

EXHIBIT "A"

Specifications,
Scope of Services, Requirements,
General Terms and Conditions

Hidalgo County Tax Office
"AUTOMATED TAX COLLECTION SYSTEM"

RFP NO: 2010-037-02-10-otm

HIDALGO COUNTY TAX OFFICE
“AUTOMATED TAX COLLECTION SYSTEM”
RFP NO: 2010-037-02-10-otm

Overview:

The Hidalgo County Purchasing Department will receive sealed envelopes containing proposals for the provision of a Turn-Key “Automated Tax Collection System” as specified herein. Sealed proposals will be accepted until 9:30 A.M., Wednesday, February 10, 2010. ANY RFP RECEIVED AFTER THAT DATE AND TIME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL BE RETURNED UNOPENED.

Deliver Submittal to:
RFP Number: 2010-037-02-10-otm

<u>US Postal Mail Address:</u> Martha L. Salazar, CPPB, Purchasing Agent Hidalgo County Purchasing Department Administration Building 2812 S. Business Hwy 281 Edinburg, Texas 78539	<u>Physical Address:</u> Martha L. Salazar, CPPB, Purchasing Agent Hidalgo County Purchasing Department Administration Building 2802 S. Business Hwy. 281 Edinburg, Texas 78539
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The Submittal Envelope Must Show The RFP Number, Name And Opening Date.

The following outlines the Request For Proposals:

SECTION I - GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Hidalgo County is requesting that request for proposals be routed to:

<u>US Postal Mail Address:</u> Martha L. Salazar, CPPB, Purchasing Agent Hidalgo County Purchasing Department Administration Building 2812 S. Business Hwy 281 Edinburg, Texas 78539	<u>Physical Address:</u> Martha L. Salazar, CPPB, Purchasing Agent Hidalgo County Purchasing Department Administration Building 2802 S. Business Hwy. 281 Edinburg, Texas 78539
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WRITTEN QUESTIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED VIA FACSIMILE NO LATER THAN Wednesday, January 27, 2010, at 5:00 P.M. at (956) 318-2629. Responses will be sent to all applicants via facsimile by Friday, January 29, 2010. **TELEPHONE INQUIRIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Effective January 1, 2006, Chapter 176 of the Texas Local Government Code requires that any vendor, person, consultant or contractor considering doing business with Hidalgo County (“the County”) to disclose in the Conflict of Interest Questionnaire (the “CIQ”) attached as **Exhibit D**, the vendor, person consultant or contractor’s affiliation or business relationship that might cause a conflict of interest with the County. By law, the CIQ must be filed with the Hidalgo County Clerk’s Office no later than the seventh business day after the date the person becomes aware of facts that require that statement to be filed. The disclosure requirement applies to a person or business who contract or seeks to contract with Hidalgo County for the sale or purchase of property, goods or service. Any purchase order or contract resulting from this process shall be considered null and void if the successful participant fails to comply with Texas Local Government Code Chapter 176. Vendors, consultants, contractors and others who desire to conduct business with Hidalgo County are encouraged to refer to Texas Local Government Code Chapter 176 for the details of this law. An offense under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 176 is a Class C Misdemeanor.

Please submit complete CIQ forms to the Hidalgo County Clerk's Office located at 100 No. Closner, Edinburg, Texas 78539-Hidalgo County Courthouse **COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF FORM CIQ IS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROSPECTIVE BIDDER.**

PROPOSER'S AFFIDAVIT:

Prior Contract award, respondents to this RFP must submit a signed Proposer's Affidavit (attached herein in **Exhibit E**) certifying that the submission is (1) not the result of Collusion as described in the Proposer's Affidavit or that the Respondent has not and will not attempt to lobby directly or indirectly as described in the Proposer's Affidavit **NON-DISCRIMINATION:** Submitters, during the performance of this contract, will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, religion, sex, national origin or disability except where religion, sex, national origin or disability is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the contractor.

