as appropriate)	September 22-24, 2026
Tentative Award Notice (posted to Cal eProcure)	September 25, 2026
Contract Start Date	October 5, 2026

Questions and Answers

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing via email with the subject line **“California Beauty Brand Accelerator: Australia and India: Questions - [Applicant Name]”** to the Point of Contact listed on the cover page.

Questions must be received by the deadline identified in the Key Dates section.

Responses to questions will be compiled and posted publicly via Cal eProcure.

Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted electronically via email with the subject line **“California Beauty Brand Accelerator: Proposal Submission - [Applicant Name]”** to the Point of Contact listed on the cover page. No mailed/hard copy submittals will be accepted.

Proposals must be received by the deadline stated in the Key Dates section. Late submissions will not be accepted.

If files exceed email limits, proposers may provide a secure file-sharing link, provided that all documents are accessible by the deadline.

Respondents are solely responsible for ensuring the successful delivery of their proposal by the stated deadline.

It is recommended that applicants submit their proposal at least two business days in advance of the final deadline to receive confirmation of receipt and avoid a late submittal because of delays due to technical difficulties.

Background

Under the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) International and Trade Unit, the California Beauty Brand Accelerator for India and Australia will prepare California beauty and personal care companies to enter the India and Australia markets. The program moves participants from general market education through individualized coaching, legal and regulatory support, and product registration.

The program will open with both markets presented together. Following the diagnostic stage, each company selects an India track, an Australia track, or does both if it has the capacity to pursue both markets in parallel.

The program will be complemented by California Pavilions at two tradeshow: Australia Beauty in August 2027, and Cosmoprof Mumbai in December 2027. Cohort timing is built to bring

participants to market-ready status ahead of these events. Note: This accelerator concludes before the tradeshow, pavilion participation will be outside this contract.

Scope of Work

The selected contractor will design and deliver a coordinated beauty brand accelerator that prepares eligible California beauty and personal care companies to pursue market entry into Australia, India, or both markets. The program must combine a shared foundational curriculum with distinct Australia and India tracks reflecting the regulatory, commercial, cultural, and distribution requirements of each market.

The contractor must designate one Project Manager responsible for overall contract administration, integration of the two market tracks, coordination with GO-Biz, quality control, scheduling, and reporting. The contractor must also designate an Australia Market Lead and an India Market Lead with demonstrated experience in the respective markets. One individual may serve in more than one role only if the proposal demonstrates sufficient qualifications and capacity to perform each assigned function.

Phase 1 – Project Initiation and Recruitment

- Recruitment of 20 California beauty brands
 - The recruitment strategy should include in-person US industry events.
- Program Design
- Pre-recording of content to be used in Phase 2

Phase 2 – Market Foundations (Australia and India)

- Format: open-enrollment webinar series, four to six sessions. Sessions will be pre-recorded, consultants will provide office hours for the participants to ask questions and engage on the content.
- The contractor may use common introductory content where appropriate; however, country-specific regulatory, cultural, commercial, and sales-channel content must be developed or reviewed by the designated Market Lead or another qualified specialist for that market. The contractor must clearly distinguish Australia-specific and India-specific requirements and must not present requirements from one market as applicable to the other.
- Webinar series should include, at a minimum:
 - India and Australia market overview: category growth, price tiers, consumer trends
 - Regulatory landscape introduction: CDSCO and BIS in India; AICIS and TGA boundary in Australia

- Cultural context briefing: beauty ideals, skin tone representation, religious and cultural considerations relevant to product claims and marketing
- Sales channel landscape overview for each market

Phase 3 – Diagnostic and Track Selection

Format: one-on-one export readiness assessment per participating company. The assessment should include, at a minimum:

- Market fit analysis against each company's product line
 - For each participating company, the contractor will prepare a written analysis summarizing the company's readiness, product-market fit, anticipated regulatory complexity, commercial opportunities, principal risks, resource requirements, and recommended market track. Where a company is considering both markets, the diagnostic must separately evaluate the company's readiness and requirements for Australia and India.
- Track selection: India, Australia, or both
 - Final track placement will be determined jointly by the participating company and GO-Biz, with consideration given to the contractor's recommendation, the company's capacity, and available program resources.

