IOWA LAND RECORDS

ELECTRONIC SERVICES SYSTEM
8711 Windsor Parkway, Suite 2
Johnston, Iowa 50131

February 10, 2026

To: ESS Service Providers

From: Phil Dunshee

Re: RFQ Number: ESS-2026-1
Questions & Answers

As provided in Section 2.8 of the RFQ, ESS Service Providers were invited to submit written questions and requests for clarifications regarding the RFQ. ESS Service Providers were also invited to submit suggestions for changes to the specifications of this RFQ. The questions, requests for clarifications, or suggestions were to be received in writing by the Issuing Officer by 5:00 PM CST on February 6, 2026.

The following are the questions received by the deadline. The questions are in no particular order. Responses are provided immediately following each question. No addendum to the RFQ is being made which would modify the RFQ.

Proposals in response to the Request for Quotes (RFQ) are due by 3:00 PM CST on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. The form and content of proposals is specified in Section 3 of the RFQ.

Service Providers who respond to the RFQ will receive confirmation of receipt by ESS. ESS reserves the right to extend the deadline for responding to the RFQ if sufficient responses are not received.

Note: ESS has made limited edits to some questions for clarity. The edits are framed by [brackets].

Q. In the list of tools and environments the backend language and frameworks are listed, however there is no mention[ed] of frontend frameworks, such as React, Bootstrap, Tailwinds, etc. What languages and frameworks for frontend development will be required?

A. ESS primarily uses Bootstrap and Thymeleaf (https://www.thymeleaf.org/) for front end development. In some cases, ESS has also used React (https://react.dev/).

Q. In the list of tools there are various items such as JIRA, Confluence, and JetBrains. Is their usage expected and if so, will all necessary licenses be provided by ESS?

A. To the extent necessary, ESS/ILR project tracking, documentation and development tools can be extended for use by the service provider. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis once a service provider has been selected.

Q. In the list of development environment[s] there is no mention of automated testing frameworks or tools.
Does the ESS have a current testing framework?

If yes, what is it and is it expected to be used or can we use our own?

If yes, what are the expectations around code coverage? Types of tests (system, unit, integration, etc.)?
If no is there a desire to introduce a framework?

A. Yes. ESS has a test (staging) environment which must be used for testing and acceptance activities. It is generally expected that the service provider will utilize their own environments for development and unit testing. Integration testing will occur in the ESS staging environment.

Q. In the list of development environment[s], it is mentioned that source control is with Bitbucket. Is it expected that during development your source control will be used?

A. During development the service provider may use their own source control. However, provision must be made for ESS personnel to review and inspect before moving source code to the ESS staging environment.

Alternatively, ESS will enable use of its Bitbucket account for source control from the beginning. This would permit ESS to see where things are with the code and have the history of the code commits if we ever needed to look back on anything.

Q. If yes [to the question about requiring the use of Bitbucket], do you have a well-documented branching and code review process you want us to follow?

If no, we're happy to give access to our source control to ESS staff.

A. ESS does have an established branching and code review process. The specifics will be worked out after a service provider is selected. It is recommended that respondents describe their source control processes when submitting a response to the RFQ. ESS will appreciate the courtesy of having access to source control during the development process.

Q. In the Proposed Application Development section, it is mentioned that all existing infrastructure will be used. To facilitate a remote team and faster development and testing times it is imperative that the infrastructure is available and robust enough to handle this project. As such the following questions apply.

Is that infrastructure available remotely? Through what means?

A. ESS/ILR infrastructure will be made accessible, when necessary, through VPN.

Q. Are there different environments available for the different stages of the SDLC (Dev, QA, Staging)?

A. ESS has a staging and production environment.

Q. Are the development and QA environments available 24/7?

A. Yes, except during planned or unplanned maintenance.

Q. Are there existing release pipelines to deploy changes immediately to testing environments?

A. ESS has Jenkins up and running and there will be a release pipeline up and running once development begins. The specifics will be worked out after a service provider is selected.

Q. In the first bullet point of the Notification and Archive Utility section it is mentioned that the functionality will be added to the existing ILR email application. Does this application use a third-party service such as SendGrid or Mailgun, or just your SMTP?

A. The ESS/ILR email application is structured as SMTP.

Q. In the Notification Administration section, it is mentioned about generating and viewing reports.
Are these reports just web pages in the system or using a reporting library such as PowerBI, Tableau, SSRS, Jaspersoft, etc.?

If not a reporting framework, do you have an existing library for exporting PDF/Excel?

A. ESS applications currently provide reports to administrators. In some cases, reports are presented in web pages, and in other cases they are made available for export in Excel, PDF or text formats. Some of our existing reports use Apache POI. Examples of the desired reports are described in Section 4.3 under “Notification Administration”. ESS wishes to collaborate with the selected service provider(s) to create and improve the reports systems

Q. [Cost Proposal Position Titles and Function Areas] Can we propose additional or alternative role titles that better reflect our team structure, or should we map our personnel to the role categories provided in the template?

