

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS #2022-014**  
**Strategic Planning for University of Maine System**  
**RESPONSE ADDENDUM #2**  
**October 08, 2021**

**QUESTIONS**

**Q1:** As noted in section 1.1.3 of the RFP, “the Contractor will also work with specific and individual university stakeholders among UMS’s constituent universities” in developing the System’s strategic plan. In our work developing strategic plans with other university systems, we’ve employed an approach that involves conducting focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., Presidents or Provosts) from each constituent institution in the system. Is this the type of stakeholder engagement you would envision for this strategic planning process? Are there other specific interactions that you envision the Contractor engaging in with the constituent institutions? What will the Contractor’s role be with respect to the individual campus plans’ development?

**A1:** Conducting focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders is an acceptable and expected approach to obtain input and buy-in for strategic plan development, within constituent System universities (e.g., students, staff, and faculty from a particular System university), across functional areas in the System (e.g., all university Chief Business Officers in the System), and with external stakeholders (e.g., alumni, Boards of Visitors, legislators, etc.). The Contractor will have no direct role or responsibility to facilitate work on any individual System university’s strategic plan, but will need to have knowledge of those plans and may advise on how to ensure they can be harmonized with the UMS strategic plan that the Contractor helps to develop.

**Q2:** The timeline provided in Exhibit B of the RFP’s Addendum indicates the strategic planning effort to begin in October of 2021 and to conclude in the fall of 2023, with a final draft for a strategic plan to be shared with the UMS community for final feedback in early spring of 2023 (between January and March 2023). What do you envision the Contractor’s role will be in the six months following the final draft of the strategic plan (e.g., March 2023-Fall 2023)? Additionally, the timeline on p. 25 of Appendix D (Master Agreement) indicates a start date of November 15th, 2021, with a termination in December of 2026. Which timeline do you feel is more accurate and will you anticipate follow-on work?

**A2:** Work with the Contractor will commence as soon as reasonably practical after award and contract execution. The spring-to-fall 2023 timeline projection is tentative; UMS desires to finalize and adopt a strategic plan as soon as practical after the anticipated spring 2023 confirmation of UMS unified accreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). Once UMS has received NECHE’s written confirmation of unified accreditation, the strategic plan under development can be harmonized with NECHE’s confirmation of accreditation and thereafter finalized. The actual date of presentation to the UMS Board for adoption may be earlier than Fall 2023, but should account for final UMS faculty comment, which is difficult to obtain during the summer months when many faculty have no contractual responsibilities to undertake work with UMS. UMS and the Contractor will together determine the appropriate final schedule for completing the strategic plan and presenting it to the UMS Board for adoption.

The primary scope of work will be for Contractor to work with UMS through adoption of the strategic plan, and Contractor's proposal should reflect that. Contractor may propose a subsequent scope of work for implementation from late 2023 and thereafter.

Appendix D (Master Agreement) is to provide for any additional work that may be required using Section 1. There is nothing contemplated at this time.

**Q3:** To what extent do you envision a market analysis of other strategic plans across similarly situated systems / institutions to inform a successful strategic plan? Or, in the event UMS has already conducted these analyses, will the results of those be shared with the consultancy?

**A3:** The UMS unified accreditation model is a "first of its kind" innovation in U.S. higher education, and the UMS strategic plan to be developed is expected to set a vision, strategic goals, and performance measurements to determine success with this accreditation model within the context of the public policy for higher education in Maine. A Contractor's proposal is welcome to include evaluation of other system plans, which may or may not ultimately be relevant to the success of UMS's own plan; understanding this, the Contractor is free to account for such work in its proposal.

Subject to the above, the Contractor and UMS personnel who work with the Contractor may jointly determine to undertake work of this nature during the project.

**Q4:** We understand that the UMS strategic plan will be developed at the same time as UMS is completing a Self Study of its unified accreditation compliance with NECHE, in advance of an anticipated accreditation in 2023. Moreover, we understand that it will be critical to harmonize the strategic plan with NECHE's confirmation of unified accreditation. To what extent do you anticipate the strategic planning efforts to drive the accreditation work? Do you have a process for ensuring the two processes complement each other?

**A4:** The tentative timeline that UMS proposed to its Board in September 2021, which is included as Addendum 1 to RFP 2022-014 Strategic Planning Services for University of Maine System, is assumed to not only permit, but also ensure, that UMS's strategic plan will be in alignment with NECHE's expected confirmation of unified accreditation in early 2023. The UMS Board expects that the strategic plan to be developed will determine a vision and goals that realize and maximize the strategic opportunities for cooperation and coordination among the universities of the University of Maine System that are available in the unified accreditation model.

