Market Research Checklists

Techniques for conducting market research may include any or all of the following:

- Contacting knowledgeable individuals in Government and industry regarding market capabilities to meet requirements.
- Reviewing the results of recent market research undertaken to meet similar or identical requirements.
- Publishing formal requests for information in appropriate technical or scientific journals or business publications.
- Querying government contracts and other procurement instruments.
- Participating in interactive, on-line communication among industry, acquisition personnel, and customers.
- Obtaining source lists of similar items from other contracting activities or agencies, trade associations or other sources.
- Reviewing catalogs and other generally available product literature published by manufacturers, distributors, and dealers or available on-line.
- Conducting interchange meetings or holding pre-solicitation conferences to involve potential offerors early in the acquisition process.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA's) necessary to perform Market Research include:
Knowledge of:

- Market research activities and sources of collecting data on business trends, IT technology cycles, and forecasting Fundamentals of supply and demand
- IT industry information systems and similar current applications in production for IT the area being researched
- Using on-line information services and skills at performing internet searches such
- Identifying financial information on IT markets and individual firms.ie. Dunn and Bradstreet, Moodys, Standard and Poors, etc.
- Identifying similar or like IT business goals and strategies, the market environments, market measurement, market segments and product differentiation, product life cycles and market evolution, market prices, market channels/middlemen, physical distribution, industrial markets, and source selection factors and procedures in industrial and public markets

Skills and Abilities to:

- Identify market data relevant to State IT business decisions — "collecting and analyzing information about capabilities within the market to meet Agency/state business entity needs or opportunity".
- Communication effectively
- Perform Internet/Intranet research
- Perform Library research
- Perform Literature research

- Perform Classification and catalog of data
- Assign importance and relevancy of data
- Collate disparate pieces of information
- Discern fact from fiction
- Identify high public visibility concerns and policy implications
- Maintain a focus of purpose and objectivity

Market research questions, information to include, or activities to consider:

- Availability of commercial off-the-Shelf, Modified-off-the-Shelf, or custom Software solutions
  - Salient characteristics and past performance
  - Market shares and niches/-corporate strategies
  - Price/feature tradeoffs
  - Support services
  - Product reliability and history
  - Typical customizing, modifying or tailoring for customers
  - Potential cost of modifying the item to meet particular needs Industry practices and trends
  - Industry specifications and industry standards.
  - Industry terms and conditions (e.g., discounts, warranties, financing, tier pricing)
  - Laws and regulations unique to the item/service
  - Production and delivery lead-times
  - Technological/product changes and forecasts - Trends in market prices - Trends in supply/demand
  - Factors that affect market prices (e.g., cost and demand of product, raw materials prices)
  - Status of availability
  - Production capability
  - Distribution and support capabilities
  - Technical strengths and weaknesses
  - Business and organizational strengths and weaknesses
  - Patent and data rights
- Practices and trends in State procurements of the same or similar requirements.
  - Other state buyers
  - Trends in state demand
  - Trends in prices paid by the government agencies
  - Problems and issues in the award and administration of prior similar contracts
- Review solicitation histories on current or prior project/contract files for the same or similar requirements.
  - Prior project files/contract files
  - Contacts with other buyers (State and out of state) who have experience in buying the supply or service
- Determine the scope and extent of research

- o Review information already in hand (including your personal knowledge of the market from prior contract actions, information supplied by the requiring activity, and the findings of recent research on like requirements)
- Plan the collection of market information (i.e., when and how)
- Consult the appropriate state procurement teams about roles and responsibilities for conducting market research
- Ensure the market research questions developed are reviewed and accepted by the IT project teams, users, executive management, legal (if applicable) oversight authorities and Procurement/Contracts teams
- Ensure the planning of the Market research and its evaluation activities are in place prior to gathering the data. Actively document solutions to problems, weighing the results and consequences of each solution. Evaluations typically will be simple, informal, efficient, practical, low- cost and easily carried out and understood by all.
  - o Evaluations won't just be delegated to one person – highly encourage everyone in the team become involved in evaluating and reviewing the results.
  - o Evaluations should be honest, and place emphasis on feasibility and credibility.
- Be sure to select a method or multiple methods for researching information. Research methods may include:
  - o Industry panels
  - o Request for Informal Market Survey/Research for Planning and Budgetary Purposes (written)
  - o Questionnaires/surveys
  - o Pre-solicitation for Industry Comments
  - o Pre-bid conferences
  - o One-on-One Meetings
  - o Presentations/Demonstrations
  - o Forums
  - o Forming of panels with members from State and supplier community

Recommendations on generating an RFI

- As a general rule the more succinct the RFI or survey, the faster the response rate. Be concise and include a clear statement of the problem for which a solution may be solicited in the future
- Request that suppliers respond to questions concerning the particular IT topic, business need or solution being considered
- Inform vendor that they bear all costs in providing an RFI response and that there is no guarantee that a resulting contract will be issued
- Inform vendors that the information provided is public and the State has the right to use it in any future solicitations, without stating which vendor it came from and by using it, the state has no liability in any way to the vendor who provided it. Ask suppliers to provide information on their qualifications, experience and ability to solve the IT problem posed by the RFI
- Ask vendors to provide lessons learned white papers or other credible data regarding the solution being considered to obtain sound information, facts and knowledge-share.