A. Yes, the role titles are provided as an illustration. It is expected that respondents will identify the appropriate position titles and functional descriptions associated with personnel proposed for the project.

Q. Can you confirm the length of this project? It says March - end of September, but it's noted that this is a 6-month project.

A. The actual duration of the project will be determined once a service provider is selected and a more detailed project plan is developed. Service providers should propose resources that will permit the project to be completed in the suggested time frame. It is the desire of ESS to have the project completed and in production six months after project initiation. Again, the specifics will be worked out after a service provider is selected

Q. [Attachment 1] Section I, Page 32: Are you open to different invoicing terms – ex. 30 net invoicing?

A. As provided in the RFQ, a respondent may propose alternative Terms, which would be considered as a part of the evaluation process.

Q. [Attachment 1] Page 32: To help us structure our cost proposal effectively, does ESS have a target budget range or anticipated investment level for this 6-month development project? This will help ensure our proposal aligns with ESS's financial planning.

A. Cost estimates gathered in May 2025 suggested that the project cost could range between $121,000.00 to $368,000.00. These were informal estimates. The purpose of the RFQ is to gather quotes and to define more precisely what the cost of the project may be. ESS wishes to complete the project in an economical manner while also achieving the critical project objectives. We are confident that the resources are available to carry out this project. Service providers are encouraged to put forward an achievable and cost-effective proposal.

Q. Section 1.1, Page 5: Have any vendors been involved in creating this RFP?

A. ESS and ILR have been publicly discussing this project for many months, and several designs have been published as a part of the meeting materials presented to the ESS governing committees. As noted above, in May 2025, ESS and ILR invited two service providers to provide informal cost estimates based on one of those designs. Knowledge gained from that exercise was used for further planning. However, no vendor was involved in the drafting of this RFQ. The RFQ was entirely created by the ESS Project Manager with input and support from other internal members of the ESS/ILR team.

Q. Section 2.23, Page 13: Will vendors be required to comply with any specific security framework? e.g., SOC2 Type 2

A. Service providers should follow accepted industry practices with respect to their development and testing environments. ESS will be responsible for its development, staging and production environments.

Note. Section 2.23 relates to the ESS right to perform a criminal history check of the Respondent. As the respondents invited are all currently operating under a general contract with ESS, we do not anticipate any issues with this provision.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 21: Are you open to a system process that allows event-driven architecture rather than relying heavily on the existing search application?

A. ESS wishes to leverage its existing infrastructure and applications to the extent possible. The notification system and the ESS search application should be linked in an effective way. However, alternative architecture and frameworks may be considered if feasible.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 21: How are documents uploaded or ingested into the system (e.g., via REST APIs)? Are there multiple upload or transfer paths?

A. Document index information and images are transferred from county systems to ILR through a county upload API published by ESS. The transfer process is currently being migrated from a SOAP API to a REST API. More detailed specifications can be found here:
https://staging.iowalandrecords.org/search/services/county/swagger-ui/index.html
More information will be provided after a service provider is selected.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 20: Are any parts of the proposed solution allowed to use public cloud (AWS, Azure) services?

A. ESS expresses a preference for using its current infrastructure but will consider proposals which leverage secure external systems.

Q. Section 4.5.2, Page 27: How much ongoing operational/maintenance costs/budget are they willing to incur for these features?

A. Specific ongoing operational/maintenance costs have not yet been estimated. Respondents should incorporate any additional licensing or infrastructure expenses as a part of any response to the RFQ. ESS recognizes that there will likely be additional costs for storage, bandwidth, CPU, etc. for the operation of these systems. ESS also anticipates that there will be additional costs associated with customer support services. Except for ongoing licensing or external infrastructure expenses, service providers should not address ongoing operational costs in any proposal.

The reference to “supplementary services” is primarily focused on development activities to correct issues or make enhancements to the notification application and service.

Q, Section 4.3, Page 22: Is there an existing service configured for sending emails programmatically for ESS, or would the setup and configuration of that service be included in this work?

A. As noted previously, The ESS/ILR email application is structured as SMTP. Proposed changes or reconfiguration of email services should be specified in the RFQ response.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 22: Are we setting up this trust and incorporating confirmations, bounces, and retries into their system? Will there be branding involved here?

A. Access to this system will require the same authentication procedures which are used for the current ESS search application. The notification application should be able to account for use cases to retry deliveries of failed notifications and logged bounced emails for further follow up by ESS customer support staff. Branding will operate under the umbrella of Iowa Land Records.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 26: How are hard/soft bounces and various conditions for emails going to be handled? Can someone contact the parties to fix their information (and re-trigger the notification to certain parties)?

A. As noted previously, the application should provide a means to log information about email bounces which would be provided to ESS customer support staff for response. The user will be asked to take responsibility for maintaining their email accounts and for whitelisting ESS messaging sources. The ESS Terms of Service will specify these responsibilities.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 21: Can you estimate the volume of notifications expected per minute/hour/day/etc?