Phase 4 – Individual Coaching and Market Entry Support

Format: 1:1 coaching and consultations with a go-to-market strategy and matchmaking with relevant partners and potential buyers. Program should support participating companies in filing relevant documentation to export their products to their chosen market(s).

Market specific topics to be covered, at a minimum:

- Legal and Regulatory Support*
 - cosmetics registration
 - required certification(s) where applicable
 - Ingredient restriction review
 - Import-Export Code (IEC) setup
 - AICIS notification or assessment for new chemical ingredients
 - Trademark filing
 - Import and export documentation, HS code classification
 - Distributor and agent contract review
 - Time with cosmetics regulatory counsel to review product requirements
- Localization
 - Packaging
 - Marketing

- Product adaptation
- Market Entry Support
 - Pricing strategy coaching, accounting for duties, tariffs, and margin structure for the selected market
 - Sales Channel Strategy
 - Supply Chain
 - Pitch creation, refinement, and practice
 - Virtual Matchmaking – virtual meetings with potential distributors, retailers, marketing and influencer companies
 - Go-to-market plan – an individual written strategy outlining the participating company’s market entry plan for their selected market(s).

*Any specialist providing legal, regulatory, or other licensed professional services must possess the qualifications or licenses required.

Phase 4 – Final Reporting

- The final report shall include the topics covered during training, services provided to each participant, participant attendance and engagement, the contractor’s assessment of each participant’s market readiness, participant feedback, and an evaluation of the program by participating businesses.

Minimum Qualifications

Proposers must meet the following requirements to be considered responsive.

Organizational Qualifications

- Must not be presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in public procurement or contracting by any government department or agency.

Organizational Capacity

1. Demonstrated ability to manage projects of comparable scale and complexity
2. Adequate staffing and operational capacity
3. The prime contractor will have been in operation for a minimum of five years.
4. The proposer must demonstrate sufficient personnel, subcontractor capacity, systems, and resources to manage the overall program and deliver individualized services to up to 20 participating companies.
5. The proposed team must demonstrate the ability to simultaneously manage the Australia and India tracks without reducing the quality, responsiveness, or level of service provided to either market.

6. If subcontractors or in-market partners will perform a material portion of the scope, the proposer must describe its prior experience working with those entities, its quality-control procedures, and how it will manage performance, communication, invoicing, and accountability across the project team.

Professional Experience

The proposed project team must collectively demonstrate:

- Experience supporting U.S. companies with market entry into Australia;
- Experience supporting U.S. companies with market entry into India;
- Experience in the beauty, cosmetics, personal care, wellness, consumer-products, or another closely related sector;
- Knowledge of the regulatory, importer, distribution, retail, e-commerce, pricing, marketing, and commercial environments of each market;
- Experience coordinating multi-market or multi-partner trade-promotion programs;
- Established professional networks in Australia and India; and
- Access to qualified regulatory, legal, technical, distribution, and commercial specialists in each market.
- The Australia Market Lead and India Market Lead must each have a minimum of seven years of relevant professional experience in their assigned market.
- Any specialist providing legal, regulatory, or other licensed professional services must possess the qualifications or licenses required in the jurisdiction in which those services are provided.
- Fluency in speaking, writing, and reading in English required
- Education
 - Project Manager must have at least a bachelor's degree. Master's degree preferred.
 - Preferred courses of study: international relations, economics, trade, business, or marketing

Budget Provisions

- GO-Biz will pay a fixed fee for the initial recorded virtual training covering topics such as, but not limited to, market overviews, regulatory landscape introductions, cultural context briefing and sales channel landscape overview for each market (Phase 2).
- GO-Biz will pay on a per company basis for Phase 3 (Diagnostic and Track Selection).
- GO-Biz will pay on a per company basis for Phase 4 (individual coaching and market entry - Legal & regulatory support, localization, and channel strategy, supply chain & buyer matchmaking).