PROCESSING TIME FOR PAYMENT:

Submitters are advised that a minimum of thirty (30) days is required to process invoices for payment.

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF BIDS:

Hidalgo County's Purchasing Department will not accept telegraphic or electronically transmitted submissions.

PROOF OF FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS CAPABILITY:

Submitters must, upon request, furnish satisfactory evidence of their ability to furnish products or services in accordance with the terms and conditions of these requirements. Hidalgo County will make the final determination as to the submitter's ability.

SUBMITTER DEFAULT:

Hidalgo County reserves the right, in case of submitter default, to procure the articles or services from other sources and hold the defaulting submitter responsible for any excess costs occasioned thereby.

RESTRICTIVE OR AMBIGUOUS REQUIREMENTS:

It is the responsibility of the submitter to review the Request for Proposal (RFP) packet and to notify the Purchasing Department if the requirements are formulated in a manner that would unnecessarily restrict competition. Any such protest or question regarding the requirements or proposer's procedures must be received in the Purchasing Department not less than seventy-two hours prior to the time set for the opening. These criteria also apply to requirements that are ambiguous.

HAND DELIVERED PROPOSALS:

Hidalgo County requires submitters, when hand delivering proposals, to make sure that it is stamped with date and time by the County Purchasing Staff.

SIGNING OF PROPOSALS:

In order to be considered all submittals **must** be signed. **Please sign the original in blue ink.**

WAIVING OF INFORMALITIES:

Hidalgo County reserves the right to waive minor informalities or technicalities when it is in the best interest of Hidalgo County.

SUBCONTRACTING:

The successful submitter **may not** subcontract the award without the written consent of the Commissioners' Court of Hidalgo County.

DURATION OF CONTRACT: The System should be available for installation/conversion upon award of the contract. The vendor must guarantee conversion of current data with a 20 year history, be fully balanced and operational by July 1, 2010. If deadline is not met, vendor will be required to pay the cost required by the Tax Office to continue to operate the current system. The contract shall be for the period of five (5) years. Payment for system shall be billed in equal annual payments. Hidalgo County reserves the right to continue this proposal for an additional one-hundred twenty days (120) "grace period" at the end of the contract term for unforeseen delay of award for the next term and contingent upon cost remaining unchanged. Additional requirements to be included in the contract, stated under **Exhibit "A" SPECIFICATIONS/SCOPE OF SERVICES & REQUIREMENTS.**

DAVIS BACON ACT:

All selected and awarded firms are required to include the Davis-Bacon Act when advertising and developing specifications (if applicable).

SECTION II - RFP REQUIREMENTS

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

The required contents and limitations for the preparation of the RFP are described in this section. Failure to provide the requested information or adhere to any County limitations will result in disqualification of the submitted RFP. A total of **one (1) original and seven (7) copies** of the RFP shall be submitted to the address on the cover letter.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROJECT:

This section should demonstrate the proposers understanding of the project needs, the services required, and any local issues or concerns. Briefly explain how long you have been organized and your business objectives. Explain how long you have been in business. This description should be concise, candid, and limited to 3 pages in length.

PROPOSER'S QUALIFICATIONS (IF APPLICABLE TO PROJECT):

Hidalgo County is soliciting to contract with a proposer who is qualified, licensed and certified. The proposer will directly perform the required services are required to have any and all applicable licenses, permits, credentials, qualifications to perform necessary services. Must submit any and all applicable licenses, permits, credentials, qualifications with RFP. Photostat copies are acceptable

PERSONNEL AND STAFFING:

The proposers should provide an organizational chart for the project and a summary paragraph of the project work to be performed by each proposed staff member. Biographic summaries that highlight the experience relevant to the specific project responsibilities should be provided for all proposed personnel. There is a one (1) page limitation for each biographic summary provided. Information regarding the proposer's credentials, education and experience with other entities is required and will be scored accordingly during the evaluation process.

