**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**
**PROJECT PRIORITIZATION SCORING PROCESS UPDATE**
**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

_**Responses to Questions raised at the March 14, 2024 Pre-proposal Meeting, issued on March 20, 2024**_

A pre-proposal meeting was held virtually via Zoom on March 14, 2024 to provide a general overview of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Project Prioritization Scoring Process Update. The following are questions asked by meeting attendees and the NJTPA's official responses.

**Question 1:**
Safety plays an important role in the existing project prioritization criteria, to what extent have impacts on health and physical activity associated with infrastructure investment (used by other MPOs like SCAG Los Angeles, RTC Las Vegas, GTC Rochester, etc.) been considered or should be considered for this project, especially for Task 1 and 2?

**Response 1:**
The connections between infrastructure and health are strong, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has significantly increased funds for trails and active transportation programs, strengthening long-standing programs and added new funding opportunities for trails, walking and biking. Safety, health, and physical activity (i.e., active transportation or walking and biking) impacts of the transportation system on its users and the communities in the NJTPA region have always been and will continue to be a priority for the USDOT and NJTPA. They are underlying factors of several goal areas (i.e., safety, equity, economic, environment). Each of these should be considered for the updated scoring process, in Tasks 1, 2 and 3. It is assumed that more transparency of them and other developing priorities may be needed in the update given the changes in the federal programs and guidance reflected in the last three authorization bills and current FHWA, FTA and NJTPA strategic plans (i.e., NJTPA's Regional Active Transportation Plan).

**Question 2:**
Is the NJTPA looking for consultants to propose whether to use Expert Choice Comparison or another tool? Is our understanding correct that Expert Choice Comparison would be purchased by the NJTPA outside of this contract?

**Response 2:**
Respondents shall propose an approach and decision-making software of their choice – that may be Expert Choice Comparion or any other tool they deem appropriate for facilitating the decision-making exercises needed to determine the project prioritization and scoring criteria. The respondent's cost proposal should include any direct expenses for software procurements or licenses necessary to perform their proposed work. However, during negotiations, the NJTPA reserves the option to use the Expert Choice Comparison software for the project and to purchase it directly with the software vendor, outside the contract to be awarded with the successful consultant.

**Question 3:**
At which point will NJTPA decide whether to use Expert Choice for Task 2?

**Response 3:**
The NJTPA intends to make the decision to purchase this software independently or to utilize the decision-making software proposed by the consultant during the proposal review and negotiation process. The NJTPA will review the advantages and cost reasonableness of the decision-making software tool being proposed by the consultant versus utilizing or purchasing Expert Choice directly with the vendor.

***Responses to Questions, issued on March 20, 2024***

**Question 4:**
Would we be conflicted from bidding on NJDOT and/or NJ Transit projects in the future if we are awarded this contract with NJTPA?

**Response 4:**
No.

**Question 5:**
Is there a budget set for this work? If so, how much is budgeted (dollar value)?

**Response 5:**
Consultants should prepare a scope of work that is responsive to the RFP and develop a budget accordingly. The review committee will determine the practicality of each consultant's proposed hours relative to completing the scope of work and in relation to that of other competitive proposals. There will be an opportunity to negotiate the budget with the top ranked firm(s) after the Consultant Selection Committee has reviewed the technical proposals to ensure the proposed expenditures are reasonable and the project's outcomes justify the project's expenses.

**Question 6:**
What was the total contract dollar value for the previous Project Prioritization Scoring Process Update completed by Louis Berger?

**Response 6:**
The authorized budget for the last update's consultant contract in 2016 was $350,000. The contract budget authorized for the prior contract should not be used as a guide to consultants preparing cost proposals for this current effort. Consultants should prepare a detailed scope of work that is responsive to the current RFP and reflects their specific approach to the project, which successfully demonstrates their ability to carry out the tasks and execute on the deliverables outlined, and develop a budget accordingly.

**Question 7:**
Could you further elaborate on item 1 deliverable for task 5 on page 9 "Development and maintenance of a web-based project collaboration site that allows for online project management and data sharing." Does this deliverable refer to a product such as MS Project, or something like SharePoint which is mentioned on page 8 under the same task, or both?

**Response 7:**
The intent is to provide a Microsoft SharePoint site, or another similar commercially available platform that is compatible with Microsoft Office 365, that that will allow for efficient communications and sharing of product deliverables between the project team, NJTPA and stakeholders.

**Question 8:**
Would NJTPA be open to the use of a commercially available web based prioritization tool customized to meet the needs of this project or is the preference enhancement of the existing tool?