Payment Terms

Payment from GO-Biz will follow state of California processing requirements. Payments will be issued via a **physical check in U.S. dollars**. Electronic delivery is not available at this time.

Payment terms, including invoicing requirements and payment schedules, will be finalized during the contract negotiation stage with the selected proposer.

Proposers located outside of the U.S. must include a statement in their proposal acknowledging that they understand and accept the payment terms, and that they are responsible for ensuring they have the ability to receive, process, and deposit such payments.

Failure to include this acknowledgement may result in the proposal being considered non-responsive.

Proposal Content

Proposals must include the following sections.

Exhibit A - Cover Letter

- Legal organization name
- Business address
- Website
- Year established
- Number of employees
- Proposal Contacts – include name, title, email, and phone number
 - Primary Contact (Authorized Representative)
 - Australia Lead
 - India Lead

Exhibit B - Key Personnel

Provide a table identifying all key personnel and subcontractors responsible for project execution. At a minimum, the proposed team must identify:

- Project Manager;
- Australia Market Lead;
- India Market Lead;
- Australia regulatory or technical specialist;
- India regulatory or technical specialist; and

- Any personnel responsible for recruitment, training, coaching, matchmaking, legal services, or reporting.

The proposal must clearly identify the contractual relationship among the prime contractor, subcontractors, affiliated firms, and individual specialists. Substitution of designated key personnel following award will require prior written approval from GO-Biz.

Exhibit C - Resume

Provide resumes for all key personnel listed. Each resume should include a summary of relevant experience and qualifications, highlighting past projects similar in scope to the work outlined in this RFP.

Exhibit D – Technical Proposal

Page limit: 27

A. Organizational Experience Up to 5 pages

Describe relevant experience delivering similar projects.

B. Implementation Plan – Up to 10 pages

Describe how the proposer will complete the scope of work. The Implementation Plan must separately describe:

- Recruitment strategy to secure 20 California beauty brands in the program;
- The proposer’s overall approach to managing the integrated accelerator;
- The Australia-specific technical approach;
- The India-specific technical approach;
- The division of responsibilities among the prime contractor, Market Leads, subcontractors, and specialists;
- The process for coordinating shared and country-specific content;
- The process for assigning companies to Australia, India, or both tracks;
- The approach to quality control and review of regulatory information;
- The communication and decision-making structure for working with GO-Biz’s Australia and India representatives; and
- The approach to maintaining continuity if key personnel or subcontractors become unavailable.

C. Implementation Timeline – 1-2 pages

Provide an overview of the timeline for the items identified in the Scope of Work.

D. Sample Work – 5-10 pages

Provide examples of similar work for similar types of contracts that were successfully concluded.

Exhibit E – Cost Proposal

Proposers must provide the total cost of the project, with a detailed breakdown showing how the costs were determined. GO-Biz may negotiate scope, pricing, or deliverables prior to final contract execution.

The Cost Proposal must clearly separate:

1. Shared program-management, recruitment, training, and reporting costs;
 - a. Australia-specific fixed costs;
 - b. India-specific fixed costs;
2. Australia per-company costs;
3. India per-company costs;
4. Regulatory, legal, filing, testing, translation, travel, and other third-party costs; and
5. For each individual staff working on the project, provide the person's name, title, project role, assigned market, location, hourly rates, estimated hours, and percentage of their overall time dedicated to the project.

The proposal must identify which costs are fixed, variable, estimated, optional, or reimbursable. Costs may not be shifted between the Australia and India tracks without prior written approval from GO-Biz.

This pricing structure is required to allow GO-Biz to evaluate an integrated award as well as potential market-specific awards.

The budget should be provided as either Excel sheet or Word document that includes the following cost categories:

- Personnel
 - Must include all key personnel, percentage of time on the project and the total cost.
 - For consulting contracts, provide the hourly rates and estimated hours for each individual.
- Travel
 - Provide the purpose, destination, travelers (name or position), and duration of each trip. Include details on airfare, lodging and mileage expenses if applicable.