REQUIRED CERTIFICATES AND SUBMITTAL:

This section will contain **any/all** licenses, registrations, permits, and certifications as required by the STATE OF TEXAS and HIDALGO COUNTY that you possess that deem you as qualified. **If proposer/vendor cannot meet any of the following services/responsibilities, such exceptions must be noted on the company's cover letter.**

PROPOSERS ARE TO PROVIDE A FEE SCHEDULE WITH THIS SUBMITTAL:

Proposer(s) is to provide a proposed fee on proposal page based on the scope of services/work requested.

All/Any costs and expenses associated with the preparation and submission of (bids, proposals and/or quotes) shall be the responsibility of the proposer and not reimbursements for such charges or expenses shall be passed onto Hidalgo County. Hidalgo County has the authority to utilize State Contracts from its membership with their existing or new cooperatives when ever it is in the County's best interest to do so.

SPECIFICATIONS / SCOPE OF SERVICES / REQUIREMENTS

The County of Hidalgo is seeking to enter into a contract with a qualified vendor capable of providing the Tax Assessor-Collector with "TURN-KEY" Automated Tax Collection System.

1.0 GENERAL

- 1.1 Hidalgo County Tax Office (hereafter called County) is requesting proposals from qualified providers (hereafter called "vendor") for a Texas-based ad valorem Tax Collection System that performs all assessment and collection functions in strict compliance with the Texas Constitution and all applicable laws, especially those requirements set forth in the Texas Property Tax Code, to be used in the tax assessing, collecting, and reporting applications. The existing Tax Collection System is currently meeting all requirements of the Hidalgo County Tax Office. County is nearing the end of the contract for that system and desires to insure that the best system available is procured to the benefit of the Tax Office. The scope of this Request for Proposal (RFP) includes the acquisition, delivery, installation, conversion, training, maintenance and support of the new system and services.
- 1.2 The procured system and services must be a turnkey installation and include all necessary hardware and software to maintain or exceed the existing level of users and service.
- 1.3 The objective of this RFP is to obtain proposals that will provide County with application software and support services that are comparable or better in nature, quality, design, performance, reliability, and maintainability to the specification described.
- 1.4 Vendors are encouraged to respond with a solution that meets the specifications of this RFP. However, if a vendor believes that an alternative solution is available and would result in an improved solution that achieves the overall objective of this RFP, the Vendor is encouraged to submit such a proposal. Vendors should highlight and thoroughly describe the alternate solution with emphasis on any variance from the specification(s). Failure to list any such alternate solution shall mean the respondent has taken no exception and shall furnish a System in compliance with the specification(s) set herein.
- 1.5 Vendors must arrange to visit the job site prior to submitting the RFP (Refer to Legal Notice, Page 3 - #5). For arrangements please contact Mr. Barrera Jr., RTA at (956) 289-7455. Information pertaining to visit date, time and location will be given at the time appointment.
- 1.6 A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on Tuesday, February 02, 2010 @ 2:30 p.m. at the Hidalgo County Purchasing Department (Conference Room), at 2802 S. Business Hwy. 281-New Administration Bldg., Edinburg, Texas 78539.

2.0 PERIOD OF CONTRACT

- 2.1 The System should be available for installation/conversion upon award of the contract. The vendor must guarantee conversion of current data with a 20 year history, be fully balanced and operational by July 1, 2010. If deadline is not met, vendor will be required to pay the cost required by the Tax Office to continue to operate the current system. This contract shall be for the period of five (5) years. Payment for system shall be billed in 5 equal annual payments. Hidalgo County reserves the right to continue this proposal for an additional one-hundred twenty day (120) "grace period" at the end of the contract term for unforeseen delay of award for next term and contingent upon cost remaining unchanged.

