Maine State Legislature
Bill Production System project

Vendor Communications : Questions and Answers Log
Updated: 5/5/2017 10:23am

Question	Can you provide more information on the current application architecture? This will be important when trying to estimate the integration efforts in the project. We are trying to understand the business applications, the scope of what they do and the technology they use.
Answer	The current application (MELD) is based on SQL Server 7 architecture (currently running on a SQL 2005 platform in 7 compatibility mode). The application is a combination of a proprietary platform for the UI (Omnibuilder), Abortext EPIC editor and VB. The current application was conceived as a solution that would completely replace a legacy WANG drafting system and would include document production, meta data, Statute update and maintenance, reporting, publication and workflow. In practice it has filled most of these requirements at one time or another but did only a couple of them well. In fact, workflow was never implemented and continued on the WANG system and subsequently in LEAP. In the 11 years that MELD has been in production, most of its tasks have shifted to LEAP with only document production, statute update and maintenance, and publication remaining completely within the purview of MELD. Our intention with this project is to replace the remaining MELD functionality.

Question	Is the LEAP database staying in place?
Answer	Yes

Question	How are bills and amendments published to members, staff and the public? Are there internal applications for bill versions and amendments?
Answer	Currently, our bill production process uses a combination of MELD and a second, vendor developed application to generate output. MELD extracts the XML from the database and passes it off to the second application which produces both MS Word and embedded font PDFs (embedded fonts are a requirement of our print contractor.) Originally the publication process used an EPIC editor feature to save the XML output as a Word document but shortly its limitations (e.g. properly handling line numbers) forced us to find alternatives.

Question	Is the drafting tool used in the House and Senate?
Answer	No

Question	How do you engross accepted amendments? Are the chambers responsible for engrossed versions?
Answer	The chambers do not have any bill production responsibilities (aside from the occasional chamber order, seat assignments, committee assignment changes, chamber rules and the like). Production of the engrosser is done by technicians in the Revisor of Statutes office. The resulting engrosser is sent to the Engrossing office (within the Revisor of Statutes office) where it is reviewed, approved and released.

Question	How are amendments entered in the Journal in the current process?
Answer	Maine does not have the concept of a journal as it pertains to the bill production process.

Question	How are requests managed in the current process
Answer	By "requests" we are assuming you mean bill draft requests. Currently, MELD is the originator of metadata, including legislative request number, title, sponsor, submitting authority, etc. That data is pushed immediately to LEAP where initial workflow is also generated. As the bill is produced, any effected statute is pushed via a batch process from MELD to LEAP. All substantive changes to meta data are done via MELD and pushed to LEAP. Workflow is the only dataset that is maintained in LEAP directly. State of Maine is currently working to reverse that process, making LEAP the originator of all metadata, pushing to MELD only that data necessary to produce a bill draft.

Question	Do you have statistics on the volume of drafts, amendments, bill versions and enacted bills in a typical session year or biennium?
Answer	Exact numbers can be provided if necessary but generally we have between 2000 and 2500 drafts (encompassing all types of bills: acts, orders, resolutions, etc.) and between 1500 and 2000 amendments. Typically something less than 50% of public acts and resolves are enacted into law.

Question	What is the volume of converted data and is it all in one consistent format? Do you want to convert drafts and amendments from previous sessions?
Answer	As indicated in the RFP, it is our intention that the Maine Revised Statutes may be converted for use in a new system. They are currently stored as 62 well-formed XML documents (one for each title) comprising 106Mb. It is not our intent to convert previous sessions' bill drafts and amendments as they already exist in MS Word documents, stored and accessible on our network. It IS our intent however, that those documents will be exposed and usable in the new bill production system. If that requirement implies that they must be converted somehow for use then that fact should be part of any response to the RFP.

Question	Is the statute update process fully in scope?
Answer	Yes

Question	Is the session law production process in scope?
Answer	Yes

Question	What publishers do you use to publish the printed books, e.g. Westlaw?
Answer	Westlaw. However, two other publications are generated locally and should be considered in scope: Laws of Maine and Bill Summaries.