- GO-Biz recommends that the consultant identify and plan to attend two US-based beauty tradeshow to support in-person recruitment efforts, including Cosmoprof North America.
- Materials, Supplies, & Equipment
 - Itemize in separate categories, including justification for the project's need for each item.
- Subcontractors
 - Provide the subcontractor organization name, point of contact email address, CA Certification (MB, SB, DVBE or None) Include link to Certification # if applicable, overview of work performed on the contract, and the total cost for each.
- Other Direct Costs

Exhibit F – References

Provide at least three (3) references for comparable work.

- Organization Name
- Contact Name/Title
- Email
- Phone
- Contract/Project Name
- Dates of Service
- Brief Description of Project

Evaluation and Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated by individuals in a committee. The committee will evaluate each proposal and score each proposal individually using the Evaluation Criteria Score Sheet.

Proposals will be considered based on their merits in accordance with the Scope of Work.

Bidders must score enough technical points (non-budget/cost) to advance in the evaluation phase and be eligible for invitation to any applicable interview or presentation phase. Technical scores are subject to change after interviews.

Evaluation Score Sheet		Maximum Possible Score
1.	Relevant Experience Score 0–1: Firm demonstrates little or no relevant experience, with limited comparable projects, insufficient qualifications, and minimal evidence of successful outcomes.	10

	Score 2–4: Firm demonstrates some relevant experience, though prior work shows moderate alignment with the scope and limited evidence of measurable results. Score 5–7: Firm demonstrates strong relevant experience with qualified personnel and successful delivery of projects similar in scope and complexity. Score 8–10: Firm demonstrates extensive, highly relevant experience with exceptionally qualified personnel and a consistent record of delivering successful outcomes on comparable projects.	
2.	Overall Technical Approach: Staffing, project management and coordination, recruitment, training, coaching, and matchmaking strategy Score 0–3: Proposal shows limited understanding of the project objectives and presents an unclear or incomplete technical approach. Score 4–7: Proposal demonstrates a basic understanding of the project with a feasible but moderately detailed technical approach and work plan. Score 8–11: Proposal demonstrates a strong understanding of the project with a clear, logical, and well-structured technical approach. Score 12–15: Proposal demonstrates exceptional understanding with a comprehensive, strategic, and highly effective approach to executing the project.	15
3.	Australia Expertise and Approach: Australia market, regulatory, and beauty-sector experience, coaching and mentoring approach Score 0–4: Proposal shows limited understanding of the project objectives and presents an unclear or incomplete technical approach. Score 5–9: Proposal demonstrates a basic understanding of the project with a feasible but moderately detailed technical approach and work plan. Score 10–14: Proposal demonstrates a strong understanding of the project with a clear, logical, and well-structured technical approach. Score 15–20: Proposal demonstrates exceptional understanding with a comprehensive, strategic, and highly effective approach to executing the project.	20
4.	India Expertise and Approach: India market, regulatory, and beauty-sector experience, coaching and mentoring approach Score 0–4: Proposal shows limited understanding of the project objectives and presents an unclear or incomplete technical approach. Score 5–9: Proposal demonstrates a basic understanding of the project with a feasible but moderately detailed technical approach and work plan. Score 10–14: Proposal demonstrates a strong understanding of the project with a clear, logical, and well-structured technical approach. Score 15–20: Proposal demonstrates exceptional understanding with a comprehensive, strategic, and highly effective approach to executing the project.	20
5.	Cost Proposal Score 0–7: Cost proposal is unclear, poorly justified, or misaligned with the scope of work. Score 8–15: Cost proposal is generally reasonable but lacks full transparency, detail, or clear justification. Score 16–23: Cost proposal is clear, well-structured, and appropriately aligned with the proposed scope of work.	30

	Score 24–30: Cost proposal is highly detailed, transparent, and demonstrates strong value and cost-effectiveness. <i>When scoring a proposal, cost/value effectiveness and cost adequacy may be judged, evaluated and awarded points as part of the technical score, but this must be in addition to cost points. GO-Biz will use the suggested formula in SCM Vol 1, 5.25, B to calculate points for cost.</i>	
6.	References Score 0–2: References are missing, weak, or indicate limited verification of relevant performance. Score 3: References confirm satisfactory performance but demonstrate limited distinction or project relevance. Score 4: References confirm strong performance and reliability on projects similar in scope and complexity. Score 5: References consistently confirm exceptional performance, professionalism, and successful project delivery.	5
TOTAL		100

To be eligible for award of the complete scope, a proposal must receive at least 50 of the 70 available non-cost points and must receive at least 13 of 20 points in both the Australia Experience and India Experience categories.

