Clarification Questions and Answers - WP2248.1 and WP2248.2: SMS Provider(s) for GOV.UK Notify

Activity	Date
Deadline for submission of supplier clarification questions relating to the SQ/ITT	**23.59hrs on 29/08/2024**
Responses to clarification questions	**17.00hrs on 05/09/2024**

Question: Due to the holiday season and to be able to provide a comprehensive bid.

We would like to request an extension to the bid and for clarification questions.

Could we request an extension deadline for clarification questions for two weeks. Also, another two weeks for bid submission?

Answers: Unfortunately, we are unable to extend the timelines for 1-2 weeks for either of the clarification period and bid submission. This is to ensure adequate provision within the programme for the end-to-end procurement process.

Question: What framework do you intend to award through? If G Cloud, are you intending to wait until GC14 has launched?

Answers: We are running an 'Open Tender' via Contract Finders and Find a Tender Service to select SMS providers for GOV.UK Notify.

We will be using 'Mid-Tier Contract' for 'WP2248.1 & WP2248.2: SMS Provider(s) for GOV.UK Notify'

Question: What does the platform look like? Please provide a description.

Answers: GOV.UK Notify's user facing website is publicly available at www.notifications.service.gov.uk. The code is open to the public on GitHub. We have also shared a technical architecture diagram as part of our responses to the clarification questions.

Question: How does GOV.UK Notify (notifications.service.gov.uk) function?

Answers: Our users create accounts with us. They create and manage content templates for emails, SMS and letters within the web interface of Notify. Our users either upload CSVs containing multiple rows of recipient details and personalisation,

or utilise our HTTPS API to send messages. We report delivery reports back to our users in real time via a web frontend and HTTPS callbacks.

Question: What is the overview of the technical setup?

Answers: Notify is a collection of Python applications hosted on AWS. We provide a user interface and a public API for our users. We communicate with SMS providers via their own APIs, and we provide endpoints via which we can receive delivery receipts/status notifications etc. from said providers.

Question: Can you provide an architecture diagram?

Answers: Yes - please see below:
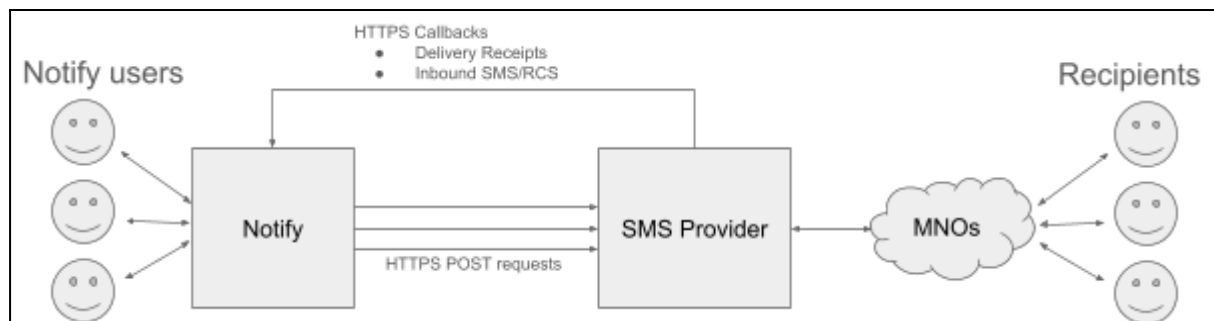
Question: Can you implement a standard provider API (SOAP, REST)?

Answers: Yes, we can implement a standard HTTPS REST API.

Question: If not, can you provide the API documentation that needs to be implemented?

Answers: N/A

Question: How does the backend connect to GDS as an aggregator?

Answers: We can build an HTTPS callback API to receive delivery receipts and inbound SMS messages to match your specification.

Question: How do you connect/interface to the current providers today? Please describe.

Answers: Currently each provider has provided us with an HTTPS URL and API Key credentials for authentication. We connect to each one separately via HTTPS over HTTP 1.1 protocol.

Question: What language/protocols are used for integration?

Answers: We will connect using HTTPS (using HTTP 1.1), connecting with a known good NCSC-approved TLS 1.2/1.3 cipher suite configuration.

Question: What technology is being used?

Answers: We will connect using HTTPS (using HTTP 1.1), connecting with a known good NCSC-approved TLS 1.2/1.3 cipher suite configuration.

Question: Shall one central load balanced connection (e.g. REST) be provided?

Answers: Yes, we expect one REST HTTPS API endpoint URL to be provided per Notify environment (Prod, UAT, Preview, Dev etc).

Question: If yes, does the platform (GDS) then handle the management of the clients?

Answers: We will need one client per Notify environment (Prod, UAT, Preview, Dev etc).

This could be managed by one or both of:
- Having multiple API Keys, one API key per environment
- Having separate URLs we connect to for each environment

Each environment will need separate delivery receipt callback URLs

Question: If no, are sub-accounts required for each of the clients and supported in the platform? And is there a need for a provision API?

Answers: We do not currently require automated provision of Clients via API

Question: How are invoices and clients managed?

Answers: SMS suppliers provide monthly invoices based on actuals for the previous month. These invoices include fragments sent per country. GDS reviews the invoices and, if there are no discrepancies and the volumes match with GDS's data, payment is made within 30 days of receiving the invoice.

We meet with our current suppliers monthly to review and discuss performance, ongoing support requests, and potential new developments.

Both of these will continue with the new contracts.

Question: Who are the existing two providers on the current contract?

Answers: You can find the two existing providers for GOV.UK Notify listed here:
- MMGRP Limited:
https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/28c6aaf5-0add-4bac-a3d8-d64d3945921b?origin=SearchResults&p=1
- Firetext Communication Limited:
https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/e5ccc441-cc49-41ba-8d18-875911d385a6?origin=SearchResults&p=1

Question: When will you share the draft contract?

The CO Mid-tier draft contract will be uploaded on the portal by Monday 9 September 2024.

Please note, we will not be answering any question(s) received after 23.59hrs on 29/08/2024 for WP2248.1 and WP2248.2: SMS Provider(s) for GOV.UK Notify.