



City of Tacoma

Questions and Answers

ESB Trusted Advisor RFP Specification No. PI24-0214F

All interested parties had the opportunity to submit questions in writing by email to Brittany Riolo, Senior Buyer by date questions were due. The answers to the questions received are provided below and posted to the City's website at www.TacomaPurchasing.org. Navigate to [Current Contracting Opportunities / Services Solicitations](#), and then click *Questions and Answers* for this Specification. This information IS NOT considered an addendum. Respondents should consider this information when submitting their proposals.

- 1. Question: Could you provide a detailed overview of the systems currently utilized by TPU, including platforms such as SAP, PMS, Snowflake, Software AG products, etc.? How are these systems integrated with the existing ESB platform?**

Answer: A current state assessment, which we expect to include inventorying products and integrations, is the initial scope of work the engagement and we are asking this assessment to encompass a holistic view. However, following is a brief description of our integration landscape.

As shared in the pre-proposal meeting, we have two domains – a corporate/business domain and utility operational control domain. Key integration middleware tools include Software AG WebMethods (within our operational domain), SAP-PI (corporate/business domain) and a handful of product specific integration tools and workbenches.

The majority of our integrations with the operational domain ESB are real-time integrations with limited transformations.

- 2. Question: What are the various integration patterns currently in place or under consideration for TPU (e.g., point-to-point, event-driven, API-led, ESB)? How do these patterns address critical business needs and technical requirements?**

Answer: Primarily point-to-point, ESB.

- 3. Question: What are the current transactional volumes processed through the integration platform on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis? Are there notable patterns or spikes that require attention?**

Answer: The assessment will need to consider the integration landscape, to include the ESB. The majority of our integration patterns are daily, real-time. We do have integrations that do have noteworthy patterns and volume.

- 4. Question: What are the expected year-on-year (YOY) growth trends for transactional volumes based on current usage?**

Answer: Unknown, but this is certainly something that is part of the assessment. We do anticipate growth based upon the large projects we will be endeavoring upon.



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- 5. Question: How many systems are currently hosted on-premise versus in the cloud (e.g., 10 on-premise and 5 on cloud)? Are there any future plans for cloud migration, and what is the projected shift in this balance over the next few years?**

Answer: We currently have approximately 50-70 systems on prem. The primary focus of this assessment is tied to our Operational Network, which there currently are no intentions to move these critical systems to the cloud. However, these are great questions to raise during the assessment workshops.
- 6. Question: How well does the current integration landscape support TPU's overarching business objectives? Are there any gaps or misalignments that need to be addressed to better meet business goals?**

Answer: In general, our landscape is currently meeting our business needs. However, the assessment should certainly dive deeper into this, alongside near-term needs and explorations for improvements.
- 7. Question: How scalable are TPU's current integration solutions in terms of handling increased transaction volumes, new systems, or evolving business processes? What potential bottlenecks or limitations could impact scalability.**

Answer: Current state assessment is a body of work within this engagement. However, our existing ESB is very capable of high volumes. The engagement is a holistic look across our integration ecosystem, which includes our service bus – but the answer of scalability will depend based upon the integration points and how they are integrating (e.g., if they are P2P, ESB, etc.).
- 8. Question: What are the primary challenges TPU is facing with the current integration platform (e.g., key integration issues, platform limitations, supportability concerns)? How are these challenges impacting business operations and overall performance?**

Answer: Limited (integration) staff and expertise, increasing complex and integrated environment, upcoming decision point on continuing/moving away from current (and very expensive) ESB.
- 9. Question: Can you provide some visibility into TPU's integration roadmap over the next 1-2 years? What are the key factors to consider, including integration patterns, the criticality of business units, and strategic milestones?**

Answer: Current state assessment is a body of work within this engagement, which is intended to a deeper identification and understanding of these factors. However, two major impacting initiatives include migrating SAP from on-prem to the cloud, and deploying an Advanced Distribution Management System.
- 10. Question: How is governance structured around TPU's integration platform, both at the project level and in terms of overarching frameworks? Are there clear processes in place for decision-making, support, and escalation?**

Answer: TPU maintains an executive technology governance framework, along with an architectural board. This initiative will be led by our Chief Enterprise Architecture and sponsored by our Chief Information Officer. There are clear processes to ensure decisions, risk and issues are appropriately determined and dispositioned.



