



Introduction

On October 15, 2019, State of Maine’s Vendor Self Service (VSS) system will be upgraded with several new features.

Two of these changes may have an impact on how vendors respond to bids, and should be reviewed. This guide covers both of these enhancements in detail:

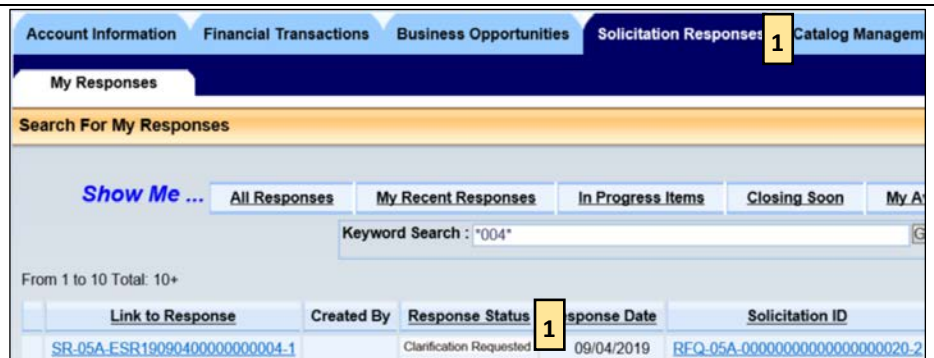
1. Clarification Questions – the buyer on a solicitation may request a clarification on the response submitted by the vendor. When this occurs, the vendor will have a chance to review the clarification question and submit a response.
2. Solicitations Re-opening for Bid – if the buyer does not receive any qualifying bids on a solicitation, or have changed the specifications, they may choose to re-open the solicitation after it has closed.

Clarification Questions

When the Buyer receives a bid for a solicitation, they may determine they need additional information from the vendor. If this occurs, you may receive an email requesting that you provide a clarification.

1. An email is received with the subject:
 ADVANTAGE SELF SERVICE
 CLARIFICATION REQUESTED ON YOUR RESPONSE

The **Response Status** of your response under the **Solicitation Response** tab in your VSS account will also show as “Clarification Requested”





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2. Log into your VSS account and go to Solicitation Responses tab
3. All responses will show by default. If necessary, use the Keyword Search box to narrow the results and find the response you are looking for
4. Open the response by clicking on the SR number

This screenshot shows the 'Solicitation Responses' tab selected in the top navigation bar. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for 'My Responses', 'Search For My Responses', and 'Show Me ...'. The 'Show Me ...' section includes buttons for 'All Responses', 'My Recent Responses', 'In Progress Items', 'Closing Soon', 'My Awards', and 'My Intentions'. A 'Keyword Search' box contains the text '*004*' and a 'Go' button. A yellow box labeled '2' highlights the 'Solicitation Responses' tab in the navigation bar, and a yellow box labeled '3' highlights the 'Keyword Search' box.

This screenshot shows the search results for the keyword '*004*'. The results are displayed in a table with columns: 'Link to Response', 'Created By', 'Response Status', 'Response Date', and 'Solicitation ID'. The first row shows a response with the ID 'SR-05A-ESR190904000000000004-1' and a status of 'Clarification Requested'. A yellow box labeled '4' highlights the 'Link to Response' column header.

| Link to Response | Created By | Response Status | Response Date | Solicitation ID |
|--|------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| SR-05A-ESR190904000000000004-1 | | Clarification Requested | 09/04/2019 | REQ-05A-00000000000000000020-2 |

5. If a clarification has been requested, you will see:
 - a. Clarification Due Date
 - b. Clarification Details

This screenshot shows the 'My Response' page for a clarification request. The page has two tabs: 'Respond To Lines' (labeled '1') and 'Criteria Response' (labeled '2'). The 'Clarification Request' section displays the following information: 'Clarification Due Date : 04/09/2019', 'Allow Pricing Update : No', and 'Allow only Attachment Updates : No'. The 'Clarification Details' section contains the question 'What is the delivery timeframe'. A yellow box labeled '5a' highlights the 'Clarification Due Date', and a yellow box labeled '5b' highlights the question text.



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- Respond to the clarification request using the Response field.
- Submit your response.

Your clarification response will be sent back to the buyer.

You will receive an email confirming that the response was submitted.

The screenshot shows a web interface titled "My Response". At the top, there are tabs for "Clarification Request", "1 Respond To Lines", and "2 Criteria Response". The "Clarification Request" section displays the following information:

- Clarification Due Date : 04/09/2019
- Allow Pricing Update : No
- Allow only Attachment Updates : No
- Clarification Details :
What is the delivery timeframe?

The "Vendor Response" section shows the text "2 to 5 business days" with a yellow box containing the number "6" next to it.

Re-opened Solicitation

A Buyer may choose to re-open a solicitation after it has closed if no bids were received, or if none of the submitted bids were selected. If this occurs, you will be able to submit a bid on the re-opened solicitation as you would with any other.

If you previously responded to the original solicitation, you will have to submit another response to the Re-Opened bid in order for your bid to be considered.

- A solicitation is posted to VSS, and the status is set to CLOSED once it expires.

The screenshot shows the "Solicitations" search results page. The top navigation bar includes "Account Information", "Financial Transactions", "Business Opportunities", "Solicitation Responses", "Catalog Management", and "Grant". The "Solicitations" tab is active. The search results table is as follows:

| Solicitation | Doc Dept/Buyer/Category/Solicitation Type | Dates |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| test | DEPT OF EDUCATION | Published On : 9/4/19 |
| RFQ - 05A - 00000000000000000020 | Request for Quotes(RFQ) | Amended On : Closing On : 9/4/19 3:00 PM EDT Time Left: Expired Intent Posted On: |

The status of the solicitation is "Closed", indicated by a red "Closed" label and a yellow box with the number "1" next to it.



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2. The buyer chooses to re-open the solicitation. It is now available on the Business Opportunities tab with a status of REOPENED.

The screenshot shows a navigation bar with tabs: Solicitation Responses, Catalog Management, Grant Opportunities, and Grant Applications. Below the navigation bar, there are buttons for 'Recently Published', 'Recent Amendments', 'Recent Intents', and 'Recent Awards'. A search bar with a 'Go' button and an 'Advanced Search' link is present. Below the search bar are navigation buttons: 'First', 'Prev', 'Next', and 'Last'. A table displays solicitation details:

| Buyer/Category/Solicitation Type | Dates | Status |
|----------------------------------|---|----------|
| EDUCATION | Published On : 9/4/19 Amended On : 9/4/19 Closing On : 9/13/19 3:00 PM EDT Time Left: 8 Days, 23:14:22 | Reopened |

A yellow box with the number '2' is placed over the 'Reopened' status.

3. The solicitation can be viewed and responded to like all other solicitations. To view or respond, click Details.

The screenshot shows a navigation bar with tabs: Account Information, Financial Transactions, Business Opportunities, and Solicitations. Below the navigation bar, there are buttons for 'Solicitations', 'My Watchlist', 'Purchase History', and 'Bulletin Board'. A search bar with a 'Keyword Search' field is present. Below the search bar, there are buttons for 'All Solicitations', 'My Commodities', 'Open Solicitations', and 'Closed Solicitations'. A table displays solicitation details:

| Solicitation | Doc Dept/ |
|--|-----------|
| test RFQ - 05A - 00000000000000000020 | DEPT OF E |

Buttons for 'Summary' and 'Details' are shown below the table. A yellow box with the number '3' is placed over the 'Details' button.