NSW Electoral Commission

iVote Refresh Program

Procurement Strategy

Updated – June 2017

Version 2

Contents

1   Introduction

The iVote® System[1] is the NSW Electoral Commission's platform for remote electronic voting, first deployed in 2011, enhanced for 2015 and to be improved further in time for the State General Election in 2019.

This document outlines the procurement strategy for the project to refresh the iVote system. This version is an update to the initial version published and may be updated again as further project documentation is prepared during planning and implementation stages of the project.

1.1   Changes in this update

After initial publication of this strategy document, a review within NSWEC has determined that the Core Voting System procurement outlined in section 2.1.1 would meet objectives and timeline better by delaying a formal RFI and extending market engagement ahead of an RFI.

2   Procurement Plan

The procurement strategy selected for the iVote refresh program will cover a range of procurements from the specialised software components to the procurement of specialist advisory services and other more general services such as data centres, call centres and mail house services.

The following sections outline the approach to be taken with the main procurements for the iVote project.

2.1   Software Components

The current iVote system comprises multiple software components that can be considered as three parts:

- Registration – comprising the Registration System and the Credential Management System, both developed by the NSWEC

- Core Voting System – Commercial software procured from Scytl in Spain

- Verification System – a telephone service developed by the NSWEC

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[1] iVote is a registered trademark of the NSW Electoral Commission. However, the registration symbol will not be used throughout the rest of this document.

Whilst initial design activities may change functionality of these components, this procurement strategy will assume that the three parts remain in the final design.

The intent of the procurement strategy is to use off-the-shelf software wherever possible. Where off-the-shelf software is used, NSWEC will try to minimise customisation whilst ensuring that the software fully meets the NSWEC requirements.

An objective of this design that will be unchanged is that the vendor-supplied Core Voting System is a replaceable component within a process and software platform owned by the NSWEC.

2.1.1   Core Voting System

Remote electronic voting software is highly specialised, involving advanced cryptography with system design to meet the security, reliability, privacy and audit/verification objectives. Experience and market research by the NSWEC has identified only a handful of organisations worldwide with experience in deployed systems. These include the provider of the current software, Scytl, based in Spain; the provider of the previous system used for the 2011 State General Election, Everyone Counts Inc. of the US; and Smartmatic, based in the UK, who offer remote electronic voting software based on that used in Estonia.

Whilst the NSWEC is confident that these organisations would have the capability to deliver and support an enhanced core voting system for SGE 2019, there are no suitable suppliers on government panels (such as the NSW ICT Services Panel) for this and an open tendering process will be undertaken. The open tender process will ensure that all companies with the capability to deliver the system have an opportunity to participate in the process.

The NSWEC plans to proceed as follows:

1.   Initial market engagement process

2.   Open Request for Information (RFI)

3.   Request for Proposal (RFP)

The initial market engagement process has already commenced and has the objective of educating the NSWEC team on the technology and solutions offered commercially. The process will give suppliers the opportunity to demonstrate new or innovative solutions that may better meet the needs of the NSWEC.

The NSWEC is actively researching and contacting organisations that could be potential suppliers and is also open to direct approaches from potential suppliers during this engagement period.

Once the NSWEC has understood the solutions being proposed, the tender documents can be prepared to ensure that no solution that meets the NSWEC requirements is unfairly disadvantaged.

An open RFI step is planned to achieve the objective of identifying other viable solutions and suppliers. To avoid unnecessary effort for NSWEC and suppliers, the RFI

step will be dropped if it would not provide anything additional to that gained from the market engagement process.

The subsequent RFP would be limited to suppliers identified as viable through the RFI process, however, depending on the outcomes of the RFI, an open tender process may be pursued.

Indicative timeline:

Month	Milestone/activity	Objectives
June 2017	Research to identify additional suppliers and invite potential suppliers to present in July	Identify potential suppliers
July 2017	Supplier presentations	Understand supplier offerings and latest technical advances
August 2017	Cease contact with suppliers[2] Refine design and planning Draft and issue brief RFI[3]	Probity during formal procurement Additional clarifications of market
September 2017	Assess RFI responses	Develop final design
October 2017	Finalise new iVote design Commence RFP preparation	Develop RFP to maximise outcomes and benefits for NSW[4]
November 2017	Issue comprehensive RFP	Formal procurement
December 2017	Assess RFP responses	Identify preferred supplier to negotiate and form contract with
February 2018	Contract executed	

It is possible that the market engagement or RFI outcomes, or the parallel redesign work could lead to a change of strategy such that the NSWEC changes the above timing, or does not pursue a RFP at all.