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- 11. Question: Is there an incumbent vendor for this initiative? If yes, who is the vendor?**
Answer: *N/A – this is a consultancy engagement. We do not keep incumbent trusted advisors on a bench.*
- 12. Question: What is the expected timeframe to kick off the engagement from the time the Public Utilities Board provides approval?**
Answer: *It often depends upon how quickly both parties can move through the contracting phase, which is often a result of negotiations and acceptance of terms, conditions and scoped work. Commonly, this process takes 4-6 months.*
- 13. Question: Are there requirements for US citizenship, residence, or visas for the deployed resource(s)?**
Answer: *While it is not expected, if your resources require access to our Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) information and data, a background check is required.*
- 14. Question: Who are the key stakeholders and / or end-users that will participate in workshops and other sessions?**
Answer: *See question/response 35*
- 15. Question: Which positions / role from TPU will the selected vendor be interfacing with during this engagement?**
Answer: *See question/response 35*
- 16. Question: What methodology does TPU currently use to determine what to build for integration development and support?**
Answer: *Generally, many of integrations are built during Capital projects. Subsequently, a methodology often involves business need assessment, feasibility, engagement with vendors, development, testing, working with operational teams on support models.*
- 17. Question: What are the technologies commonly used across the landscape of integrated systems?**
Answer: *Geographical Information Systems, Energy Management Systems, Advanced Distribution Management Systems (e.g., Outage Management Systems), Wholesale Market and Trading Systems, Data Analytics (Cloud), Meter Data Management Systems, Enterprise Resource Planning (SAP).*
- 18. Question: Can you describe the current ESB solution? If it is a product from a vendor, can you tell us which one?**
Answer: *SoftwareAG WebMethods*
- 19. Question: What security and compliance requirements must the ESB adhere to (e.g., NIST, ISO, state-specific regulations)?**
Answer: *Considerations for compliance, security and regulatory requirements include NIST, NERC CIP.*



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20. Question: What are the primary goals of modernizing the ESB (e.g., scalability, cloud-readiness, performance improvement)?

Answer: The goal isn't necessarily to modernize the ESB. Rather, the goal is to understand our integration use cases, needs and to provide recommendations against best practices and industry direction – which may result in recommendations of either replacing or keeping our current integration tools.

21. Question: Are there known service goals for the new solution (RTO, RPO, MDT, SLA)? Are they being met with the current solution?

Answer: This engagement should provide findings and recommendations, which may or may not result in recommendations toward new solutions. Identifying service goals and service assurance is not necessarily a primary element of consideration.

22. Question: Are there specific, critical communication protocols that the deployed resource should be intimately familiar with (e.g. DICOM, MQTT, BACnet) beyond trivially common ones?

Answer: No.

23. Question: Does the current solution have an API guide, user guide, support runbooks or technical documentation? Will they be made available to the selected vendor?

Answer: We currently use Software AG WebMethods, which does have vendor documentation. However, this engagement is to be holistic in it's review of our integration architecture, use cases, tools – WebMethods is one of the primary tools, but not the only tool we use for integration.

24. Question: Can technical and user documentation for a few mission-critical applications be made available to the selected vendor?

Answer: This can be a point of discussion during the engagement.

25. Question: Can you provide examples of currently supported critical use cases?

Answer: Use case examples are an element of the engagement. However, following is a generic example of integrating an ADMS and GIS solution (which will be one of our in scope use cases). We are anticipating a greater level of detail to be provided.