A. We cannot estimate the volume of notifications at this time. Because notification information must be timely identified and distributed, we expect the load on a given day to be manageable. This would apply to the regular operation of a system search to find matches with name profiles in recently recorded and recently uploaded documents, and the regular operation of the assembly of notification information and the distribution of emails (only when matches are found).

Q. Section 4.3, Page 21: Will you give us an idea of your SLO (service level objective) for notifications? Can they be generated over the next day/week/month?

A. The objective is to provide notifications shortly after recorded documents are uploaded to ILR systems. Generally, this should occur within one or two business days (preferably the next business day). Standard practice in the financial services industry indicates that timely notifications are provided.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 22: For notifications – is there an approval process for validating emails or mis-use cases? When should human review/trigger actions/approvals be in the loop?

A. The notification application is intended to leverage existing systems for user set up. Emails are initially validated through an application process and a central authentication system. Subsequent email failures should be logged by the notification application and referred to ESS customer support personnel. The ESS Terms of Service will address situations where email communications bounce. As noted previously, it will be the responsibility of the user to maintain their email system and to whitelist communications from ESS.

Q. Section 5, Page 28: What are our metrics for success? How will we define success/value for the different parties involved? (Read email confirmations, spam counts, engagements, or feedback from focus groups via surveys)

A. For the notification application itself, the primary metric will be the successful delivery of an accurate and timely notification message, and the maintenance of a log or history of notifications sent. Other methods outside the notification application may also be developed to measure user satisfaction.

Q. Section 4.3, Pages 22-24: As some parties are government entities here, are there 509 accessibility standards in play here?

A. It is expected that the interfaces created to either set up a notification profile(s) or to view a history of notifications should be designed to comply with accessibility standards. Automated notification emails should also be designed for accessibility.

Q. Section 4.3, Pages 22-24: Are there any requirements for alternate languages other than English?

A. There is no expectation for notification interfaces or communications to be in languages other than English.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 20: Are there any restrictions on our use of AI in either development (GitHub Copilot/Claude Code) or solutions?

A. ESS will expect to review all code developed for the project, and it is expected that if proprietary information is used it will be appropriately disclosed and licensed. If AI tools are used to develop code/solutions, we expect that it will be disclosed. Otherwise, the use of various tools for development activities is not restricted.

Q. Section 4.3, Pages 22-24: Is this strictly web application development only or are there needs for mobile apps as well?

A. It is expected that the notification application will be primarily used on desktop devices. However, provision should be made for the user interfaces (notification profile set up, notification history review, and notification emails) to be operational and viewable on mobile devices.

Q. Section 1.4, Page 7; Section 4.5.2, Page 27: Who will maintain this long term and are there any training/mentoring needed after or during initial development?

A. Long-term maintenance will be provided by ESS technical and customer support staff. However, external developers, including the service provider selected through this process, may be retained for supplemental development work as needed.

Q. Section 4.3, Page 20: Are there any existing event transport brokers in the stack? E.g. Apache Kafka, RabbitMQ. ActiveMQ/Artemis, Redis Streams?

A. ESS uses ActiveMQ/Artemis in our stack.

Q. Can you confirm which of the following reflects the intent of this RFQ?

- **Staff augmentation/support model: You will manage development and own the resulting product/IP.**
- **Build-and-license model: HRS will develop the solution as a licensed product; HRS will provide ongoing support, maintenance, and future development.**
- **Other: If neither option fits, please briefly describe your intended engagement model (who manages development, who owns the IP, and whether any licensing is expected).**

A. The staff augmentation/support model is preferred. This is reflected in the statement found on page 20 of the RFQ which reads “ESS and ILR propose to leverage its existing infrastructure and search application to build the service.” [Emphasis added] This can also be inferred from the overall description in section 4.3.

Please also refer to section 6.1, Contract Terms and Conditions, page 30 which includes the following text.

> “Software development or software engineering creating new code or systems will be considered Developments or Deliverables or Customer-Owned Deliverables and as such are works for hire and owned by ESS. Software development or engineering using code or systems previously created by the Service Provider or Vendor are Derivative Works owned by the Service Provider and may be subject to a license agreement with a nonexclusive, perpetual, and full paid-up right to use or modify the Derivative Works. It is the responsibility of the Service Provider to identify any Derivative Works proposed for use when developing the notification system.” [Emphasis added]

This anticipates the possibility that there may be components owned by the Service Provider which may need to be licensed. Compensation for the license may be proposed, provided that it is a “nonexclusive, perpetual, and full paid-up right to use or modify the Derivative Works.”

Modification to the Terms and Conditions in a substantive way would be evaluated as described in Section 6.1.

Q. Our [service provider] primary software development stack is C#/.NET (Core) and Angular, which can be deployed and run in your Linux environment. Would that be an acceptable alternative to a Java-based stack?

Whatever platform is used to develop the notification application must be supportable by our internal team, generally. ESS prefers the use of Java-based software.