- Do not use the RFI to select a supplier or a solution.
- Any subsequent ITB or RFP should not be written to a particular vendor, product, service or solution discovered during the RFI process.
- The State may ask vendors for a ROM or cost driver estimates for budgetary and planning purposes.

Information to obtain on performance, specifications and product Information

- Product data sheets
- Availability of product samples/length of time the product has been produced or service provided
- Purchase item descriptions used by other State activities or used in commercial transactions, including commercial specifications standards and statements of work.
- Product quality, reliability, and maintainability experience of similar users
- List of products and company services satisfying identical or similar service requirements. Applicable regulatory and de facto standards.
- Average time between model changes and practice of providing continued parts inventories, upgrades, or production for phased-out models
- Supplier plans for handling upgrades and obsolescence

Information to obtain for supplier capability

- Number of suppliers
- Size and location of suppliers and their current market
- Product distribution channels
- Business practices in sales and distribution from manufacturers to wholesaler, distributor or Value Added Distributor or Master Value Added Reseller, Value Added Reseller, reseller or retailer, to user
- Production capacity to meet requirements as part of commercial sales.
- Packaging, handling, storage, and transportation practices.

Information to obtain for market acceptance criteria

- Annual sales
- Anticipated future orders
- Description of supplier/contractor's quality controls including extent of statistical process controls and any ISO or other quality certifications.
- Warranty terms and practices, annual returns under warranty.
- Need for any pre-production or production qualification testing and special quality assurance requirements.
- Product evaluation criteria (including life-cycle criteria, if applicable)

Information to obtain for system integration (SI) professional services

- How are technology vendors adapting their services offerings to capitalize on the trend toward the solution be provided?
- What is the scope of the SI market, and what are the primary drivers that affect its growth and development?
- How is SI project delivery changing, and what impact will this have on skill sets going forward?
- Which are the leading SI vendors, and what is their market position?
- Which are the leading integrators for the specific industry and around specific solution areas?
- What are the industry benchmarks for key performance indicators such as hourly rates, utilization rates, breadth of services offerings, global delivery capabilities, etc.?

Information to obtain about supportability

- Repair parts availability and lead times, documentation, pricing, and distribution systems
- Customer service, installation, checkout, and user operation and maintenance instructions.
- Requirements and provisions for manpower and personnel
- Competitive or sole source repair
- Training and training support requirements.
- Requirements for and availability of tools, test equipment, computer support resources, calibration procedures, operations, and maintenance manuals
- Commercial repair capabilities
- Supplier calibration, repair, and overhaul practices and capabilities documentation
- Supplier commitment to maintenance and operation support
- Degree of technical data package availability
- Stability of current configuration of technology
- Security requirements

Information to obtain about test data

- Hardware, software, and manpower interface issues such as human factors and product safety as experienced by similar users
- Manufacturer test results
- Certification or test results from independent test organizations
- List of those currently using the product

Information to obtain about business data

- Distribution practices
- Minimum order quantities or TIER or package pricing and practices
- Typical contract terms and conditions
- Warranty procedures

- Financing practices
- Typical Service Level Agreements

Information to obtain about supportably and maintenance

- What is the anticipated staff requirements that the solution may require for the with the operation, administration and maintenance of the system?
- What should be included in Knowledge Transfer activities?
- What should the State know about Maintenance and Operations risks?

Information to provide to vendors may include:

General Information

- Operating characteristics for hardware and software
- Environmental conditions for use

Logistics Support Information

- Planned maintenance echelons
- Software maintenance plans
- Maintenance environment (weather, mud)
- Supply support, support equipment needs, limitations
- Training needs
- Technical data needs
- Transportability

Services Information

- Description of services desired
- Period of performance
- Expected deliverables
- Expected labor categories
- Usage (e.g., fixed, airborne, tactically deployable)

System Interface or Integration Requirements

- Computer language, speed, throughput, ports, memory and expansion potential.
- Radio transmission frequency requirements and allocation status
- Rules for government use of frequency spectrum
- Human factors considerations

Maintainability Information

- Self-test requirements
- Limitations, if any, on organizational-level support equipment

Communications-Computer System Interface Information

- Software portability to other communications-computer systems
- Interoperability
- Operating duty cycle (e.g., 24 hours, intermittent)
- Input power quality (drops, surges, spikes, noise)
- Essential safety characteristics
- Reliability, Maintainability, and Survivability data

Market Research Logistical Information

- Provide a Purpose Statement
- Provide a Scope Statement
- Provide Key Action Dates with activities tied to them
- Provide Background Information
- Provide Contact and Correspondence information
- Provide any required content format when response
- Provide any additional information that might be of benefit to gather meaningful data

Research Resources:

- Reading Trade Journals
- Contacting knowledgeable people (state, government and industry) in specific markets
- Contacting Procurement Officials, Program Managers, Contract Officers in other Federal/state agencies and private industry (other users). Take advantage of the lessons that these individuals have learned in previous solicitations
- Contacting known sources or those communities of those providing services for the applicable IT solution being researched
- Reviewing market surveys prepared by independent companies
- Attending trade shows, conferences, and symposia
- Querying State and other Government databases (GSA, FedBizOpps, SBA) that provide relevant information on acquisitions
- Reviewing results of recent market research on similar or identical requirements.
- Reviewing catalogs and literature published by service providers