

RFP for outsourcing of services related to issuance of Indian Visa Services at Embassy of India, Brussels, Belgium.

Responses to Questions asked by Prospective Bidders

Quote from RFP	Question/ Clarifications	Answers
Schedule for the RFP process	When is the Contract Signing expected to happen, and when is the new service provider expected to start the operations?	On completion of current process.
Scope of Services	<p>Page 3, INTRODUCTION- Point 11(2) Talks about scope as Visa support Services only</p> <p>Whereas, On page 13, Scope of Work, there is mention of Passport and other consular applications as well. Please confirm that the scope of this tender includes Visa/Passports and other consular services like attestation, PCC, Affidavits, Birth Certificate, etc etc</p>	Currently only outsourcing of VISA services are being offered.
Scope of Services...Contd	If the scope of services includes the passport and consular services; please provide monthly count of such services for the last THREE years.	ONLY VISA SERVICES. Figures already given.
No of Visa Transactions in the last three years	We believe there is an error in calculating the daily volume. At 250 days of the year, daily volume of Visas Issued comes to 100. Please confirm our understanding.	<p>The exact figure for VISAs in the last 3 years are as follows: 2015- 21,952; 2014-27,022; 2013- 25,925. Exact Average for year 2015 comes to appx 88 Visas per day.</p>
Application Count Split between all the three VAC's	What is the approximate Split of Applications in percentage between all the three current VAC's?	Based on last 3 years i.e 2013, 2014 and 2015 figures of Antwerp and Luxembourg were appx 10-15 % of the VISA figures of Brussels.
Annexure D- III	Considering the daily number of applications as per the figures provided in the RFP; the Size of the VAC's and the Minimum Staff required is way too much considering the daily 100 applications; there will be atleast 50% incoming applications through Post and Travel Agents.	<p>Staff strength is a key component in order to maintain a good image of India, viz Fast turnaround time, Lesser workload and consequently smiling and willing to help staff.</p> <p>In view of the image being generated of India in the minds of Tourists, there can be no compromise on the issue raised.</p>

	<p>We request the Embassy to relook at the minimum requirements of number of Staff and Size of the VAC's as this will inflate the service fee to a point where people will stop sending applications to the VAC's and instead go the E-Tourist Visa route.</p> <p>We have observed in lot of European stations that applicants now prefer to go to Travel agencies who take a small fee to put the application into the ETV system, rather than coming to the VAC's.</p> <p>Staffing and Sizing are the key components that drive the Service Fees.</p> <p>Request your kind reconsideration.</p>	
eTourist Visa Volumes	Please provide month wise data on visas issues under the Embassy's jurisdiction after the launch of eTV scheme.	<p>As per figures currently available:</p> <p>Sept'15 – 322 (Belg), 28 (Lux); Oct'15 – 1103 (Belg), 66 (Lux); Nov'15 – 460 (Belg), 35 (Lux) ; Dec'15- 2112 (Belg), 322 (Lux).</p>
Monthly Visa Numbers	Please provide MONTHLY COUNT of Visas issued by the Embassy in Brussels for the last THREE Years. This will help us understanding the seasonal trends; and planning thereof.	<p>2015. Jan- 2969. Feb-2152. Mar-1755. Apr-986. May-1232. June-2202. July-1496. Aug – 1256. Sep- 1774. Oct-2326. Nov-1672. Dec-2132.</p> <p>2014. Jan-3520. Feb-2589. Mar-2196. Apr-1072. May-1384. June-2239. July-1830. Aug-1738. Sep-2664. Oct-2958. Nov-2473. Dec-2359.</p> <p>2013. Jan-3429. Feb-2492. Mar-2188. Apr-1343. May-1593. June-2022. July-1182. Aug-1024. Sep-2321. Oct-3164. Nov-2670. Dec-2497.</p>