3.0 GOVERNING LAW

- 3.1 Proposer is advised that these requirements shall be fully governed by the laws of the State of Texas and that County may request and rely on advice, decisions and opinions of the Attorney General of Texas and the Hidalgo County District Attorney concerning any portion of these requirements.
- 3.2 This request for proposal is limited to an "Automated Tax Collection System" only. Any offer or proposal purporting to offer anything other than "Automated Tax Collection System" will not be considered and may, in fact, be grounds for disqualification from consideration or down grading of a proposal.

This request for proposal process is intended to comply with all applicable statutes, attorneys' general opinions and professional ethical considerations.

4.0 SCOPE OF WORK

TAX OFFICE ENVIRONMENT: The County collects for 37 tax jurisdictions for billing, collecting, and distribution of their respective tax revenues. The tax system maintains approximately 335,000 accounts with a twenty (20) year history containing approximately twelve (12) million tax unit records. The current tax system has approximately 70 local in-house users including users at 5 remote substations. Our current system allows remote logins for one bank, eight title companies, and three law firms. An interactive web site is also maintained.

- 4.1 **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:** The system must be based on current standard technology and the proposed solution must be fully compatible with other current technologies. It must be of such design to enable the vendor to make suitable future modifications as required by County. The vendor will provide and implement all future upgrades available to any of the vendor's other tax collection clients, that are in Texas, as part of the original purchase. All modifications, additions, or upgrades of the system will require the vendor to transfer all past and current data into the new system without additional cost to County. To this end, the following metrics must be met:
- A detailed and itemized list of all hardware and software being proposed.
 - Must be compatible with current PCs, printers, and existing network setup. If not compatible vendor must submit a list of needed hardware and software, including price, of what will be needed to make the proposed solution a turnkey setup.
 - Vendor must list all environmental requirements needed to house proposed solution's hardware, i.e. power requirements, humidity control, temperature tolerance, battery backup time and power levels, etc.

4.1.1 Performance:

The system must support the major tax office business processes in a manner to allow for efficient operation of the tax office. To this end, the following metrics must be met:

- Load of new year tax data from appraisal district (2 days)
- Load monthly supplements and name change files from appraisal district (2 days)
- Generation of new year certified tax statements (12 hours)
- Generate end-of-day reporting (1 hour)
- Generate end-of-month reporting (3 hours)
- Fiscal period accounting roll-over (12 hours)
- Take a simple single account payment and print a receipt (8 seconds)
- Post the largest day lockbox (2 hours)
- Post the largest mortgage company payment file (2 hours)

4.1.2 System Security:

The vendor is required to provide both a primary and backup server(redundant system). Servers should work in a manner that if the primary server goes down, the backup server continues to operate the system without interruption of service.

Both primary and backup servers shall be housed and maintained entirely by the vendor. Both servers should be housed in a secure facility that provides for uninterruptible power and equipped with electronic and physical security. Primary server and backup servers shall be housed in a geographic location that is not prone to natural disasters i.e., hurricanes, tidal floods, etc. Backup server shall be located at least 50 miles away from primary server to avoid being affected by local power outages, storms, etc., at the same time. Copies of audits, inspections, and/or certifications for the facilities shall be enclosed in the proposal. An onsite inspection of the facility will be made by the tax office staff prior to acceptance of the proposal.

A plan for safeguard and recovery of data in case of natural or other disaster must be included with the proposal.

4.1.3 User Security:

- Security must be role based and managed by a tax office authorized employee via a standard user interface
- User IDs will inherit authorizations based on their role (or group). Changing authorizations due to change in duties should be a simple matter of reassigning the user id to the new role (or group)
- Password management should follow strict guidelines
- A combination of application and database security may be required to ensure data security
- The proposed system must provide for logging and viewing all data changes within the system
- Must be able to view system and user logs to see the user's history or activities.
- Must be able to customize rolls for each of our user groups.

4.1.3.a Please answer the following questions as thorough as possible for us to be able to evaluate your RFP.