A proposal that does not meet the minimum score for one market may remain eligible for a market-specific award if it meets the overall technical threshold and the minimum experience score for the market for which the award is being considered.

Additional Terms and Conditions

Vendor Forms

- STD 204 – Payee Data Record*
 - U.S.–based vendors or vendors accepting payment to a U.S. based address must complete and submit the STD 204 form
 - International or foreign vendors who possess a U.S. Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) are also required to complete and submit the STD 204 form
 - *Instructions to Foreign Vendors Without a U.S. TIN - If the Respondent is an international or foreign vendor without a U.S. TIN, they must submit the appropriate IRS Form W-8 instead of the STD 204. The correct type of form will depend on the nature of your business and entity type
 - W8BEN form for individuals
 - W8BEN-E form for entities
- STD 21 – Drug-Free Workplace Certification
- CCC – Contractor Certification Clauses
- Darfur Contracting Act Certification
- Bidder Declaration

Payment Terms Acknowledgement

Proposers located outside of the United States must include a statement in their proposal acknowledging that they understand and accept that payment will be issued only by **physical check in U.S. dollars** mailed through standard postal services, and that they are responsible for ensuring they have the ability to receive, process, and deposit such payments.

Payment Term Acknowledgement Statement (for proposers located outside of the United States):

“The proposer acknowledges and accepts that payments under any resulting agreement with the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) will be issued by physical check in U.S. dollars and delivered by mail in accordance with State of California payment procedures. The proposer confirms that it has the ability to receive and process such payments.”

GenAI Disclosure

The State of California seeks to realize the potential benefits of GenAI, through the development and deployment of GenAI tools, while balancing the risks of these new technologies.

Applicant must notify the State in writing if it: (1) intends to provide GenAI as a deliverable to the State; or (2), intends to utilize GenAI, including GenAI from third parties, to complete all or a portion of any deliverable that materially impacts: (i) functionality of a State system, (ii) risk to the State, or (iii) Contract performance. For avoidance of doubt, the term “materially impacts” shall have the meaning set forth in State Administrative Manual (SAM) § 4986.2 Definitions for GenAI.

Failure to report GenAI to the State may result in disqualification. The State reserves the right to seek any and all relief to which it may be entitled to as a result of such non-disclosure.

Upon notification by an applicant of GenAI as required, the State reserves the right to incorporate GenAI Special Provisions into the final contract or reject bids/offers that present an unacceptable level of risk to the State.

Government Code 11549.64 defines “Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)” as an artificial intelligence system that can generate derived synthetic content, including text, images, video, and audio that emulates the structure and characteristics of the system’s training data.

Small Business and DVBE Incentive Program

Small Business Incentive Program

Current law encourages state departments to first consider a California-certified small business (SB) and microbusiness (MB) for contracting opportunities. The State of California is committed to supporting SB and MB participation in state contracting and seeks to use certified SBs and MBs whenever possible.

In accordance with GC Section 14835, et seq., certified small businesses and microbusinesses are encouraged to apply and can claim a five percent (5%) preference when submitting a bid on a state contract. A non-small business may receive a preference of five percent (5%) if the business commits to subcontracting at least twenty-five percent (25%) of its net bid price with one or more small businesses or microbusinesses and the subcontractor preference does not remove the award from a certified small business.