**Q5:** As noted in Section 1.1.4, "The System will require as many meetings and presentations as necessary. There should be no assumption on the number of presentations or the number of trips required." Do you expect a potentially unlimited number of meetings for a fixed fee, or will you expect a time and materials proposal?

**A5: Contractors are free to address the issues presented in this question in whatever manner the Contractor believes will be mutually beneficial. The Contractor could propose, for example, a cap on the number of meetings for a fixed price, with a cost schedule for additional meetings, or other appropriate arrangements.**

**Q6:** Appendix C (Required Cost Evaluation Exhibits) of the RFP provides instructions for Exhibit 1 (Table 2) – Pricing for Custom Features Deliverables. It indicates that Respondent should provide a rate schedule for the high-level deliverables defined in RFP Section 1.1.4, which specifically addresses the creation of the System’s strategic plan. Beyond the creation of the strategic plan, can you clarify the individual deliverables that you would like identified in Exhibit 1 (Table 2)?

**A6: The University is relying on the Respondent’s professional judgement in response to this section. We would expect to see a proposal of how the Respondent would break the work down into manageable deliverables designed to outline checkpoints along the process.**

**Q7:** Can the UMS clarify on what is meant by this section, as it seems as if some words may be missing:

Though the Contractor’s work undertaken for the University of Maine System will support the development of a System-wide Strategic Plan, the Contractor will also work with specific and individual university stakeholders among UMS’s constituent universities to consider how individual UMS university strategic plans as well.

**A7: Regrettably, this sentence in the RFP contained an error. The final phrase should read: “to consider how individual UMS university strategic plans will align with the UMS strategic plan developed and adopted.”**

**Q8:** Can the UMS clarify on what is meant by this section, as it seems as if some words may be missing:

Though the Contractor’s work undertaken for the University of Maine System will support the development of a System-wide Strategic Plan, the Contractor will also work with specific and individual university stakeholders among UMS’s constituent universities to consider how individual UMS university strategic plans as well.

**A8: See A7 above in response to Q7.**

**Q9:** Is the scope of this effort a system wide strategic plan?

**A9: Yes.**

**Q10:** Should the selected vendor include time to work with the individual participating constituent universities to define their respective linkage to the system wide plan?

**A10:** This should not be considered within the primary scope of work expected of the Contractor, but may be a beneficial consideration. See also the A1 answer above in response to Q1.

**Q11:** What is the UMS's current expectation for on-site facilitation and meetings? What are the work requirements with respect to the current pandemic?

**A11:** First and foremost, UMS expect to share a commitment with the Contractor for the public health and safety of their employees and communities. UMS is presently conducting in-person teaching, learning, work, and research, and would prefer to conduct in-person meetings when doing so can be safely undertaken in compliance with UMS's present COVID protocols. That said, hybrid meetings (e.g., a mix of some people in person and others participating remotely via Zoom or similar technology) may be used where doing so does not limit the qualitative substance of the meeting and work undertaken.

**Q12:** To what extent does the UMS have existing data for benchmarks, targets, or other University performance metrics?

**A12:** UMS maintains a web-based dashboard of the KPIs it presently tracks at this link: <https://www.maine.edu/databook/ums-dashboard/>

**Q13:** Does the UMS have an existing strategic planning process in mind for this project? Are you looking for the selected vendor to bring their proven process?

**A13:** UMS invites the Contractor to address this matter in its proposal.

**Q14:** In the UMS Strategic Planning Charge, the plan is to be developed by the Chancellor in close collaboration with the University Presidents and Maine Law Dean. Are there any existing meetings of this team that can be leveraged for strategic planning activities?

**A14:** Yes. The UMS Chancellor convenes a monthly meeting of a UMS leadership group known as the Presidents' Council. The group includes the Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, all university presidents, the Maine Law Dean, and key System leadership staff who support the Vice Chancellors.

**Q15:** To what extent will a core strategic planning team be available to advise on planning and analysis tasks? How much time have you projected they will be available?

**A15:** UMS expects to charge a Strategic Planning Core Leadership Team that will be available to work with the Contractor as UMS and the Contractor deem to be mutually beneficial and necessary to successfully develop the UMS strategic plan according to the UMS Board's July 2021 charge (which is included in Addendum 1 to the RFP). UMS Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Legal Officer James Thelen will be available as

**the Chancellor's delegated executive sponsor and liaison between the Contractor and Strategic Planning Core Leadership Team.**

**Q16:** To what extent does the UMS wish to engage stakeholders in the information gathering activities, such as via surveys, interviews, listening sessions and focus groups?

