1. **Questions:**
   How important is domain (Bioinformatics, biology) knowledge?
   During scoring of evaluation criteria what weighting will be applied to biology or bioinformatics skills?

   **Answer:**
   The following is from the RFP
   - Section IX F. f.: If you have biology or bioinformatics skills, please explain them. Please note that bioinformatics domain knowledge is not a requirement of this RFP. However, if such domain knowledge is available, it will be viewed favorably (See Section XIII for evaluations criteria).
   - Section XIII A.:
     **Selection Criteria:** Proposals will be evaluated by Virginia Tech using the following:

     The following is the selection criteria in order of importance:

     1. Ability to produce Production Ready Software
     2. Ability to hire resources
     3. Skills available
     4. Third Level Help Desk support Plan
     5. Communication Plan
     6. Price
        a. Project – Fixed Price
        b. Project – T&M
        c. Consulting

     Note that Domain Knowledge is but one element of “Skills available”. We (VBI) have expertise in the Domain. We view the Software development skills much more important to this contract than specific domain knowledge.

2. **Question:**
   Please define what you want in the communication plan.

   **Answer:**
   The detail in the communication plan depends upon where your staff is located. We (VBI) did not want to limit this RFP to local vendors or to local staffing solutions. You will have to make tradeoffs on the ability to get the resources you need against the potential problems remote staff afford. However, the ability to communicate with the personnel involved in the projects will be critical to our success. In other words, the communication plan should address how we (VBI and you) will work together to make sure whatever staffing location plan you have will work. For example: if this is a fixed price task, the requirements need to be well defined. The ability to turn this over to a remote staff with check points will be easier than if this was a consultant contract. The communication plan should address (by type of project and the particular staffing location(s) you are proposing) what communication problems we
can expect and how we should mitigate any risk due to lack of communications. The “right” person, remotely located, with a good communication plan is better than the “wrong” person located in Blacksburg.

3. **Question:**
   What is your definition of level 3 maintenance?

   **Answer:**
   Level 1 maintenance is the answering of the phone call from the customer and the logging of the problem and the follow-through to make sure that the problem is resolved in a timely manner for the customer. If the problem is a “how do I do this” type of question, the question is answered. If the problem is a “known problem” the customer is told that and the work-around that is proposed. The person doing level 1 maintenance is typically working off of scripts supplied to them.

   Level 2 maintenance is the support of the customer when the question/problem is not in a script. The level 2 person is knowledgeable in the software and its use. No “fix” to the software is required, but only knowledge of how to use the software.

   Level 3 maintenance is all other support required. This includes code fixes, supplying the script the level 1 maintenance person uses, and one of a kind questions that need detailed software and/or domain knowledge to answer. For the last type of question, VBI recognizes that we are likely to be responsible for the domain knowledge and our two organizations may have to work together to solve the customers problem. See the answer to the question “how important is Domain knowledge?”

4. **Questions:**
   Identify the location where the following work order types will be performed.
   a. Project – Fixed Bid
   b. Projects - Time & Materials
   c. Consultants

   Can you comment on the significance of the companies being local?
   Do you anticipate significant on site interaction with VBI?

   **Answer:**
   VBI is located in Blacksburg Va. However, VBI recognizes the potential difficulty of the vendor doing the necessary staffing in Blacksburg. Where the vendor chooses to locate his staff is his decision. However, please see the answer to the question “Define what you want in the communication plan”

5. **Questions:**
   What is the timeline for the following RFP milestones?
   Phase 1
Questions from RFP #501757 for Cyberinfrastructure Support for Virginia Bioinformatics Institute Pre-Proposal Conference and received through Monday, March 13, 2006

a. VBI selects vendors to compete in Phase 2

Phase 2
a. VBI sends to the selected vendors the additional data required for them to propose the 3 projects.
b. Optional meeting with each vendor to discuss project requirements.
c. Vendors prepare project quotes.
d. VBI scores and determines which vendors to negotiate with.
e. VBI finalizes one of more contracts.

The specific Phase I requirement is spelled out. How and when will you move to Phase II?

Answer:
That depends upon how many respondents we have to Phase 1. However, we have plans that require the resources to be available in May. If 20 to 30 vendors respond, we will not meet this schedule.

6. Question:
What is VBI’s expectation on Service Level Agreements maintenance/support? (They request identification of unit costs associated with different SLAs)

Answer:
Short of a national emergency, the software and its support, should meet the expectations of “good commercial practices”. However, in a national emergency, we may have to respond to the user (customer) in a expedited way. Some of our software (if we are successful) may be used to help the US quickly respond to biological emergencies.

7. Question:
Will the specific work outlined in the work orders necessitate the need for a business analyst, or will the requirements be pre-defined and/or prototyped?

Answer:
First of all, “business analyst” in this RFP can be translated as “domain expertise”. See the answer above to the question “How important is domain knowledge”. There will be tasks that require a lot of domain knowledge. We expect most of these tasks will be done using VBI domain knowledge and vendor “consultants”. At the other end of the scale, we expect the fixed price projects to be well defined and or prototyped. Please note that we are asking each vendor to help us define the process we will use to define the specific projects and place them in the appropriate type of work order (Fixed Price, T&M, and Consultant). See section IX A. of the RFP.

8. Question:
Section IX.A. Are you looking for an outline for all three of those mechanisms?

Answer:
What we’re asking for is how you would propose that we go about putting a structure in place to be able to handle these three types of projects. We do anticipate that over the course of the contract we would be looking at all three types of requests. If you feel there are more than these three please let us know.

9. **Question:**
   Will this contract be awarded to one, or possibly multiple vendors? Paragraph XIII.B states “…Virginia Tech shall select the offeror who, in its opinion, has made the best proposal, and shall award the contract to that offeror.” Paragraph VIII.B.5 references a final RFP action where VBI finalizes one or more contracts

**Answer:**
It is VBI’s goal to have 2 contracts. The exact number will depend upon the number and quality of proposals received.

10. **Question:**
    Could there be other companies engaged as subcontracting mechanisms?

**Answer:**
Yes, this does not preclude you from using subcontracts on any project.

11. **Question:**
    Is it expected to go beyond 18 months?

**Answer:**
Yes, we’re asking for an initial term of the resulting contract(s) to be three years with an option for five one year renewals, subject to negotiation.

12. **Question:**
    Could you elaborate more on the foreign nationals requirements?

**Answer:**
There are some requirements in contracts that VBI holds that precludes the use of foreign nationals. This will be project dependent.

13. **Question:**
    Could one of the Contractors indirectly use an employee of Virginia Tech as a consultant?

**Answer:**
The answer to this question would be specific to the situation. The following policies provide detailed guidance to the faculty member regarding what is considered potential conflicts of interest and the disclosure procedure.
- University Policy Number 13010, [Faculty Conflicts of Interest and Commitment Policy](#)
Questions from RFP #501757 for Cyberinfrastructure Support for
Virginia Bioinformatics Institute
Pre-Proposal Conference and received through Monday, March 13, 2006

- President's Policy Memorandum Number 150, Conflict of Interest
- President's Policy Memorandum Number 199 Disclosure And Approval Of
  External Activities