- B) The SB preference provides certified SBs and MBs a calculation preference in the amount of five percent (5%) of the highest scored, responsible, and responsive proposal submitted by a proposing firm who is not a certified small business.
- B) The five percent (5%) preference is used only for computation purposes, to determine the winning bidder and does not alter the amounts of the resulting contract. A contract awarded on the basis of the five percent (5%) preference is awarded to the small business or non-small business for the actual amount of its bid.

A complete copy of the firm's current Small Business certification with the Department of General Services (DGS) **must** also accompany the response.

Helpful resources pertaining to the small business program may be found here:

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/PD/About/Page-Content/PD-Branch-Intro-Accordion-List/OSDS/OSDS?search=small%20business>

Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise (DVBE) Incentive Program

Prime contractors, with the exception of a certified Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise (DVBE), who subcontract work to DVBEs a minimum of five percent (5%) of its net bid price to meet the DVBE participation goal will receive a five percent (5%) preference during the evaluation. The preference is in addition to any small business preference that may apply.

In accordance with section 999.5(a) of the Military and Veterans Code, an incentive will be given to bidders who meet or exceed the DVBE program requirement. For evaluation purposes only, the State shall apply an incentive to bids that propose California-certified DVBE participation as identified on the Bidder Declaration and confirmed by the State. A five percent (5%) preference will be given. A contract awarded on the basis of the five percent (5%) preference is awarded to the DVBE for the actual amount of its bid.

A complete copy of the firm's current DVBE certification with the Department of General Services (DGS) **must** also accompany the response.

Helpful resources pertaining to the DVBE program may be found here:

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/PD/About/Page-Content/PD-Branch-Intro-Accordion-List/OSDS/OSDS?search=small%20business>

Insurance Requirements

Insurance requirements may apply when the total contract value exceeds \$100,000. Contractors may be required to maintain Commercial General Liability, Workers Compensation, and Professional Liability (applicable to contracts over \$1,000,000).

RFP Response Requirements

This RFP and the Proposer's response to this document will be made part of GO-Biz's proposer's file.

Plagiarism, including but not limited to taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own, and failure to cite someone else's work or ideas, is prohibited and is grounds for disqualification. Using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools to complete any portion of an application, without citation, may be considered plagiarism and may also be grounds for disqualification.

Reservation of Rights and RFP Amendments

GO-Biz reserves the following rights, which may be exercised at its sole discretion and without liability to any Applicant:

- 1. Right to Amend, Supplement, or Cancel the RFP**

GO-Biz reserves the right to amend, supplement, clarify, revise, delay, or cancel this Request for Proposals (RFP), in whole or in part, at any time prior to the proposal submission deadline or prior to execution of a final agreement. Amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes to the scope of work, key dates, funding availability, evaluation criteria, or submission requirements. Issuance of this RFP does not obligate GO-Biz to make an award or to enter into any agreement.

- 2. Notice of Amendments**

All official amendments, addenda, and clarifications to this RFP will be posted on at: [Cal eProcure](#)

It is the sole responsibility of each Applicant to monitor the website for updates, amendments, or additional information related to this RFP. GO-Biz is not responsible for failure of an Applicant to receive notice of an amendment. Failure to acknowledge or respond to an amendment may result in disqualification. **The Notice of Intent to Award will post to Cal eProcure and remain posted for five (5) business days.**

- 3. Right to Reject Proposals**

GO-Biz reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive minor irregularities or

technical defects in proposals received, and to request clarification of information submitted.

4. Right to Award in Whole or in Part

GO-Biz intends to award the complete scope to one proposer if the evaluation determines that doing so provides the strongest combination of qualifications, coordination, performance, and value. GO-Biz reserves the right to:

- a. Award funding in whole or in part;
- b. Award less than the total amount requested;
- c. Make multiple awards under this RFP;
- d. Not award all available funds; or
- e. Issue additional solicitations for similar services.
- f. Selected Applicants may be required to negotiate scope or budget adjustments consistent with available funding.
- g. Make no award.

If separate market awards are made, GO-Biz may require the selected contractors to coordinate on shared recruitment, curriculum, company diagnostics, scheduling, data collection, and reporting. Each contractor will remain responsible for the performance and accuracy of its assigned market workstream.