1. Data Synchronization

- Establish a bidirectional data flow between ADMS and GIS*
- Synchronize asset information, network topology, and customer data*

2. Real-time Mapping

- Integrate ADMS real-time data with GIS map layers*
- Display current grid status, including power flow and equipment status, on GIS maps*

3. Outage Management

- Use GIS data to accurately locate and visualize outages*
- Leverage ADMS analytics to predict potential outages based on weather data and asset conditions*

4. Work Order Management

- Generate geo-tagged work orders in ADMS*
- Display work order locations and details on GIS maps for field crews*

Benefits



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- *Improved Situational Awareness: Operators can visualize real-time grid status on detailed geographic maps.*
- *Faster Outage Response: Precise location data and predictive analytics reduce outage duration and frequency.*
- *Efficient Asset Management: Better tracking and maintenance of assets based on both spatial and operational data.*
- *Enhanced Decision Making: Combining ADMS analytics with GIS spatial analysis for more informed planning and operations.*
- *Streamlined Field Operations: Field crews have access to accurate, up-to-date information about asset locations and work orders.*

Challenges and Considerations

- *Data consistency and quality across both systems*
- *Real-time performance of integrated visualizations*
- *Training staff to effectively use the integrated system*
- *Cybersecurity considerations for the expanded system integration*

26. Question: Can you describe the two networks used by TPU?

Answer: Detailed information is an element of the current state assessment. However, we currently have two networks – a corporate/business network and an operational network.

27. Question: What is the cloud provider(s) used by TPU?

Answer: Amazon Web Services

28. Question: Is this a new opportunity? If not, could you provide the details of the incumbents, along with the rates they have quoted?

Answer: This is a new consulting engagement. However, it will be reviewing existing and incumbent products. We will not share rates.

29. Question: Are we required to submit resumes along with the proposal? If so, should these resumes be actual, or can we submit sample profiles?

Answer: Yes, please submit actual profiles.

30. Question: Can we utilize the references and experience of our subcontractors/partners for this opportunity?

Answer: Yes, but please identify where and how you are engaging 3rd parties and who those vendors are.

31. Question: Is a joint venture allowed for this opportunity?

Answer: Yes, but please identify where and how you are engaging 3rd parties and who those vendors are.

32. Question: Since we are a certified DBE with the Washington State Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE), will this certification alone fulfill the equity-in-contracting criteria?

Answer: Yes.



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33. Question: What should be the subject line of the submission email?

Answer: See the RFP section 6.

34. Question: Does TPU prefer specific middleware platforms (e.g., MuleSoft, Apache Kafka) in the proposed solution?

Answer: Solutioning should be a consideration for the recommendations. However, we do not have plans to move away from our SAP middleware.

35. Question: Who will participate in the 3–5 visioning workshops (e.g., business, IT, or operations staff)? Will external vendors also be involved?

Answer: Internally, yes we are anticipating participating teams to include business, operations and technical SMEs. We are not anticipating external vendors to participate. However, if necessary, we may engage vendors if there are product specific questions the team is unable to answer and is required in order for you to move forward.

36. Question: Will each Task Authorization (TA) include specific delivery deadlines, or will milestones remain flexible based on mutual agreement?

Answer: We can consider TAs. Please provide a structure with deliverables as you feel are appropriate.

37. Question: What is the anticipated timeline for each TA? Can multiple TAs be executed in parallel?

Answer: Please provide a milestone timeline. We typically issue Task Authorizations in 9-12 week periods of time. Given the likely limited run of this work, we can consider TAs as well as a deliverable based SOW with estimated delivery timeframes.

38. Question: For the “publish-ready RFP” deliverables, are there specific templates or formats that we need to follow?

Answer: No.

39. Question: What level of detail is expected in the technical specifications (e.g., code-level details or API documentation)?

Answer: We did not identify technical specifications in the RFP. However, for the deliverables and scope identified, the deliverables should be clear and where appropriate, actionable.