**A16:** UMS anticipates that this will be a critically important component of information gathering for strategic plan development.

**Q17:** Will the University consider extending the due date by one week, so that respondents will have the opportunity to react to information provided in response to questions submitted?

**A17:** UMS will hold consideration of granting such a request until Contractors evaluate these responses and determine whether to request additional time to prepare an informed and substantive proposal.

**Q18:** On page 6 of the RFP, it's noted that "Though the Contractor's work undertaken for the University of Maine System will support the development of a System-wide Strategic Plan, the Contractor will also work with specific and individual university stakeholders among UMS's constituent universities to consider how individual UMS university strategic plans as well. Contractor will thus work with UMS System leaders and all UMS universities and the University of Maine School of Law in carrying out work pursuant to this RFP and an award under it." Separately, on p. 2 of the Addenda it notes, "The Board acknowledges that individual universities have strategic plans at various stages of development or implementation, and that university strategic plans play a fundamental role in university-level budget building, priority setting, and university presidential leadership and accountability. The Strategic Plan developed for the System should guide and incentivize the universities to act together in strategic coordination to refine, align and fulfill their individual missions in ways that support and advance the System's mission and strategic plan." Is there any additional information available about the expectation that the Contractor will work with individual institutions on their own strategic plans, either independently or to ensure alignment with the system-wide plan?

**A18:** See the final portion of the A1 answer in response to Q1 above. See also A7's answer to Q7 above regarding an error in the above-quoted portion of the RFP.

**Q19:** The RFP emphasizes the importance of the system-wide strategic plan being aligned with the anticipated NECHE confirmation of unified accreditation by Spring 2023, but also the importance of the system-wide strategic plan as a guide for individual institutions to work together. Will individual institutions be updating existing strategic plans or undertaking new planning processes based on the unified accreditation?

**A19:** Individual UMS universities will be expected to administer their existing strategic plans in harmony and alignment with the UMS strategic plan developed with the Contractor. The work of doing so is not within the scope of work for this RFP (and see A1's answer to Q1 above on this point).

**Q20:** In section 2.2 the RFP notes that the system “reserves the right to award Agreement(s) to one or multiple Respondents.” Is there any additional information available about how the decision to make separate awards will be analyzed and determined by the System?

**A20:** The evaluation criteria is outlined in RFP Section 2.1. That said, and while the reservation of rights stands, UMS’s preference is to work with a single Contractor.

**Q21:** In general, what are UMS’s expectations for in-person vs. electronic/online meetings, interviews, presentations, and other interactions—particularly in light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic but also as means of increasing participant involvement and reducing project expenses?

**A21:** See A11’s answer to Q11 above.

**Q22:** Could a significant part of the stakeholder input-gathering be conducted as online interviews and focus groups as a means to complete more of these meetings in short period of time over what may be great geographical distance?

**A22:** Without knowing the perspective of the Contractor who submitted this question as to what constitutes a “significant” part of input-gathering, it is difficult for UMS to accurately respond. That said, given the present state of COVID, as well as the expected need to efficiently meet throughout the planning process with people who are geographically distant from each other, see A11’s answer to Q11 above.

**Q23:** Please offer further explanation about the three sets of visits by the Chancellor to the campuses described in the Addendum I timeline. (Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Fall 2022). Specifically:

- Will these be held as separate events at each of the nine UMS universities/centers?
- Does UMS expect or prefer the consultant to play a role in each of these events—in their planning and/or as active participants? (Please indicate this specifically for Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Fall 2022.)

**A23:** The UMS Chancellor visits each of the seven named UMS universities as well as the Maine Law School at least once each semester. The Chancellor will be updating each university community on the status of strategic planning during these times. For each, the Chancellor, UMS’s Strategic Planning Core Leadership Team (yet to be formed), and the Contractor will mutually determine in advance of the visits whether, and if so the extent to which, substantive strategic planning work should be incorporated into these visits, or whether it should be done outside of them. The outcome of that planning will determine the Contractor’s role and participation, if any, in each visit (including whether Contractor staff could participate remotely).

**Q24:** The timeline in Addendum I notes that a “UMS Strategic Planning Core Leadership Team” will be formed in October.

- What will the specific role of this group be, in particular:
  - Is it intended to serve as the primary working body for the planning effort, the primary group interacting with the consultants to develop the strategic plan—for example, meeting frequently (say, every 4-6 week) to review, discuss, and offer feedback on reports and drafts from the consultants? OR

- Is it intended to serve as primarily an oversight body—receiving periodic high-level updates about the strategic planning process and making decisions when requested by the consultants and working committee?
- What is the anticipated size of the group and the types of individuals it includes (i.e., positions, titles, or roles within the UMS)?