Should an RFP identify a suitable supplier, then it's planned to use the Procure IT Version 3.1 contract framework as the basis for contracts for development and implementation of this iVote software.

The RFP documentation will be finalised, including detailed requirements documentation and evaluation criteria, in accordance with NSWEC procurement policies and NSW Government procurement guidelines.

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[2] The NSWEC will restrict interactions with Scytl, the current supplier, to matters pertaining to usage of the current system only, so that no advantage can be gained by them.

[3] At the conclusion of the market engagement, an assessment will be made on the need and value of the RFI step, which could mean proceeding to the RFP without an RFI step

[4] Assessment of RFI responses will determine if the RFP will be open or should be restricted to suppliers meeting minimum criteria within the RFI

The online tendering system 'NSW eTendering'[5] will be used to publish both the RFI and any subsequent RFP. Other channels may also be used to ensure that suppliers are aware of the tender being available on this system.

2.1.2   Registration System

The registration system used in 2011 and enhanced for 2015 will be significantly updated for 2019, based on the new overall design and also incorporating improvements identified from use of the current version. The registration system is highly specialised to the requirements of the Commission and cannot be provided using off-the-shelf software. This software development will remain within the NSWEC and be delivered by a mix of employees and contract staff.

2.1.3   Verification System

One of the key improvements for iVote in 2015 was the implementation of a verification system which allowed each elector to verify the preferences of their vote as captured by iVote.

The intent at the time was for this system to be developed and operated by an organisation which was independent from both the NSWEC and the Core Voting System supplier. However, the open procurement process for this in 2014 was unable to find a viable supplier and consequently the NSWEC procured contract staff to develop the software, which was then hosted and operated by an independent supplier.

With the IP for the current Verification System owned by the NSWEC, it is expected that the current model will be retained and the software development for an updated version will be delivered by a mix of employees and contract staff.

2.2   Hosting and Infrastructure

The iVote system operates from 3 independent data centres, which are currently:

1. Registration – hosted in the NSWEC data centres

2. Core Voting System – hosted by Secure Logic in the NSW GovDC data centres

3. Verification System – hosted by AC3 in their data centres

As with other NSW Government agencies, the NSWEC will be migrating from internal data centres to the NSW GovDC facilities and it is anticipated that the registration components will also make this move to the GovDC.

To retain separation of systems, new hosting locations will be required for the Core voting system and this will result in an open procurement for such services. The NSWEC may determine that the tender process will also include the separate hosting of the Verification System, to obtain the best value for NSW.

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[5] https://tenders.nsw.gov.au

2.3 Advisory Services

The iVote system is a leader in the unique and specialised field of remote electronic voting, therefore it's a system that needs to be developed with the best available expertise. Although expertise exists in Australia and is growing, there is a likelihood that expertise will also need to be obtained from overseas. The iVote project will call upon experts from different fields to provide design reviews and advice of the implementation of the iVote system.

The experts will be selected by the NSWEC based on their

- Demonstrated skills and knowledge of internet voting internationally, including trials, implementations and proposed use for public elections;

- Standing and respect in the international academic and election research community;

- Commitment to successful implementation of internet voting; and

- Sound organisational capability and capacity.

2.4 Other iVote Contracts

There will be a number of other contracts to be formed for the iVote Refresh Program or for use of the iVote System at the 2019 State General Election, including:

- Mail-house services

- SMS services

- Call centre services or operators

- Voice actors and recording facilities

- Security and performance testing services

These procurements and contracts will all proceed in accordance with NSWEC procurement policies and NSW Government procurement guidelines.

3   Procurement Schedule

The timing of the Core Voting System RFI and RFP is outlined above, whilst other procurements are yet to be scheduled.

A detailed project schedule is in development, which will include all procurements within the schedule and this will then be updated periodically as the project progresses.