- We have a windows based network with active directory and with established trusts with other county departments' active directories within our network, how would you prevent anyone from within the network that is not authorized to do so from gaining access to the data tables?
- How would you prevent anyone from the outside from compromising the data tables? In this scenario, we have given a title company a vpn portal to log into the system for inquiry purposes. If that login and password gets compromised, how secure is your system to prevent anyone with inquiry only access from making changes to the tables?
- Does your system have an administrative console where we can see all users logged into the system? Does it track login attempts and lock them out after three unsuccessful tries?

4.1.4 Database:

- Hidalgo County currently operates Oracle and SQL SERVER Database Management System.
- The proposed system must provide for monitoring of database performance
- Public information requests should be handled by providing informative data to the end user that requires minimum operator intervention and that follows safe guidelines when dealing with confidential information.
- The system must handle confidential data with the highest sensitivity when dealing with public access, reports, and listings.
- You must maintain a website for the Hidalgo County Tax Information.
- The information you provide on your website must comply with what we currently provide our tax payers at this time. This includes providing paid history, Levy balances broken down by taxing unit. The ability to perform searches by name, address, account number, or appraisal district number. Tax payers should have the ability to pay their taxes online.

The System must provide a robust ad hoc reporting capability so that the Tax Office, Planning and Resource Management personnel, and County Auditor can create reports from any data in the system without the assistance, or intervention of the Vendor or Information Systems staff.

4.3 **STATEMENT PRINTING:** Each year approximately 335,000 statements and related mailings are produced. Printing is accomplished by generating a print tape and delivery to the current County printing vendor.

4.4 **APPLICATION SOFTWARE:** The County requires a high performance property tax system. The System must support role-based security. The System must be designed so that the end user does not have direct access to the database tables. The System must maintain all proper accounting controls, audit trails, and transaction logs.

The System should provide ease of use facilities and provide consistent, user friendly access methods. The System should be user friendly so that the end user can operate the system productively. The System should have extensive search capabilities for timely account access. The System must maximize productivity and accuracy while minimizing redundant data entry.

Help and informational messages must be provided for all data fields. The messages must be displayed upon user demand and via hover help.

All data entered must be checked for validity and provisions made to correct any erroneous entries.

The System must comply with the Texas State Property Tax Code and all other laws pertaining to property taxation in the State of Texas and have continuing support for legislative mandates requiring implementation prior to effective dates. It must meet or exceed all existing office processes for tax assessments, collections, accounting, auditing and disbursement.

4.5 **USER REQUIREMENT CRITERIA:** Requirements include, but are not limited to:

Support consolidated assessment and collection functions for 37 taxing entities on approximately 335,000 current year accounts and total administrative, receivable, and transaction file containing approximately two (2) million records. Each tax account may contain multiple records for as many as the maximum number of units.

Provide real time update and tax collections for credit cards, e-check, and barcode readers. Support a minimum of 70 workstations running Windows XP/Windows 7 and a minimum of 70 printers simultaneously on-line.

- 4.6 **PRIMARY FUNCTIONS:** The contracted vendor must supply a vendor-hosted tax system that performs all assessment and collection functions in strict compliance with the Texas Constitution and all applicable state laws, especially those requirements set forth in the Texas Property Tax Code. All processes and forms produced must also meet the standards established by the state Comptroller's office. Reports must provide sufficient audit controls for all processes and conform to standards established by the Tax Assessor Collector. Rounding in the system must be consistent, limited in scope, and conform to levels established by Hidalgo County Tax Office rules.

There must be sufficient system security to identify the operator and date of every change of any type entered into the system. Every programming or data change entered by vendor's staff must have prior authorization by the Hidalgo County Tax Office management before entry into the production database. There must be an easily accessible log of all changes showing the data before and after the entry. This record must be system generated and unaltered by staff.

There must be controls that restrict operator's updating and cashiering capabilities according to County Tax Office rules.