Question	Page 2 of the RFP states that "The 128th Maine Legislature seeks proposals from qualified vendors to provide a MS Word based legislative bill production system […]". On page 14 it is stated that proposals could describe "a commercially available package that supports the entire system". See Note (1) below Our company provides a user-friendly XML-based solution that is precisely designed for legislative bill production, has the look and feel of a word processing tool, and is being used in several jurisdictions. It is capable of producing MS Word, HTML, PDF and ePUB documents in a variety of layouts, including authoritative/official versions. Could the Legislature please indicate whether MS Word is a mandatory technology upon which the solution must be based or whether a different commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) product that is highly optimized for legislative drafting is acceptable?
Answer	Being an MS Office-centered environment, we have a very deep knowledge base when it comes to working with Word. The requirement that we be able to maintain our environment and update it as necessary stems from our 10+ year history of depending on an outside entity to provide ALL support for our bill production system. That said the efficient, accurate production of legislation is paramount to this project and if the right solution for Maine's needs includes something other than MS Word as the editing environment, we would have to give it consideration. However, any solution must address concerns Maine has with user training and use, both in drafting and bill production, system integration with existing resources including MS Word and SQL Server database backend.

Question	The Legislature states on page 8 that "All computer program source code shall be delivered to the Office of Legislative Information Technology. This will include compile/load scripts, documentation, training, etc.". However, to ensure document and system integrity throughout the production process, certain modules, libraries and algorithms of our product are not available as source code.

	See Note (2) below Our solution is a commercial off-the-shelf product offering a multitude of configuration options that can be managed by the client. For example, modifications to style sheets for document production as well as the conception and integration of new functionality to the document editing environment is possible. As a solution that has existed for over 20 years, Ou company invests on average between $500,000 to $750,000 in the development and enhancement thereof every year. Our bill production system is used by several clients and boasts a return on investment (ROI) that could conservatively be calculated at 30%-50% on annual operation costs, compared to using traditional text editing tools. Given the above-mentioned autonomy over product development that is retained by the Legislature's development team, could the Legislature please indicate whether an arrangement of this type would be acceptable, as opposed to the delivery of all computer program source code?
Answer	Similar to the previous answer, the efficient, accurate production of legislation is paramount to this project and if the right solution for Maine's needs includes something other than complete autonomy over source and maintenance, we would have to give it consideration.

Question	Various references are made to software warranty throughout the RFP document. However, section 5.2 of the RFP document refers to the intention of LIT staff to "[…] be able to both maintain and build new functionality going forward after project completion."
	
	Since our company cannot provide warranty on software that has been altered, in part or in whole by the client, could the Legislature please:
	    a) Elaborate on the scope of warranty and support that is expected?
	    b) Elaborate on what is meant by "project completion"?

Answer	It is our intent that a successful solution will include a warranty period to be determined in the contract negotiation. This period will cover at least one regular session (and perhaps more) of the Maine Legislature during which time the contractor will be responsible for maintaining and updating the solution while engaging in knowledge transfer sufficient to allow Maine to maintain going forward. Given your previous statements about your product, the amount of maintenance we would be responsible for would have to be determined.

Question	Could the Legislature please indicate the projected budget for the legislative bill production system described in its RFP?
	    a) Between $100,000 and $500,000
	    b) Between $500,000 and $999,999
	    c) Between $1,000,000 and $2,000,000
	    d) More than $2,000,000

Answer	The budget will be appropriate for the solution selected.

Question	General Question : Are bidders' responses to this RFP subject to public records (FOIA) requests?
Answer	Under the rules adopted by the Executive Branch governing RFPs and bidding, it looks like proposals submitted by vendors become public records after notification of the award by the contracting agency

Question	General Question : Is the Maine State Legislature open to utilizing cloud technologies for parts of this solution? Or does it prefer to have all parts of this solution on-premises?
Answer	We would prefer to host the solution locally.

Question	General Question : It is stated in the Introduction that "… content coding must be supported in a form that can be exposed to the edit, display and search tools." What technology are these search tools built on ?
Answer	The functionality we are looking for allows for searching existing content, e.g. statutes, laws, supporting documentation, old legislation. Whether an OTS tool or custom built solution is employed is the contractors choice.

Question	Section 3 : It is stated that any documentation that is germane may be included in the content of a drafted bill. Does this include rich content (images)?
Answer	Yes.

