

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR EDI SOFTWARE

The Bahamas Customs administration wishes to implement an electronic data interchange (EDI) infrastructure to manage the exchange of electronic information between Customs and commercial operators.

Background

Bahamas Customs is the lead agency with responsibility for the regulatory clearance of goods at the point of import and export. The Customs administration is responsible for the collection of customs duties, excise, stamp and departure taxes on behalf of the government.

Persons importing, exporting or warehousing commercial goods are required to complete a formal Customs Declaration. Modes of transport, ships and aircraft carrying commercial goods are required to deposit a cargo manifest with Customs.

Currently the Customs Administration of Bahamas receives Customs declarations by paper. Manifest data is received both in paper format and electronically using a simple EDI solution. This solution is based on bespoke software using host-on-demand services to accept manifest data from shipping companies. These companies send the manifest as a flat file attachment to an email, which Customs manually loads into the CAS system. Consideration needs to be taken of the investment already made by these companies who have modified their systems to provide this email and electronic manifest to Customs. The current usage of EDI is only in one direction from clients to Customs, there is no capability for Customs to send electronic responses to clients.

Customs officers enter the information contained on these forms into the Customs Automated system (CAS). CAS is an IT application designed to carry out data validation and consistency checks, calculate the correct taxes payable and, along with a separate risk management system, manage the regulatory clearance process which allows the commercial operator take goods out of Customs control.

Customs wishes to reduce and eventually eliminate the need for officers to manually enter data into CAS. In addition Customs also wants to provide response information to declarants indicating the status of the information submitted.

Basic facts and figures

Number of manifests processed through CAS annually	10,000
Number of Customs declarations processed through CAS annually	211,000
Maximum size of a manifest (kilobytes in database)	90 Kb
Maximum size of a Customs declaration (kilobytes in	70 Kb

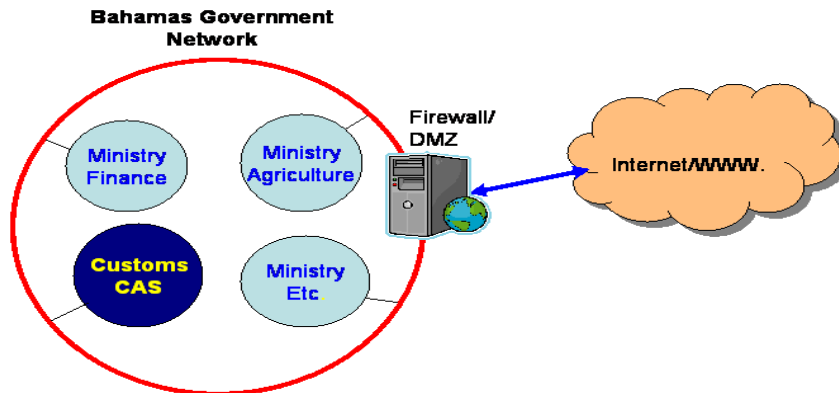
database)	
Number of registered Customs brokers ¹	60
Number of database tables for the manifest and customs declarations	12
Number of database indexes	15

Current Technical Environment

The Bahamas Customs System (CAS) operates in the following environment:

- application written using Visual Age Generator (IBM) which is compiled to COBOL on an AS/400
- database is IBM DB2
- application runs on an AS400 server.

Access to Customs servers is via the government network, which is managed by the government's Data Processing Unit (DPU).



Functional Requirements of the EDI application

Customs require the establishment of a message handling repository to which commercial operators can submit manifest and Customs declaration data and from which Customs can respond to received messages.

Given that the information being submitted to Customs is in fact a statement of regulatory compliance it is essential that any EDI system be able to offer the highest degree of message integrity and offer high levels of security in transmission and reception.

High levels of general information security and message audit trails will also be required.

¹ Customs Brokers are responsible, on behalf of their clients, for submitting Customs declarations.

In order to maximise the potential take up for this EDI solution it is foreseen to give operators a range of options to assist in the adoption of electronic information exchange:

- Email attachment using the existing flat file format described above
- Online web interface to enter data through web forms
- Web interface giving the possibility for the user to upload a file
- System-to-system EDI interface.

These various options should be integrated into a single interface between the Customs system and the EDI software

Information received via EDI will have to be validated by the CAS system for errors before the CAS database is updated. In order to achieve this, given the current infrastructure of CAS (green screen application) it is envisaged that a host-on-demand interface will be necessary to place the EDI data into the various CAS input screens in order to carry out the necessary data validation checks.

Customs declarations (import, export, transit and warehousing) require a total of 25 input screens to be populated with information, with an average of 5 screens per specific Customs form. The ships manifest requires 5 input screens to be used.

Companies are at liberty to provide alternative solutions to host-on-demand but should be aware that, based on the configuration of the CAS system, data validation must be carried out before information can be stored on the CAS database.

Content requirement in response to this RFP

Respondents to this RFP are requested to submit a diagrammatical representation of their proposed solution(s) with a clear identification of each component.

Technical issues to be covered

Transport protocols

Indicate the available physical methods of transferring information between the commercial operators and Customs, for example ftp, https, web services (SOAP), etc.

Message formats

Please indicate the message formats supported by your software, for example XML, UN/EDIFACT, ASNI X12, CSV, etc.

Software hardware architecture required to host the EDI application

Please indicate the physical characteristics required to operate your software solution:
Physical machine characteristics: CPU type and speed, RAM, disk capacity, etc.
Software requirements: Operating System, any additional software required to compliment EDI software, for example pdf converter/reader, email client, web browser, etc.