40. Question: Will TPU provide access to project management tools or dashboards to track deliverables?

Answer: We can, but given the limited size of the initiative, we would expect you to provide active project management and regular updates.

41. Question: Are there preferred billing milestones (e.g., monthly, per phase, or by deliverable)? Are there preferred billing milestones (e.g., monthly, per phase, or by deliverable)?

Answer: By deliverable.



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42. Question: Does the current environment include cloud-based components or hybrid systems that we need to consider?

Answer: Current state assessment is an aspect of the engagement. We currently do have a limited cloud presence with data analytics and we currently have an initiative to migrate to SAP Hana (Cloud).

43. Question: Will TPU favor proposals that incorporate sustainable practices in technology recommendations?

Answer: The sustainability scoring criteria is a pass/fail and is five (5) points of the total 100 points possible.

44. Question: Are there any diversity requirements or staffing goals that we need to address?

Answer: A total of five (5) points can be earned on a pass/fail basis if your company is registered with the Washington State Office of Minority and Women Owned Business. There are no other diversity requirements. It would be appreciated if there is insight provided on staffing requirements for any recommended roadmap initiatives.

45. Question: Is offshore work permitted for this opportunity?

Answer: Yes, however certain cases may require information remain onshore.

46. Question: Should the required forms and attachments be incorporated into the technical response, or should they be submitted as separate documents?

Answer: Either approach is acceptable. Please be aware of attachment size and time of submission. A larger attachment may take longer to be received on our servers, if you are planning to submit a proposal the day it is due, close to the time that it is due, several attachments and/or emails may be a good approach.

47. Question: Integration- are you referring to products or the whole process?

Answer: Whole process.

48. Question: Is the future state already decided, defined broadly or is that part of what we are looking to define?

Answer: Part of what we are asking you to define. We have committed to a number of large capital initiatives that address the upcoming 3-6 years.

49. Question: Does documentation already exist or is that part of the deliverables?

Answer: Very limited and we are expecting you to provide detailed documentation of your assessment, use cases, key requirements, findings, recommendations, strategy and implementation roadmap.

50. Question: Is it possible to have some of the workshops in person?

Answer: Yes.



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51. Question: Please clarify what is meant by a Professional Service Agreement versus a Master Service Agreement?

Answer: A Master Service Agreement captures Terms and Conditions only, does not include scope of work (which is presented in an SOW tied to the Master). A Professional Service Agreement includes Terms, Conditions and Scope of Work. We prefer MSAs when we anticipate doing more than one engagement with a supplier. If a single engagement is anticipated and it is limited to professional services, we can consider a PSA, as they are often faster to execute through contracting and legal processes.

52. Question: Please share a list of in-scope departments or business units that will participate in the workshops.

Answer: See response from question 35

53. Question: Please share a list the list of known or material use cases that TPU is considering or aware of.

Answer: Identifying the use cases details are a key deliverable of this engagement and we are hoping to have a well-documented list as an outcome. Currently, we do not have a list of known use cases. However, at a high level, the general list could look like:

- *Reference Question 17 for example systems*
- *Real-time data synchronization of systems utilizing integration middleware (e.g., a service bus)*
- *Real-time data synchronization of systems utilizing point-to-point*
- *Utility control systems integrated to back-office and business systems (transversing firewalls and multiple middleware)*
- *Cloud to Operational Network On-prem*
- *Operational Network On-prem to Business/Enterprise Network On-prem*
- *Restful services, file transfers*

54. Question: How many applications are potentially in scope? Where do the in scope applications reside (i.e., cloud, on-premise, both)?

Answer: Approximately 40-60 applications, nearly all on-prem. See response from question 17 for a summary of the types of applications.

55. Question: What is the existing service bus technology?

Answer: See response from question 1

56. Question: What is the anticipated start date of the engagement?

Answer: Dependent upon the duration of contracting (see response from question 12), we are hoping for a start date in the late Q1, early Q2 2025.