System must have an area to enter notes or comments at the account level and capability to restrict access to this field. Key processing steps must produce system-generated notes.

There must be search capabilities to locate and retrieve account information by entering known data such as owner, situs location, DBA, tax suit number, partial account number or appraisal district number. Must be able to search payments by date and amount and identify fiduciary information from codes.

User must be able to retrieve data from the system for simple reports on demand.

System must include inquiry access to accounts via the Internet, with the ability to make electronic payment via the Internet with real-time updates of payments.

- 4.7 **FINANCIAL REPORTING:** The new tax system must provide an accounting package that will allow for modifications for future financial requirements. The accounting system must allow us to download daily tax collections, attorney fees, and miscellaneous fees. It must be able to reconcile payment transactions made by cashiers and tie them to the daily deposit. It must allow for the disbursement of funds daily, weekly, or monthly via wire transfer, check, or ACH to the taxing jurisdictions. It must be able to calculate and withhold the cost per account amount for each jurisdiction twice a year through remittances and also tie the figures into the monthly tax report.

The system must conduct the following:

- Must be able to upload and download files to Intuit QuickBooks Enterprise.
- Automatically load tax adjustment refunds and overpayment refunds.
- Provide the capability to manually enter tax refunds, special inventory refunds and escrow refunds.
- Be able to automatically print checks from all bank accounts.
- Be able to print a refund register (the picture before the checks are actually printed).

- Print a bank register which includes the check number, payee, payee address, check date, check amount, and type of refund.
- Be able to convert the bank register into an Excel spreadsheet and allow for an export file to be created to be forwarded to the bank for Positive Pay (provide the bank with a file containing the check number, check date, and amount for each of our bank accounts to clear checks as they are cashed).
- Be able to hold, delete, or process check requests (ad valorem, refund, special inventory, and escrow) once the file is loaded into the system for supervisor approval.
- Be able to void/cancel or reprint checks or to reuse check numbers (ad valorem, refund, special inventory, and escrow) once they are printed with supervisor approval.

The system must also produce:

- Detailed daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly reports for tax collections, escrow, special inventory, and miscellaneous fees by taxing jurisdictions.
- Summary reports for daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly tax collections, escrow, special inventory, and miscellaneous fees by taxing jurisdictions. All reports must have adequate cross checks to allow for reconciliation.

4.8 ASSESSING REQUIREMENTS: All appraisal district updates must be processed electronically for the current year and five (5) preceding years. Updates will affect various types of taxing units, which will have differing value and exemption data. These updates must adjust the tax receivables appropriately for all taxing units, postpone delinquency dates, and produce tax statement files and/or refund files, without intervention by tax office staff.

System must be able to automatically create, calculate, and print statements for agriculture rollback taxes as per Texas Property Tax Code section 23.55.

Summary reports after each update must show the adjusted year to date totals by taxing unit values, exemptions, and levy. The figures must be balanced to figures provided by each appraisal district to verify successful loading of data. Owner, location, and other administrative data must match the most recent information provided by the appraisal districts. System must allow manual overrides to correct receivables.

Users must be able to do “what if” scenarios, i.e. change value and exemption information in the system to determine the impact of such a change and provide estimated levy differences without actually changing the system amounts.

Every tax account must identify all taxing units levying a tax, the appraised and taxable value of the property within that unit, its exemption reductions, any special valuations, and its current calculated levy amount and beginning levy at the start of the fiscal year. There must also be a display at the account level summarizing data for all units combined.

- System must store previous account number information for research when dealing with account splits, account mergers, ag rollbacks and deleted accounts.
- System must have the capability to produce a tax certificate.
- System must produce an assessing Audit report that can be specific to an operator and date range. (modified receivable report sorted by operator)
- Online system must maintain multiple freeze records starting in various years for different units.
- System must automatically adjust receivables for penalties added per Texas Property Tax Code sections 25.25 and 23.431 and add interest on omitted property per section 26.09.