Throughput capabilities

Indicate the maximum number of messages that the software can handle during a five minute period.

Database insertion/extraction

Please describe in detail how your software would interact with the Customs Automated System (CAS) environment, for example direct XML data insertion, host-on-demand interface, predefined file interface, etc.

It is also essential to indicate clearly what technical involvement you would require from the Customs IT department in this aspect. This should be done by defining clearly the boundaries of responsibility for your company and what would be expected from Customs.

Electronic Message Security and Integrity

Provide a description of the data transmission and storage security and integrity mechanisms used in the software application.

Provide a description of any standard non-repudiation mechanisms used in the software, for example user name and password access by client to submit message.

If there is no such mechanism built in to the EDI software package does your company offer security software that provides a non-repudiation service. If "yes" a description of the software/service should be provided.

System audit capabilities

A detailed specification of system audit capabilities should be provided.

Specification of client-side needs

Indicate the minimum technical requirements that a commercial operator will need in order to be able to submit and receive information from Customs, for example EDI software, ftp software, email client, etc.

Please also indicate if your software solution can include a client side “lite” application that can be used to assist them establish an EDI interface for use with Customs. This may be required for some commercial operators who do not yet have an EDI capability.

Costs

Capital cost for software/hardware

Bahamas Customs is aware that some service providers may offer the possibility of paying a transaction fee rather than a one-time capital expenditure cost.

For companies who provide such a service, please indicate, where appropriate, the capital cost of buying the necessary licenses and the option of paying by transaction.

For the transaction based pricing the total number of manifests and declarations already presented in this document should be used as the basis. It can also be assumed that for each message received by Customs and response will be sent back to the client.

However, given that it may take time to reach a critical mass of electronic messages respondents should also indicate the minimum number of transactions which would be required to offer such a business solution.

Recurring/maintenance costs

Any annual recurring costs should be identified in the response. The coverage of these fees should also be clearly identified, e.g. helpdesk response times, software updates, etc.

Consultancy/assistance

Any consultancy or technical assistance costs associated with the installation and configuration of the software should be clearly stated. The cost per day and an estimated time for configuring the system to handle the manifest, Customs declaration and response messages should be provided.

Project Planning & Implementation

Respondents to this RFP should indicate the lead time, after notification of acceptance of an offer, necessary before commencement of the installation.

Companies should also give an indication of the total man-days taken to complete the installation.

As part of the implementation respondents should state clearly the boundaries of this project vis-a-vie the work which will be carried out by the company and the anticipated work to be carried out by the Customs IT department.

Deadline for responses

The deadline for responses for this RFP to be submitted is Friday, 21st November, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. at the Ministry of Finance, Cecil Wallace Whitfield Centre (3rd Floor), West Bay Street, Cable Beach.

Submission of responses

Respondents' should note that replies to this RFP can be submitted in triplicate (3) to the addresses indicated below.

**The Chairman
Tenders Board
c/o Ministry of Finance
P. O. Box N-3017
Nassau, N.P.
The Bahamas
Telephone: 327-1586 or 327-1530
E-Mail: mofgeneral@bahamas.gov.bs
E-Mail: subrennahiggs@bahamas.gov.bs**

Please mark all responses with the following subject: Customs EDI tender

The Ministry of Finance reserves the right to reject any or all Tenders.

Contact for additional information or clarification

For any additional technical questions information please contact:

Mrs. Subrenna Higgs
Director IT
Bahamas Customs IT Department
Phone: 1.242.3023321
E-mail: subrennahiggs@bahamas.gov.bs

Example Records

Manifest field specification for existing shipper EDI interface

Manifest header information

	Field length	Format
A=<c2>		
B=Vessel	20	char
C=Port (see Port Codes)	5	char
D=Date (dd/mm/ccyy)	10	date
E=Nationality of the vessel (see Country Codes)	3	char
F=Origin	15	char
G=Owner/Operator	25	char
H=Agent	20	char
I=Tons	7	decimal
J=Vessel Desc (Cruise or Cargo)	30	char
K=Crew#	5	decimal
L=Passenger#	5	decimal
M=Master name	30	char

Manifest detail information

Row #2 – This is the key for the manifest detail information.

	Field length	Format
A=BOL	11	char
B=Mark	6	char
C=Number of Pieces	7	decimal
D=Description	25	char
E=Weight	7	decimal
F=Consignee	25	char

Customs Declaration sample

Mode of transport header information (alpha numeric)	Header details (alpha numeric)	Line item details (fields are numeric with 2 decimal places)
- Entry No - Entry Port - Entry date	- Internal Reference - Assocdoc - C41meind	- Internal Reference No. - Line Number - Number of pieces

• Port Arrival • Vessel • Date of Arrival • Bill of Lading • Form type • Internal Reference • Rotation No. • TIMS Code	• Importer • Date Entry paid • Entry User Id • Import Mode • Broker Name • Country Origin • Entry Value • Gov. Code • Bond Codes • Deposit Amount • Expiration Date • Stamp Tax • Storage Charges • Warehouse Removal • Warehouse id • Warehouse Deposit • Stamp prep. • Duty Liabile • Duty Collected • Import License • Supplier Name • Actual Stamp • Excise Liabile • Excise Collected	• Value • Quantity • Quantity unit code • Rate of Duty • Specific Duty • Duty Liabile • Duty Collected • Stamptax Liabile • Appamt • Tariff • Duty Free codes • Excrate • Stamp Rate • Excise Liabile • Excise Collected • Stamp tax Collected
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