	Travel Agent/Post Numbers	<p>What percentage of applications is currently received through Post in all the Three VAC's currently?</p> <p>What percentage of applications is received by the travel Agents in all the Three VAC's currently?</p>	<p>1 or 2 applications are received by post in Brussels only in 2-3 months.</p> <p>15-20% in Brussels only. No travel agent goes to other VAC's in Antwerp and Luxembourg.</p>
	Visa Issuing Mission	<p>Our understanding is that Visas will be issued only at the mission station in Brussels. Applications collected at Antwerp and Luxemburg will be couriered to Brussels VAC; and then processed and submitted centrally to the mission in Brussels for Visa Issuance. Please confirm our understanding of the operations.</p> <p>Additionally, if Brussels is the only Station issuing the Visas, is it necessary to open physical VAC's in Antwerp and Luxemburg. Applicants could directly courier the applications to the VAC in Brussels. Saves time also.</p>	<p>Point No 1. Yes. The understanding is correct.</p> <p>Yes. The physical VAC's in Antwerp and Luxembourg are a pre-requirement and cannot be dispensed with.</p>
	Transition	<p>There is no mention of the word transition in the entire document.</p> <p>Failure on the part of the incumbent service provider has not been addressed at all in the RFP.</p> <p>Detailed information is solicited as far as transition is concerned to ensure that a process is defined to ensure accountability.</p> <p>Below is a sample of questions that need clarification:</p> <p>i) When will the incumbent service provider end accepting applications?</p>	<p>The incumbent service provider will hand over all applications received from applicants to the Embassy of India, Brussels at the expiry of its contract. The new service provider will be handed over the processed VISAs by the Embassy for delivery to the applicants.</p> <p>Rest of the clarifications can be discussed and clarified in the pre bid meeting.</p>

		<p>ii) When will the contact centre of the incumbent service provider discontinue its operations?</p> <p>iii) Will the applications that were processed by incumbent be handled?</p> <p>iv) How will the handover of the unprocessed applications, courier labels, passports, etc. be implemented?</p> <p>v) Will the new service provider charge their service fee for handling applications handed over by incumbent service provider?</p> <p>Due to poor transition, there are disastrous consequences and can cause major inconvenience to the applicant community & reputation of the Indian Mission abroad.</p>	
	<p>The Service Provider should provide an efficient and courteous telephonic enquiry system through Toll free numbers/ Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The Service Provider can charge normal call charges after five minutes. Special higher call charges are not permitted. No caller should be made to wait for more than eight minutes and waiting time should not be chargeable. The telephonic enquiries should be attended from 9AM to 7PM on all working days and an automatic answering system should be functional outside the above period including holidays.</p>	<p>Kindly provide the details on number of calls and emails received from the applicants at the current service centres.</p> <p>RFP states the call centre time to be 9 AM to 7 PM on all working days. We request the Embassy to consider a time period of 9 AM to 5 PM to coincide with the IVAC working hours and also taking into account any possible staff security issues arising out the time taken by staff to reach home in the night.</p>	<p>A call can be taken on the same based on specific requirements.</p>
	<p>SMS & Email Charges</p>	<p>How will the System Identify if a particular</p>	<p>Due to this issue, every applicant should receive updates in 3</p>

	<p>applicant will receive updates in which language?</p> <p>Does the Embassy expect the service provider to provide Alerts in all the three languages? If yes, we request the embassy to increase the rate to atleast 8 Euros</p>	<p>major languages viz English, French and Flemish. The rates fixed are maximum and cannot be increased.</p>
Biometric enrolment	<p>What would be the likely date of implementation of biometric data capture?</p>	<p>This will be decided in due course by the competent authority and intimated accordingly.</p>
Unviable Service Fee	<p>What is the Mission's definition of unviable Service fee? Service fee charged by the current service provider will not be even sufficient to pay even the staff salaries.</p>	<p>The current service provider is giving stellar services in the same fees and mission sees no reason to increase service fees.</p>
Signature of CEO/Directors on all the Documents	<p>Will the Mission consider the RFP response and relevant Annexure including the Financial Bid to be signed by a senior person authorized by the Board of Directors of the company?</p> <p>As the CEO/Directors are not usually available at one place hence getting the entire response document signed by one of them will be a difficult task considering the stringent timelines of the RFP.</p> <p>Hence we request Mission to kindly consider the request.</p>	<p>Anyone authorised by the CEO/Directors of a Company can sign the documents, provided a copy of letter authorising signatures is enclosed</p>
Urgent/Emergency Visa Category	<p>As the Mission is charging a Urgent Visa Fee of 43 Euros, what is the service provider allowed to charge for Urgent Visa Applications; in addition to the regular Service Fee?</p>	<p>Service provider is not allowed to charge any urgent fees. They only charge service fees as per current practice. There is no separate urgent category service fee in the RFP. There will be only one Service Fee applicable to all cases. Mission's requirement for urgent service should be acted upon</p>