Question	Section 4 : It is stated in the Introduction that "the application will allow the drafter to compare versions using a side-by-side comparison utility". Does this imply a simple split screen representation, or is the expectation that differences would be highlighted and navigable as part of that utility?
Answer	Ultimately anything that increases the efficiency of the drafter and/or technician is desired. A simple split screen where line beginnings and ends can be compared would meet a minimum requirement. Highlighting the differences would certainly be more desirable.

Question	Section 4 : The RP states that: "… ability to integrate all metadata about a bill necessary for proper production, e.g. bill title, emergency status, committee of reference, and workflow, currently stored in LEAP." Does LEAP currently have a .NET or REST based API that exposes this information for integration or will that need to be defined and created as part of this effort?
Answer	LEAP does not currently have any sort of API that can be used for data sharing. However, Maine is willing to entertain employing one as part of this project.

Question	Section 4 : The RFP states that: "Database data and document text are related (and might need to be updated synchronously) and parametric information must be collected using system standard forms and other presentation controls." What parametric information needs to be collected?
Answer	What we are looking for here is a consistent look and feel for any UI used in a bill production system where the user is required to enter search or workflow data that is then shared to the LEAP database.

Question	Section 4 : The RFP states that: "Documents are subject to change; sometimes to the point where even the type of legislative instrument changes." Can any instrument type become any other instrument type or are there a finite subset of transitions that can be enumerated as initial scope?
Answer	What type of instrument is created should depend on meta data that exists at the time of creation. However, if after an instrument has been created the meta data changes to the point where a different document is indicated, the user should be able to create a new one based on the new information while keeping the old one for reference.

Question	Section 4 : The RFP states that: "All histories (b,Q) will be stored in such a way as to allow searching for cumulative effect." What does "histories (b,Q)" mean here?
Answer	The terms 'b' and 'Q' histories refer to the two different levels of change history that Maine tracks with respect to the Maine Revised Statutes. The terms themselves are a holdover from past legacy systems. b-histories refer to historical entries immediately following amendable units of statute: sub-section, indented paragraph and lettered paragraph. Q-histories refer to the cumulative history at the section level. The format of histories is: chapter year, chapter number, chapter part, chapter section, effect. E.G. 2001, c 471, Pt. D, §2 (AMD). Note that understanding histories as they apply to the MRS is a key component.

Question	Section 4 : The RFP states that: "The application must allow for the publication of the session laws and the updated Maine Revised Statutes and output in various formats (HTML, Word and PDF) to the Internet." What is the protocol used to transfer these files and the technology/platform used to store these files?
Answer	The files are stored in the filesystem of a Windows Server running IIS 8.5, and are transferred via Windows SMB copy facilities. Any working transfer system that does not interrupt availability of the files for any significant amount of time would be acceptable, (i.e., copy to new directory (statutes-new), rename old directory (statutes to statutes-old), rename new directory (statues-new to statutes). Filenames and filename patterns should be maintained to avoid breaking links throughout State agency websites and many other external websites.

Question	Section 4 : The RFP states that: "This application will allow for consistent, repeatable generation of output in various formats including, but not limited to MS Word, PDF and HTML. Output should be able to correctly accommodate line numbering." Is the intent to allow the output documents from the codification process to have line numbers (since the current Maine site does not have line numbering in the Statutes)?
Answer	No. Line numbering is only used on original and amendment documents.

Question	Section 5.1 : What version of Microsoft SQL Server is currently being used at the Maine State Legislature (i.e. SQL Server 2012, Enterprise Edition)?
Answer	LEAP currently resides on a SQL Server 2005 Standard edition. Our intent is to move it to SQL Server 2014 Standard edition before this implementation of this project.

Question	Section 5.1 : Which Windows OS/Microsoft Office Platform versions are expected to be used by Bill Drafters and Technicians?
Answer	For purposes of this discussion, future state would be Win10 and Office 2016. We are currently running Win7 and Office 2010, so if can run on either platform(s) until we do upgrades, would be beneficial.

Question	Section 5.1 : Do Drafters and Technicians perform all work locally on the state network? Do they ever use personal machines?
Answer	All work is performed on state-owned and provided hardware.