**A24: While UMS will look to the Contractor for recommendations about these issues, initial thinking is that the Strategic Planning Core Leadership Team will be closer to the latter description – an oversight body with a small number of representatives from each university and System leadership that includes faculty, staff, and academic administrative leaders.**

**Q25: If the Core Leadership Team is not intended to be a working body, do you anticipate creating such a group to work directly with the consultant?**

**A25: Yes, UMS anticipates forming a small working group to work directly with the selected Contractor, either as a subset of the Strategic Planning Core Leadership Team or separately.**

**Q26: Has UMS allocated administrative staff to the project to assist with logistical matters, such as scheduling, communication, event planning, preparation of meeting materials, and the like? How many such persons or FTEs have been designated?**

**A26: At least two administrative staff – one each in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Chief Legal Officer and the UMS Office of Organizational Effectiveness, respectively – are available to assist with such work.**

**Q27: Has UMS assigned any faculty, administrators, or professional staff to the project who would be expected to participate with the consultant in input-gathering, data-collection &, analysis, drafting and report production, and the like? How many such persons or FTEs have been designated?**

**A27: See A25's answer above to Q25. Further, UMS will consider inviting faculty to propose release time to participate directly in the strategic planning activities identified above.**

**Q28: Would you provide us a rough sense of UMS's budget parameters for the project? We ask only because having an idea greatly helps us determine how to establish the most cost effective project workplan—or allow us to make the decision not to submit a proposal if we feel we cannot provide the assistance required within a client's budget.**

**A28: UMS welcomes all proposals and looks to the Contractor to determine a market-appropriate cost proposal in line with proven strategic planning processes and the proposed timeline and scope and size of the University of Maine System.**

**Q29: The final paragraph of RFP Section 1.1.3 states that, “the Contractor will also work with specific and individual university stakeholders among UMS's constituent universities to consider how individual UMS university strategic plans as well.” [sic]**

- Some part of this sentence seems to be missing. What are UMS's expectations for the consultant's work with individual universities of the System? Is the consultant expected to work with each university in the System to develop its own strategic plan? Is the consultant expected to advice each university on how to align its strategic plan with that of the System? Something else?

- Is this work intended to occur concurrent with development of the System plan or following completion of the System strategic plan—that is, after approval by the UMS Board in Fall 2023?

**A29: Please refer above to the final portion of the answer for Q1/A1 and the answer for Q7/A7.**

**Q30:** We assume that Table 1 in Appendix C, “Professional Services Rate Schedule” is asking simply for the hourly professional billing rates of the consultants involved in the project rather than the project costs tied to specific activities or deliverables. Is this the case? (We ask because we are somewhat confused by the statement directly above the table: “Respondents will use this attachment to record all costs associated with this section.”)

**A30: Please provide hourly rates by title only in Appendix C, Exhibit 1, Table 1.**

**Q31:** Are we correct to assume that the consultant should provide total project costs in Table 2 of Appendix C (broken out as indicated by the table)?

**A31: That is correct. Ideally the response in Appendix C, Exhibit 1, Table 2 would support the workplan deliverables with the associated costs for each deliverable.**

**Q32:** Question #6 states: “Demonstrate your proposed means and methods, and organization of the data gathered to develop the Strategic Plan.” Is it correct to assume that this is asking for a general description of the consultant’s tools and approaches for information-gathering and analysis rather than a specific workplan for the project?

**A32: Yes.**

**Q33:** Are we correct to assume that Question #1 under “Professional Services” is asking for the consultant’s detailed project work plan, i.e., the specific activities the consultant would undertake to get to the deliverables of Section 1.1.4, with time frames indicated?

**A33: Appendix H Question 1 is intended to elicit a narrative response, which should relate to the response in Appendix H, Implementation Question #4 where a work plan is requested.**

**Q34:** Is question #1 under “Implementation Requirements” asking for the consultant’s general approach to undertaking the project work, the detailed project workplan & timeline, or something else?

**A34: See response to Q33/A33 above.**

**Q35:** Question #4 under “Implementation Requirements”:

- The first sentence asks about roles and responsibilities of “the project team required...” Does this refer to the members of the consultant’s team or to personnel from UMS who the consultant believes would need to be involved in the project?
- The second sentence requests a sample project plan. How is what is requested different from the work plan requested in Question #1 under “Professional Service”?

**A35: The first sentence refers to the personnel from UMS.**

**The second sentence would provide the work / project plan including (tasks, duration, dependencies, resources, etc.), whereas Appendix H Question 1 is intended to be more of a**



**narrative response, which should relate to the response in Appendix H, Implementation Question #4.**