	Additionally, please provide month wise count of applications processed under this Urgent category in the last 3 years?	by the Service Provider without any additional cost. Mission also has the right to handle urgent visa applications directly. As regards count, No such data is available.
Call center and helpdesk of the current service provider-Timings	We have experienced applicants contacting the new service provider for applications submitted at the previous service provider. In this event, the current service provider should be asked to continue their telephone and email helpdesk for at least two weeks after the last date of their contract. Kindly advise.	A suitable arrangement can be worked out.
Postal Applications- Incomplete Documents	Service provider should be allowed to return the applications that do not have all the mandatory documents in the postal package received after deducting the service provider fee and the return courier charges.	As per norms being followed currently, additional documents are asked from applicants if unavailable and no application is returned.
The Bidding Company must provide certification that its operations are compliant with local labour laws and relevant tax regime	This certification can only be provided after the operations have begun and taxes are filed at the end of the 1 st financial year. Please confirm if our understanding is correct.	Certification on compliance with labour laws can be provided initially in terms of minimum wages.
Ref- Profit Margin & Reasonable rate of return	What might be reasonable for one service provider might not be reasonable for another. Please specify a range which Embassy feels is reasonable.	Cannot be specified.
VI- Post/Courier applications received should be brought into the system on the same day of the receipt	Scrutiny of these applications may take some time post the postal/courier company delivers the applications to the VAC, and this could delay the upload into the main system to the next day. Hence, embassy should approve the flexibility of one business day for such applications to be brought into the system.	The time frame being followed currently is adequate and no change can be acceded to at this juncture.
XII- Service fee can be retained by the service provider	Since the courier company will charge a fee for return of incomplete documents, such charges should be deducted from the refund as per the	NOT APPLICABLE.

		VAS schedule along with the service provider service fee.	
Penalties		“no of days” should be replaced with “per business day” as the banking system does not work on non business days	Will be clarified.

Page No. 9 Point (o)	The Bidding Company must deposit a Bid Security of US\$50,000. The Bid Security is refundable not later than 15(fifteen) days from the opening of financial bid and award of Contract, except in the case of the selected Bidding Company whose Bid Security shall be retained till it has provided Bank Guarantees as indicated in Para X - Bank Guarantees of this document.	Please provide complete beneficiary details for making the draft for security deposit of US\$50,000 (USD Fifty Thousand).	Bank guarantee to be made in favour of EOI, Brussels.
Page No 29 Point (m)	The Service Provider will ensure that the total turnaround time for visa/passport/consular applicants applying for visas will not be more than 60 minutes (or lower as offered in the Technical Bid). Machine generated tickets should be given to visa applicants, indicating the date and time of entry at the IVAC and also the time of completion of the submission process, so that the total turnaround time can be reliably documented.	Kindly elaborate procedure for turnaround time of 60 minutes.	The turnaround time of 60 minutes should be counted from the time when applicant enters the VAC leaves the VAC after completion of his work.
Page No. 15. Point 12 a (x)	The Service Provider should have special arrangements to deal with emergency calls outside office hours and on holidays to coordinate with the Mission/Post.	Clarification about the special arrangement to deal with emergency calls outside office hours and on holidays may be elaborated.	A special designated number on which applicants can contact after office hours is to be made operational.

Page No 77 Annexure-E	Annexure-E (Proforma for Evaluation of Technical Bids - Grading companies giving marks)	The remarks column in all the criteria from 1 to 9 provides that “Marks to be awarded as per Mission’s Judgment.” It is nowhere either explained or clarified as to what would be the basis and /or parameter for the Mission to pass a judgment on the concerned criteria. Besides, the said judgment by the Mission will be highly subjective. This criteria of evaluation is not transparent evaluation criteria as per normal guidance of Government of India, should be transparent and predefined and not to be arbitrary.	The guidelines are as per RFP circulated by MEA Govt of India and will be followed as per the directions.
	Record of Past Performance with Mission/MEA/GOI [Marking under this head should take into account the past record of performance of the company, including a constructive and harmonious working relationship, number of instances where show-cause notices have been issued, reliability and faithfulness in implementing Mission's/Post's instructions, record of payment of penalties (which are not sub-judice), honest delivery of value-added services, etc.] Companies applying for the first time may be given a neutral evaluation for the purpose of ranking (5 marks) while the SPs with difficult record will be given a symbolic more than zero. The SPs with good record may be given marks between five	Criteria No. 9 provides that marks will be awarded as per Mission’s judgment on the basis of number of memorandums /show cause notices etc. It further provides that the first time bidder is to be given a neutral evaluation for purpose of ranking i.e. 5 marks, the said criteria favor inexperience bidder while the service providers who has experience and who has already provided services and successfully completed the contract will be given a symbolic mark more than zero. These criteria in itself appears to be discriminatory. While the first timers have been given exemplary good mark i.e. 5 marks, the	The guidelines are as per RFP circulated by MEA Govt of India and will be followed as per the directions.