Question	Section 6 : The RFP states that: "The vendor will agree to conform to all systems architecture standards set by the Office of Legislative Information Technology." Can you share existing architectural standards documentation at this time?
Answer	Here we are looking for consistency in naming conventions and structure, where applicable, with Maine. Speaking the same language will trim down the learning curve for all involved.

Question	Appendix B : General Requirement 7 states: "Documents will accommodate tables, lists and forms." In the case of "forms", will these continue to be textual representations of field based documents (e.g. 18-A MRSA §5-804), or is the intention to have a more graphical or image based representation in the future?
Answer	We are currently bound to textual representations by environment limitations. The ability to build a form outside of the editing environment and then include it as part of a bill is desirable. Note the form you referenced was enacted into law in 2003, predating our current production environment.

Question	Appendix B : General Requirement 8 states: "WYSIWYG input required with any tagging optionally obfuscated from user." Is it a requirement that the WYSIWYG drafting tool is able to show the tagging?
Answer	In instances where there is a question as to how a particular piece of text is being referenced, the user should be able to ascertain exactly how that piece is tagged.

Question	Appendix B : General Requirement 9 states: "Bill document output will include line numbering." Do all document formats need to support line numbering, or does the HTML format (available on the public site) not have that requirement? Additionally, for the case of an embedded table, is the intention that each instance of wrapping text in a table cell, or more commonly a column heading, would result in an additional line number (e.g. 127th LD 148)?
Answer	Original bills and amendments require line numbers. The HTML "Quick View" and "Word Document" versions available on the website are generated directly from XML bill data and text from the database for convenience of searching. They are not the "official" version of the document, which includes line numbers. When a table is included and the cell text wraps, the wrapped line gets its own line number. See 128th LD 302.

Question	Appendix B : General Requirement 16 states: "Application will allow the user to view, track and process line-item vetoes." Does the Governor interact with the system directly to create the line-item vetoes, or is there an agent of the legislature that captures these actions on their behalf? In either case, are these

	separate line-item vetoes tracked only as marked up text in a version of the document, or as separate entities from a metadata and workflow perspective?
Answer	No, the Governor does not interact with the system directly. That interaction is done within the Legislature, in ROS. All line-items are tracked within the same version of the document.

Question	Appendix B : Workflow Requirement 2 states: "Application will track current milestone status." Is this information currently available via AIs in the LEAP system?
Answer	Yes. All work flow is stored and maintained in the LEAP system. Our intent with this requirement is that an editing environment can update certain workflows and milestones to LEAP as aspects of bill production are initiated or completed.

Question	Appendix B : Workflow Management Requirement 4 states: "Security, for a document, utilizes check out (one write / many reads)". Would it be appropriate to assume that some facility needs to exist to show who has the document checked out, and if necessary to allow that lock to be administratively released?
Answer	Yes, on both accounts.
Question	Appendix C : Are the statutes that need to be migrated inclusive of the 1st through 128th Maine Legislatures, or a subset?
Answer	Migration includes only the current Maine Revised Statutes (at the time of project implementation).

Question	Appendix C : For the included Legislatures, do the documents adhere to a single consistent format, or will migration entail multiple historical formats? If multiple, can you provide details on the number of formats in scope?
Answer	As indicated above, aside from the Maine Revised Statutes, all documents to be used as part of a new bill production system are currently available in Word document format.

Question	Appendix C : Outside of statutes and bills (legislative requests – inclusive of amendments), what other document types are in scope for migration?
Answer	It is not our intention to convert other data out of the current drafting environment. The Revisor's Office has extensive archives of past legislature's bills, amendments, engrossers and chaptered laws in Word format on our file system. It is our intention however that any solution would expose that body of work to the user as necessary. If a new solution requires those documents to be migrated into another form for storage and use, the vendor will indicate such.

Question	Section 4 of the RFP details how the Maine Revised Statutes (MRS) are currently stored "as well formed XML documents supported by a schema." Q : Can you provide the schema and meaningful samples of those XML documents?
Answer	Yes.

