Questions and Answers as of May 4, 2021 to CHFA 234-Request for Proposals ("RFP") for Information Technology Strategic Plan:

Question: With the remote work environment, is it still required to mail a CD/flash drive along with the electronic submission?
Answer: CHFA will accept an electronic submission without the follow up of a CD/flash drive.

Question: Is there an established budget for this work?
Answer: CHFA does not have a specific budget range to disclose.

Question: Has the funding already been secured for the project?
Answer: Yes, funding has been secured for the project.

Question: Will all vendor questions be answered and supplied?
Answer: All questions through April 30, 2021, the date published in the RFP, will be answered and posted on CHFA's website.

Question: What is the desired start and end date for the creation of the strategic plan?
Answer: CHFA anticipates starting the process immediately following the execution of a contract and completing the project within six (6) months.

Question: For references from any other State of Connecticut agencies that have engaged our firm to perform services, is this specific to the performance of Strategic IT planning services or inclusive of any types of services performed for State of Connecticut agencies?
Answer: Please provide the names of any state agencies you have worked with regardless of services performed.

Question: What cyber regulatory frameworks are applicable to the work performed at CHFA?
Answer: Compliance with GLBA (Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act) is applicable.

Question: Has CHFA ever created an IT Strategic Plan in the past? If so, who helped CHFA in the development of that plan?
Answer: CHFA has created an IT Strategic Plan in the past, which was prepared by BlumShapiro.

Question: Could CHFA please confirm that cost should be provided by deliverable?
Answer: The proposal should include overall costs with a detailed breakdown.

Question: Are we permitted to include project references from subcontractors who are part of our project team?
Answer: CHFA does not anticipate that there will be any subcontractors.

Question: Are we permitted to include projects from our subcontractors to demonstrate how we meet the desired qualifications outlined in the RFP?
Answer: CHFA does not anticipate that there will be any subcontractors.

Question: If bidders have any exceptions to the terms and conditions laid out in the RFP, should exceptions be taken in the proposal?
Answer: Yes, please include any exceptions you may have.

Question: If bidders are partnering with independent subcontractors with no employees, must the independent subcontractors carry workers' compensation insurance?
Answer: CHFA does not anticipate that there will be any subcontractors.

Question: Can CHFA share the weight of each evaluation criteria (if this exists)? For example, is one evaluation criteria more important than another, or are the evaluation criteria ranked in any way?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share on the evaluation criteria.

Question: Has CHFA completed a cyber-risk assessment within the last 12-18 months?
Answer: CHFA has not completed a cyber-risk assessment within the last 12-18 months.

Question: Has CHFA already performed a business impact analysis? Has there been significant changes to the environment/boundary that is in scope, and if so was the impacted environment/boundary included in the analysis?
Answer: CHFA has not performed a business impact analysis.

Question: What cybersecurity frameworks are in scope (e.g., NIST, PCI-DSS, HIPAA, etc.)? Does CHFA have a framework preference?
Answer: CHFA complies with GLBA.

Question: Does CHFA desire a penetration test and vulnerability scanning, as part of the assessment activities? If so, please define the scope of those activities (e.g., network devices, web services, endpoints, number of IP addresses and URLs
Answer: The scope of services will not include penetration testing or vulnerability scanning.

Question: Does CHFA currently have a well-formed incident response and disaster recovery team/plans/procedures?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Does each division under CHFA have their own business plan, business impact analysis, and incident response plan or does CHFA have a single, unified plan?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Does CHFA have a central IT department and security department, or is it decentralized?
Answer: CHFA has a centralized IT and IT security department.

Question: What does CHFA mean when it requires bidders to "specify the category for which a proposal is being submitted?" Specifically, what are the categories?
Answer: The category for this RFP is 'CHFA 234-Request for Proposals ("RFP") for Information Technology Strategic Plan'

Question: Given the timeframe between the issuance of answers and the proposal due date, would CHFA consider extending the proposal deadline by a week?
Answer: CHFA does not anticipate extending the deadline for responses to the RFP.

Question: On page three, you mention that our final deliverable should be informed by interviews with key staff. Could you please elaborate further on the number and type of key staff and agencies to be engaged as part of the interview process?
Answer: The key internal staff relevant to this engagement will include the CHFA senior management team members (~ 15), CHFA IT staff (~ 12) and key agencies will include few (~ 5) peer organizations (for purposes of technology benchmarking).