	and ten.	experienced ones are given less marks than the first timers.	
		<p>Besides, it is stated in the said remark that the marks will be reduced depending upon the number of show cause notices etc. It is requested to appreciate that the issuance of show cause notice to any service provider in no way can be termed as cognizable or any stigma attached to the said service provider. Mere issuing show cause notice cannot be taken as negative point as it is unfair and discriminatory. Thus the said method of marking in criteria 9 needs to be rectified and explained as the same is highly discriminatory. Criteria No. 10 As verdict is vague and unclear it doesn't specify who is not Government of India client and how would quality being ascertained has not been mentioned. Further this criteria also favoured non-Indian Companies who may have more experience with non-Government of India clients.</p>	<p>The guidelines are as per RFP circulated by MEA Govt of India and will be followed as per the directions.</p>

Page No 36 Point XV. PENALTIES	XV. PENALTIES	As regards penalties, there are certain superfluous clauses which need to be rationalized as the same are difficult to be strictly implemented and monitored.	It is requested that the clauses mentioned may be mentioned specifically.
Page No 74 Annexure D II Point 4	Capacity to provide Insurance for services and obligations The insurance should cover the properties of IVACs and services rendered by the Service Provider and the obligations including legal obligations arising out of them and should survive expiry or termination of Contract in regard to legal issues.	whether company is required to submit insurance cover in the form of certificate from the insurance company or copy of Insurance policy.	Documentary evidence of taking an Insurance policy will suffice.
Page 65 Annexure 'C' Financial Bid	Note: Mission has the right to disqualify the bidders in the Financial Bid stage if the costing details are not commercially viable and found to be unsustainable, treating the Bid as unresponsive.	There is no definition provided in the RFP of words “commercially viable”. Besides there is no parameter or criteria w.r.t. the same. While for the bidder a financial bid can be commercial viable, it may not be so for the Mission. Thus the said decision is highly subjective and needs clarification and necessary amendment providing the complete parameters and criteria as to when a particular financial bid can be termed as commercially viable and commercially not viable.	Cannot be specified.
		Besides there is no definition of the word unsustainable i.e. it needs to be clarified as to when the costing details can be termed as unsustainable. The said parameters must be provided in the RFP so as to enable the bidders to be vigilant in providing their costing	

		details so that the same can be termed as commercially viable and sustainable.	
	Please provide us the application volume split month wise since last three years for all the 3 cities (Brussels, Antwerp and Luxembourg).		Given below at Annex 1
	No of Applications for VISA Support Services received from Walk-in, Postal and Travel Agents at all above cities.		No such details are maintained.
	When will the details of evaluation of Technical Bid be intimated to participated companies? Will it be at the time of opening of financial bid or prior to opening of financial bid?		The details are mentioned in the RFP
	We would like to know when the current service provider terminates his contract with the Mission.		As and when the new contract is signed.
	We would like to know when the new service provider has to start the work.		The details are mentioned in the RFP

Annex 1

	Brussels	Antwerpen	Luxembourg	Total/Month
January-13	2981	307	141	3429
February-13	2075	246	171	2492
March-13	1944	140	104	2188
April-13	1216	86	41	1343
May-13	1347	172	74	1593
June-13	1718	231	66	2015

July-13		1322		188		113		1623
August-13		1231		176		79		1486
Sep-13		1917		295		109		2321
October-13		2754		268		142		3164
November-13		2231		264		175		2670
December-13		2005		312		180		2497

		Brussels		Antwerpen		Luxembourg		Total/Month
January-14		2862		323		335		3520
February-14		1984		278		327		2589
March-14		1751		154		291		2196
April-14		916		104		52		1072
May-14		1195		151		38		1384
June-14		1777		302		160		2239

July-14		1339		141		350		1830
August-14		1170		173		395		1738
Sep-14		2143		246		275		2664
October-14		2569		251		138		2958
November-14		2053		269		151		2473
December-14		2016		275		68		2359

		Brussels		Antwerpen		Luxembourg		Total/Month
January-15		2544		294		131		2969
February-15		1825		219		108		2152
March-15		1520		138		97		1755
April-15		858		81		47		986
May-15		1050		137		45		1232
June-15		1820		341		41		2202
July-15		1282		153		61		1496

August-15		1048		169		39		1256	
Sep-15		1528		169		77		1774	
October-15		1995		237		94		2326	
November-15		1424		159		89		1672	
December-15		1793		273		66		2132	