Question	In the vendor Q&A, a response to a question about "target architecture" stated, "(T)he efficient, accurate

	production of legislation is paramount to this project." Our experience successfully delivering modern, efficient and standards-based legislative drafting systems suggests the target architecture mandated in the RFP will not serve the Maine Legislative Council well for the long term. Q1 : Should we respond to the RFP, in order to meet the primary goals of the project we would have to propose an alternative. Q2 : As currently structured, the evaluation criteria heavily weights compliance with the "target architecture." Would the evaluation panel be willing to modify its evaluation criteria to allow consideration of alternative architecture for the new system or would a proposal suggesting an alternative automatically be given low marks?
Answer	A1 We believe that the rest of the quoted sentence above answers the question: "…and if the right solution for Maine's needs includes something other than MS Word as the editing environment, we would have to give it consideration." A2 The target architecture was chosen based on the extensive skill set and knowledge base that exists within the LIT and staff offices. The desire to be able to maintain a potential solution, once delivered and accepted and once the warranty period has passed is highly desirable and as noted above, stems from a decade long dependence on outside vendors for nearly all maintenance and enhancements. But again please refer to the answer directly above.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.5, Section 4, p.5 and Section 4, p.7, Areas of Work 4 B "This application will allow the drafter to create and manage several document draft versions including the text of the draft along with any notes or other correspondence and documentation related to the version." - and - The application will allow the drafter to compare versions using a side-by-side comparison utility and will allow the drafter to identify the "final" version and "lock" it to prevent future changes. - and - "Security, for a document, utilizes check out (one write / many reads)" Q1 : In light of these statements, it is our understanding that a Document Management System (DMS) is required within the scope of this project. Could the Legislature please confirm this interpretation?
Answer	While may not be need for full DMS, a method or tool to create, store, organize and manage all documents and other bill-related materials will be required.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.5 […] the bill production process is a well-defined set of steps, documented in a "Bill Production Manual." Q2 : Could the Legislature please share a copy of the Bill Production Manual?
Answer	Yes

Question	Re : Section 4, p.6 Currently, the MRS are stored as well formed XML documents supported by a schema. Q3 : Could the Legislature please share the XML schema it refers to, as well as instances of the well-formed XML documents mentioned?
Answer	Yes

Question	Re : Section 4, p.6, Areas of Work, 1 A "Application will be extensible" Q4 : Could the Legislature please elaborate on the meaning of "extensible" in the context of this RFP?
Answer	Any solution should be able to change and be enhanced as drafting and production requirements change.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.6 Areas of Work 2 A and 3 A "Application will consume necessary metadata from LEAP", - **and** – "Application will update necessary metadata in LEAP" Q5a - Could the Legislature provide documentation covering the LEAP program interface? Q5b - Could the Legislature provide a data model diagram?
Answer	A5a - As indicated above, Maine does not currently use an API to facilitate the exchange of data between its systems, however that is something we are willing to entertain as part of this project. A5b - As it relates to bill production, yes.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7, Areas of Work, 4 A "Application will allow the user to easily view necessary metadata without exiting" Q6 - Is the Legislature referring to viewing metadata from the Bill editing tool or from the LEAP database?
Answer	Ultimately, allowing the drafter or tech access to necessary meta data from within the editing tool is highly desirable.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7 Areas of Work 5 A "The type of bill draft will dictate what kind of instrument the Tech can create" Q7a - Could the Legislature please share an exhaustive list of instruments and/or documents that must be supported by the application? Q7b - Could the Legislature please provide samples of the documents that must be supported by the application?
Answer	A7a – Yes. But the current list only exists for today and is subject to the direction the Legislature might take in the future. A7b - Yes

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7 Areas of Work 6 A "Markup (e.g. strike, underline, etc.…) will be readily assignable and identifiable" Q8a - Could the Legislature please confirm that "assignable" and "identifiable" markup refers to the

	capacity for the Legislature to establish the application user responsible for entering specific markup? Q8b - Could the Legislature please indicate for which steps of the legislative workflow this requirement must be supported by the application.
Answer	A8a - We're not sure what you are asking here. It is our intent that any user of the application would be able to do so in a manner that includes marking up text. A8b - Text markup must be part of the document creation and authoring. It is also assumed that the Maine statutes will be stored as marked up text in some form.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7 Areas of Work, 10 A
	The functional requirements list states that "Documents including Maine Revised Statutes will initiate proper history tracking".
	
