

Request For Proposals  
Options  
August 22, 2007

There are two likely alternatives as related to the Request For Proposals (RFP). We can do a very detailed RFP or we can do a more general RFP.

The detailed RFP would begin with a very detailed needs assessment. The needs assessment would include interviews with court staff, judges and others who use the system. We would discuss each task the system performs; document each task as a “use case” and include those use cases within the RFP. As each specific task is documented as a use case, this detailed RFP and analysis will result in 2000 to 3000 use cases. The resulting RFP will be a lengthy, very specific document. This is certainly the method one would choose when programming or “building” an information system “from scratch”.

However, as we are buying a system with the intent of making very few modifications to that system, we have a second alternative available: A more general RFP could be created.

A more general RFP would include a similar needs assessment. However, the assessment would focus on more general processes. Those processes would be documented and included in the resulting RFP. As the focus is more general, this analysis would result in approximately 10% of the total use cases that a detailed RFP would result include – 200 to 300. These processes would be included in the RFP. This scenario would include and be largely based on the consolidated functional standards. The detailed focus would be on areas of the system where North Dakota’s processes are significantly different from others across the country.

In both scenarios, the RFP creation process would include assessment meetings with judges, clerks, administrative personnel, other government entities, CJIS partners and others. The results of those meetings will be documented and included in the RFP. The primary difference is the level of detail specified for tasks performed by court personnel and judges.

The level of detail specified as related to interfaces, data sharing, integration, data conversion and other tasks will be similar in both scenarios.

As the detailed RFP is primarily based on discussion with current users, it is my concern that a detailed RFP including thousands of use cases would ultimately be a specification for a “windows or web based version of UCIS”. As we are hoping for this system to be the catalyst that will move us leaps forward in terms of technology, features, case flow, document flow and case processing, focusing on UCIS as the “model” for our specifications seems to be problematic.

Selecting the more general approach is not without its own problems. One would pursue this option with several assumptions. Ultimately, those assumptions could be proven incorrect and include: The vendor’s system is based on “best practices”; the system, as programmed will accommodate processes currently in place in ND courts. We are also ultimately assuming that

we in ND are willing to modify business practices to adopt the system with minimal modifications.

If the system is poorly developed, or if the system is based on “bad” practices, or if the system simply cannot accommodate some unique ND practices, or if we are unwilling to adapt our practices, there will be problems with the installation.

The vendors in this marketplace are well established, experienced vendors. The systems these vendors are creating are mature, stable systems. As such, I believe the above assumptions related to the vendor’s systems are safe.

It is my recommendation that we pursue the more general RFP approach.