**Response 8:**
NJTPA welcomes the use of a commercially available web-based prioritization tool for this project if it meets the specified requirements. We will also consider custom developed tools based on spatial database applications or similar tools developed and used by other MPOs for the same purpose. If such a tool is selected, the tool must be fully maintainable and updatable by NJTPA staff following the conclusion of the contract. The tool must also be compatible with ESRI. If the tool utilizes any external software, Microsoft products are preferred. Any one-time or recurring costs associated with such a tool should be estimated in detail in the cost proposal. The costs for procurement, development and implementation of each proposed scoring application will be assessed for cost reasonableness and best value. Each proposed tool will be compared to determine the most appropriate and effective tool for this project, considering cost, functionality, and ease of use, as well on how flexible, extensible, and maintainable the application will be throughout the life of the software.

**Question 9:**
If a commercially available web based product is proposed, would NJTPA prefer hosting the product internally, or require the vendor to host it on a site like Amazon AWS?

**Response 9:**
NJTPA expects the web-based product to be hosted internally.

**Question 10:**
If hosted externally, does NJTPA have specific reequipments for disaster recovery, service level, resiliency, backup and recovery and downtime?

**Response 10:**
Since NJTPA does not expect to host a web-based product externally for this project, no such requirements have been established.

**Question 11:**
Page: 6, Section: Deliverables for Task 2, Paragraph: bullet 5 - On Task 2 Deliverables, it is unclear whether "facilitation of a minimum of five decision making sessions for establishing the goal area criteria/sub-criteria, and goal area criteria weights, including set-up of the exercises and compilation of their results" is redundant with the TAC meetings, or a different set of stakeholders will be involved.

**Response 11:**
The estimated number of decision-making sessions reflects the number of decision models that are anticipated to be set-up in the decision support software application and total number of rounds of voting exercises that will need to be facilitated with the TAC. For Task 2, a minimum of three rounds are assumed to establish the revised criteria and initial goal area weights, and two additional rounds are assumed to refine and reach a consensus of each goal area weight. It's assumed that these voting exercises will be completed during two TAC meetings (the fourth bullet).

**Question 12:**
Page: 6, Section: Deliverables for Task 2, Paragraph: bullet 6 - One of the deliverables under Task 2 refers to developing a draft technical memorandum that will include a measurable scoring system, rating scales and assessment approach for qualitative and quantitative criteria. Is the scoring system and rating scale to be discussed during the Task 2 TAC sessions as well? This is the focus of Task 3.

**Response 12:**
This technical memorandum should summarize the results of the TAC decision sessions and voting exercises conducted in Task 2 that will be presented to NJTPA's Project Prioritization Committee for their input on the options and recommendations, before proceeding to Task 3. The complete scoring system will be developed in two phases under Tasks 2 and 3. The scoring system and rating scale in Task 2 refers to the main goal areas to be established and their overall weights to be assigned based on each criterion's relative importance in achieving NJTPA's regional goals, as well as the general approach for establishing the sub-criteria. In Task 3 the focus will be on the establishing the detailed sub-criteria and rating scales of the sub-criteria weights under each goal area, which will include defining rating scales and breakpoints for the sub-criteria and identifying and gathering data available to operationalize the sub-criteria.

**Question 13:**
Page: 6, Section: continuation of Task 2: Recommend Updated Criteria and Associated Weights, Paragraph: 3, last sentence - Will we have to wait to get approval from the NJTPA Board of Trustees on Task 2 recommendations before starting Task 3?

**Response 13:**
No. The Board of Trustees will vote on the complete final set of revised criteria that is developed and presented for adoption during Task 4.  The Project Prioritization Committee is a subcommittee of the Board that oversees all activities related to the development and management of the Transportation Improvement Program. Therefore, a meeting with them in Task 2 to obtain their input on the initial options and recommended goal areas and weights is essential for ensuring their buy-in before further developing the revised scoring process with the detailed sub-criteria and their weights and data.


**Question 14:**
Page: 8, Section: Deliverables for Task 4 Paragraph: bullet 4 - Who will be the audience for the training? How many sessions are expected?

**Response 14:**
Training shall be provided to NJTPA staff who will be core users of the automated scoring application and IT administrative staff who will be responsible for maintaining the application. A minimum of two sessions is required, one for core users and one for administrators. The actual number of sessions will be dependent on the complexity of the application being proposed by the respondent and their proposed approach to training, which should be outlined in their proposal.


**Question 15:**
Will NJTPA own and maintain the implemented decision-making software upon completion of the Project (whether or not the preferred software will be Expert Choice Comparison)?

**Response 15:**
The decision support software referenced in the RFP is only intended to be used for the decision-making exercises to be conducted during Tasks 2 and 3. It does not need to be owned or maintained by NJTPA, or beyond the completion of these tasks or the project.


**Question 16:**
To confirm, will the selected bidder be required to purchase the [decision-making] software (the software itself and supporting licenses) on behalf of NJTPA? Therefore, should this expense be included in the respondent's fee proposal?

**Response 16:**
Yes. Please refer to NJTPA's response to Question 2. Any costs associated with the decision support software application proposed by the respondent, to be provided and used by the consultant for the decision-making exercises in Tasks 2 and 3, should be estimated in detail in the cost proposal.