Question: On page 8, in the next to last paragraph of the "Submission of Responses" section, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority explains that "Each approved firm will execute a contract satisfactory to CHFA and will agree to comply with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes applicable to contracts with CHFA including, but not limited to, nondiscrimination and affirmative action provisions. Failure to comply with the requirements of this RFP may result in CHFA's rejection of a proposal." Does the CHFA plan to release a sample contract for applicants to review prior to submission of their proposal response? If yes, please provide guidance on timing of such release and CHFA's approach to considering any exceptions or requested changes identified by applicants.
Answer: CHFA does not intend to release a sample contract.

Question: Please describe the relative complexity of your IT organization - # users, # employees, # locations, centralized/decentralized, etc.

Answer: CHFA has approximately one hundred and forty (140) users/employees, twelve (12) IT staff, one (1) location that is centralized. For further information, refer to https://www.chfa.org/directory/

Question: We identified that there is a 5 page limit for the Statement of Qualifications, are there page limits for the requested items 1) Work Plan; 2) Brief description of our organization; and 3) Brief description of staff background?

Answer: There is no page limit for the other items.

Question: Is there a cost proposal template that vendors should follow? If not, what details does the CHFA want?

Answer: There is not a cost proposal template to follow. Please provide any costs you foresee for the proposal.

Question: Could you please provide us an insight on types of applications/products in CHFA:
1. Types of applications - What are the various types of applications in the domain, such as loans servicing/rentals, etc.?
2. What are the implementation types such as Windows/Web used for these applications?
3. What is the high level technology stack used for these applications? (.Net/Java/Mainframes/in-house tooling, etc.)
4. Are all the users of these applications the CHFA internal (corporate) users only or are there any external users (non-CHFA) also accessing the applications?
5. How many tentative overall users accessing these application during a business day?

Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Could you please provide us some insight on current IT infrastructure around the following areas:
1. Compute - What is the typical server's power and capacity (CPU/Memory/IO/cache) being used for applications/services hosting?
2. Network Topology - Please provide us a high level understanding on the network architecture used like S2S/P2S/Vnet-to-Vnet for communication with-in on-premises. Also how is the on-premises to external network connectivity established, if there is any? Example- Vnet to another vnet gateway to reach to another network, etc.?
3. Networks: Is there a DMZ network environment set up to expose any of CHFA's application outside to network over a public IP for external access?
4. Load balancers - What kind of load balancers are used to route users' traffic to backend servers? Are these L4 or L7 load balancers?
5. Firewall Policy: On a very high level, what are the different kind of protocols and ports opened in order to communicate with external resources; such as file share / RDP/ SSH.. etc.?
6. Storage: are CHFA's applications/products using only RDBMS databases only or any sort of usage of NoSQL / Elastic databases too? If NoSQL storage is used, then what is the high level purpose of the NoSQL databases for CHFA's products?

Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Could you please provide us some insight on your technology vision around these areas:
1. Is technology upgrade required to provide a rich user experience (responsive applications) / mobile specific needs / system latencies due to monolithic backend architecture of applications / limited scalability of downstream systems/ cost optimization by adopting digital services - cloud?
2. Please advise us regarding a high level technology vision of CHFA.
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Could you please help us understand the typical challenges or opportunities with the existing applications? Are these experiences around the applications scalability/reliability/resilience/ modernization/cost optimization with apps, resources and operations? We would like to understand the directions here to build the digital roadmap pragmatically.
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: What is the indicative transactional volume (daily/weekly) for the business crucial CHFA's applications/systems? Are there any peak load times (during a day / week/ specific day of a week/month) for these applications?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Could you please guide us on the existing security framework implementation with following questions:
1. How are users getting authenticated in order to get into the applications? Is this LDAP or bearer token based authentication?
2. Is the role based security access implemented?
3. Is there a classification in user types / role types or claims used to gain systems accesses?
4. Is the user's identity authentication getting delegated to an identity provider (IDP)?
5. Are the user's identities getting federated by any external provider?
6. Is the single sign-on expected for the internal (CHFA) applications?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Are there any data consolidation/analytics dashboards or reporting mechanisms set up on existing data which could provide a predictive view of data, and CHFA could exercise and plan its business functions accordingly?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Are there any data analytics tools used on the existing data?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Databases failover - how is the dbs getting failed over? Is there a log shipping/ replication set up to maintain read-only databases replicas?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Web/Application servers - Can you please advise if a copy of deployable code is replicated in the secondary web/application servers to switch onto failover env in case of system outages?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can you please advise if the fail over subnets/virtual switches are established in order to failover systems into secondary environment in the event of corporate outages?
Are the backup locations established with in the same zone (say in the same region Connecticut) or across multiple regions (east-US and west-Us)?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can you please guide us on what is CHFA's vision to adopt Cloud services to support its products/applications with availability/scalability/operating cost considerations?
Our understanding is that, existing applications in CHFA are operating on-premises. If this is a correct understanding then, can you please advise us on organization's future view on adopting cloud services for its applications/users base expansion or possible cost optimizations?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Are the existing applications/products interfacing with any external/third-party software/services? If our understanding is correct, then could you please provide us some high level understanding on what these external services are and how frequently are these services being used by existing applications? Please advise us on the impact on applications in case of unavailability of these third party interfaces/services?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can you please advise us on the acceptable downtime limits for some of your business critical applications? If some degree of downtime is acceptable then what time during/outside business hours these application(s) can be brought down for maintenance/ upgrades?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Could you please provide us some insight on the release of management practices:
1. How frequently product releases are conducted for existing applications?
2. How is the product delivery currently streamlined - Is this agile or waterfall based?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can you please provide us a high level understanding around the product features release/deployment process >
1. How are the builds getting deployed into production? Is this through a continuous integration/build process or a manual way?
2. How many different pre-production environments are set up to validate the product functions?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can you please provide us some understanding around the current quality assurance practices:
1. How much is the automation coverage for the current set of applications?
2. Are all the business critical features going live in production testing through automated testing in the QA environments?
3. Is the capacity of QA environments matching with production boxes?
4. Do you have a regression test suite built for the applications? If yes, then how frequently the regression cycle is conducted? Is the regression of applications conducted every time before the production release?
5. Can you please provide us an overview of tools and levers used for automated/manual testing?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can you please advise on how do you prioritize some of the security risks (below) based on the business criticality of your applications/products? Also, kindly add if any potential foreseen risk is missed or strike out if not applicable.
> Data loss or theft
> compliance/regulatory incidents
> Phishing/social engineering attacks
> Denial of service
> Impersonations
> Privilege abuse
Will it be Flash cut (or) Parallel cut where the legacy system is left functioning and the new system is installed around it to decommission legacy system.
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Can we please understand on your priorities for the systems/components upgrade? Are these upgrades targeting for infrastructure first then applications? What are your thoughts around this?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Does CHFA have an Information Security Management System (a policy or collection of policies that expresses senior management's high-level security requirements)?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Does CHFA currently have a corporate risk register? How is this maintained? Is cyber security risk included today?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Does CHFA have a defined project planning process that includes quantification of risk and ROI as part of cost/benefit analysis? What methods are being used for same?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Does CHFA have any dedicated or partial security roles and responsibilities amongst its staff today? Does CHFA have any security contractors, vendors or managed security service providers?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Which security and privacy standards or regulations, if any, does CHFA refer to or comply with today?
Answer: CHFA complies with GLBA.

Question: Any intent in going to Cloud from existing on-prem environment?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: Any thought in upgrading the databases while decommissioning legacy systems?
Answer: CHFA does not have additional information to share.

Question: What is the current system to support BC/DR activity?
Answer: CHFA's systems to support BC/DR activity are on premise and the Cloud.

Question: With very limited high level details on the scope, is CHFA open for 4-6 weeks of workshop proposal? This workshop will enable us to get more insight on the scope that needs to be covered to define a 3 year IT strategy plan.
Answer: CHFA may consider workshops to provide more information and insight on the scope.

Question: Is CHFA expecting this project to be done from onsite [US]? Or looking at the diversity of required skill sets? Is CHFA open for offshore/hybrid team. This will also have a positive impact on the cost.
Answer: CHFA expects the firm to have a U.S. presence and comply with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes applicable to contracts with CHFA.