5. Right to Negotiate and Request Additional Information

GO-Biz may request additional information, conduct interviews, seek clarifications, or enter into negotiations with one or more Applicants prior to final award. Failure to respond timely to such requests may result in disqualification.

6. Proposal Preparation Costs

All costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal are the sole responsibility of the Applicant. GO-Biz shall not be liable for any costs incurred in connection with this RFP, including in the event of amendment or cancellation.

Award and Protest

A contract award may not be made until GO-Biz posts a notice of the proposed contract award in a place accessible by the general public, including any Internet site identified in the RFP for at least five working days prior to awarding the contract. (PCC § 10345(b).)

A. Inspection of bids is required as follows:

1. All proposals and all evaluation and scoring sheets shall be available for public inspection at the conclusion of the committee scoring process. (PCC § 10344(c)(2).)

B. There are time limits in which to file a protest. A protest must be filed with GO-Biz GO-Biz.BSU@gobiz.ca.gov and DGS OLSProtests@dgs.ca.gov after notice of intent

to award the contract, if notice was required, but before the actual award. (PCC § 10345.)

- C. Once a protest is filed, the contract may not be awarded until the protest is withdrawn or DGS has rendered a decision. (PCC §§ 10345(a)(2), 10345(b)(1).)
- D. After filing a protest, the protestant has five (5) calendar days to file a detailed written statement of the protest grounds if the original protest did not contain the complete grounds for the protest. (PCC §§ 10345(a)3), 10345(b)(2).)
- E. Upon receipt of a protest, DGS/OLS:
 - 1. Sends the protestant an acknowledgment letter which includes copies of the protest statutes and regulations and informs the protestant that it must submit a full and complete statement specifying grounds of protest within five calendar days of filing of the notice of protest.
 - 2. Requests information on a designated form from GO-Biz regarding the agency contact person and other administrative details. GO-Biz will complete and return the form to DGS/OLS within 24 hours. In addition, if GO-Biz is aware of any reason that the protest should not go forward, this would be communicated to DGS/OLS at this time. (See SCM 1, section 6.03).
 - 3. Reviews the protest to determine whether DGS has jurisdiction. If DGS does not have jurisdiction, DGS/OLS issues a written notice of dismissal.
 - 4. Assigns a Hearing Officer to the protest if DGS has jurisdiction. The Hearing Officer determines whether the protest will be resolved by written submission or public oral hearing.

Proposal Disclosure and Confidentiality Procedures

Proposers are advised that all proposals submitted pursuant to this RFP are subject to Public Contract Code section 10344, subdivision (c)(2), under which proposals, evaluations, and scoring materials become public records available for inspection at the conclusion of committee scoring. If a Proposer seeks to protect confidential, trade-secret, or proprietary information in its proposal, the Proposer must clearly identify specific proposal portions as confidential at the time of submission. Note that blanket, whole-document, or untethered (such as unclear or not page/provision specific) confidentiality designations will not be honored, and the submission will be treated as entirely public.

If a Proposer seeks to protect confidential information in its proposal, it shall flag or highlight such information in its proposal either in-text or via a separate page or attachment identifying the confidential information, submitted along with the proposal. Any separate confidentiality explanation document or attachment shall not count toward the maximum proposal page limit.

For purposes of any claimed confidentiality, confidential information is limited to material or information that falls under an exemption to the California Public Records Act (Government Code section 7920.000 et seq.), and the Proposer should identify which exemption applies to the confidential information flagged or highlighted in its proposal.

GO-Biz retains sole discretion to determine whether any portion of a proposal is exempt from disclosure, though it will take into consideration the specific confidential information identified by the Proposer when making that determination.

Standard Contract Terms

All agreements entered into with the State of California will include reference to General Terms and Conditions that may be viewed and downloaded here: [Standard Contract Language](#).

Authority

Assembly Bill 2832 Chapter 577 exempts from any contracting requirement applicable only to state contracts, including but not limited to Section 10295 of the Public Contract Code.