	Q9 - Could the Legislature please confirm whether "proper history tracking" refers to application functionality for the tracking of legislative provision enactment and amendments, and generation of section history notes following each section of the Maine Revised Statutes?
	  For example:
	`SECTION HISTORY`
	`1995, c. 148, §10 (NEW). 1997, c. 636, §8 (AMD). 2001, c. 704, §§1,2 (AMD).`

Answer	Yes

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7 - Areas of Work 14 A Requirement #14 of the "General" functional requirements questionnaire states that "Application will expose data necessary for reporting and other publication requirements". Q10 - Could the Legislature please clarify what "reporting" and "other publication requirements" mean in the context of this RFP?
Answer	If there is data that exists ONLY in the application that is required for reporting or post-session publications, that data should be identifiable and extractable. For example, the Bill Summaries publication includes the bill summary which is part of the bill document, not existing as data elsewhere.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7 Areas of Work 16 A "Application will allow the user to view, track and process line-item vetoes." Q11a - Could the Legislature please describe how line-item vetoes are currently processed (i.e. handwritten markup? Other mechanism?). Q11b - Could the Legislature please indicate whether a document version containing line-item vetoes must be published?
Answer	A11a - Line Item vetoes are currently handled manually by marking up the enacted engrosser document.

	A11b - Yes

Question	Re : Section 4, p.7 Areas of Work 1 B, 2 B, 3 B "Application will allow the user to view, track and process line-item vetoes." "Various actions within bill drafting and bill production will initiate workflow milestone updates to LEAP where and when appropriate". - and – "Application will present current milestone status." - and – "System will capture "tracking" information automatically whenever possible, e.g. custody, revision history, work history, etc.…" Q12a - Could the Legislature please clarify if these features are part of existing LEAP functionality? Q12b - Could the Legislature provide documentation covering the LEAP program interface?
Answer	A12a - Workflow is an integral part of LEAP functionality. It is expected that there are certain actions or points in time that drafters and techs will encounter that will initiate an update to the LEAP workflow. For example, the completion of a drafting function may initiate a custody change. A12b - As noted above, Maine does not currently employ an API to facilitate data exchange between systems but that functionality can be part of this project.

Question	Re : Section 5.2, p.8 The RFP states that "A local project manager as well as developers from the LIT office will be dedicated to the project […]". Q13 - Could the Legislature please indicate if it intends for the local project manager to be a Legislature employee or a vendor employee?
Answer	A13 - Maine expects to provide the project with a PM from LIT staff who will work hand in hand with a PM from the vendor.

Question	Re : Section 4, p.5 and Section 6, p.9 As stated in the introduction, this is not intended to be a complete list of requirements; the successful vendor will obtain a more comprehensive list at the requirements gathering stage. " - and - "The proposal the vendor prepares will represent a firm fixed price." We are dedicated to providing high-quality, cost-effective and professional service to our clients. Our experience demonstrates that each project is unique and therefore requires more definite and comprehensive specifications in order to provide a price that accurately represents the work that is required. Q14 - Given that no definite or comprehensive specifications are available at this time, how shall bidders accurately provide a "firm fixed price"?
Answer	A14 - While every project is unique and involves a certain amount of customization, Maine depends on the vendor's past project experiences to adequately project cost.

Question	Re : Overall Chamber Management Q15 - Could the Legislature please indicate if the application must interface with an existing Chamber management system? If so, could the Legislature please provide any technical and workflow documentation which describes this system?
Answer	A15 - No. Not directly. Exporting documents to a file system location which exposes them to the Chamber management system is required

Question	Re : Overall Application Users Q16 - Could the Legislature please indicate if it intends for the local project manager to be a Legislature employee or a vendor employee? Bill Drafters Consolidation Staff Bill Technicians Administrative Staff Other Legislative Staff
Answer	A16 – Would expect there to be a local PM that works with the vendor's assigned PM. Bill Drafters – 20+ Technicians – 8 Proofreaders – 12 Administrators – 4 Other staff – 4

Question	Re : Overall Response Deadline Q13 - Given the brief time frame between the bidder's conference call and the response deadline, would the Legislature consider extending the response deadline to June 2nd?
Answer	A17 – Consideration may be given to extending the deadline