Human Services Council

The Voice of the Human Services Community

May 15, 2015

Dear members and partners,

I am pleased to present the Human Services Council of New York's report on the initial impact of HHS Accelerator. As you know, HSC partnered with the New York City Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services five years ago to conceptualize a Web-based procurement system that would streamline human services contracting and foster more open and efficient competition. The HHS Accelerator team, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, the Mayor's Office of Operations, and the Mayor's Office of Contract Services have been true partners in streamlining the procurement process, and the success of HHS Accelerator is a reflection of their thoughtful, user-driven approach.

Our study revealed a high level of provider satisfaction with HHS Accelerator. We administered an online survey to providers of all sizes and interviewed users regarding their procurement experience before and after the launch of the system. Participants identified greater efficiency, reduced administrative burdens, and outstanding customer support as key benefits of HHS Accelerator. They see the potential for even greater benefit once all City human services agencies fully engage in its use and as additional components are added.

During our interviews and via the online survey, providers offered ideas to make the system even more robust. HSC is working with the HHS Accelerator team to address these suggestions. In addition, we will be at the table as new components, such as the newly released Financials module, roll out and enhancements are made. I would like to recognize Tracie Robinson, Policy Analyst, for her work researching, conducting interviews, and writing this report and Michelle Jackson, Associate Director & General Counsel, for spearheading our collaboration with HHS Accelerator since its inception.

Partnering with City agencies and bringing the voice of nonprofit human services providers to City initiatives are important parts of our ongoing work, and are made possible with your support. We look forward to spearheading additional advancements on behalf of the sector.

Sincerely,

Allison Sesso
Executive Director

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The New York City Procurement Reform Project
A Report by the Human Services Council of New York

Part 1: The Initial Impact of HHS Accelerator

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April 30, 2015

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Foreword

This report is the result of a study of the HHS Accelerator ("Accelerator") user experience. It represents an inquiry into the initial impact of the system and is limited to the procurement process (*i.e.*, it excludes the Financials Module). The Human Services Council ("HSC") will conduct a follow-up study next year that will examine the Financials Module and any modifications to the system.

The study and report were made possible by a generous grant from The New York Community Trust. The overall conclusion is that the system is a significant step forward in the process of improving human services procurement in New York City. The system is revolutionary and not only eliminates substantial barriers to competing for human services contracts, but also facilitates more open and robust competition. Notwithstanding the advances made by Accelerator, study participants noted certain areas for enhancement and expansion. HSC will work with the Accelerator team over the coming year to make the system even more robust and efficient.

Acknowledgements

HSC commends the City of New York for daring to reimagine the human services procurement and contracting process. Working closely with HSC and our members, the City has taken the bold steps of designing and implementing a new, research-based, streamlined system. We thank the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, the Mayor's Office of Contract Services, the Mayor's Office of Operations,[1] and the Procurement Policy Board for their continued commitment to improving the relationship between the City and its human services providers for the benefit of New Yorkers in need. In particular, we are grateful to former Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs, Louisa Chafee, and the entire HHS Accelerator team for their vision for changing procurement and for their ongoing assistance.

Neither Accelerator nor this report would have been possible without the honest, thoughtful input of our member organizations. For this study, representatives of more than forty nonprofit providers took the time to complete a comprehensive survey, and representatives of twelve nonprofit providers gave detailed accounts of their experience in face-to-face and telephone interviews, never missing a beat in the delivery of services to their constituents. Their feedback is vital to the continuous improvement of Accelerator, and we acknowledge the time and resources that they have devoted to optimizing the procurement and contracting process.

Finally, HSC acknowledges the generous support of The New York Community Trust ("The Trust"), which provided funding for this report. Since 1924, The Trust has been a stalwart supporter of New York City's nonprofit organizations, making grants in the areas of community development and the environment; health and people with special needs; education, arts, and human justice; and children, youth, and families. We thank The Trust for enabling us to carry out the important work of fine-tuning Accelerator, which will in turn enable the City and its nonprofit partners to focus more resources on the delivery of high-quality human services to those who need them.

[1] HHS Accelerator is now part of the Mayor's Office of Operations, but when the system was launched, it was part of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services.

Executive Summary

Human services organizations provide much-needed supports for New York City's most vulnerable residents, and they comprise a significant share of the City's economy. In fiscal year 2014, the City spent more than $17.7 billion on supplies, services, and construction through more than 43,000 transactions.[2] Human services accounted for 17 percent of all procurement.[3] Nonprofit organizations are the primary providers of human services in New York City. As of June 30, 2014, nonprofits cumulatively held 93% of all active human services contracts, regardless of registration date, with a total value of $16 billion.[4] In fiscal year 2014, they delivered nearly $3.14 billion in services through more than 5,300 contracts.[5]

A healthy relationship between City government and providers is essential to the delivery of high-quality services. Unfortunately, the process of doing business with the City has proven problematic for many organizations. The difficulties, detailed in this report, have created significant administrative and financial burdens for providers, straining their resources and impairing their ability to serve clients. These problems have also made it harder for the City to identify and contract with qualified organizations, which, in turn, has made it harder to meet the growing needs of under-resourced populations.

More than five years ago, the Human Services Council engaged nonprofit providers and City government in a dialogue about the procurement process, with the goal of identifying core challenges and formulating a comprehensive, technology-driven solution. As a result of this extended dialogue, the Deputy Mayor's Office for Health and Human Services launched a new Web-based procurement system, HHS Accelerator, in March 2013.[6] This report examines the impact of the new system on the provider experience based on interview and survey responses from those who use the system. The report includes 1) an overview of the HHS Accelerator initiative, 2) a review of progress to date, 3) a summary of provider experiences, and 4) next steps and key considerations. The objective is to inform decisions regarding further improvements to and possible expansion of the system.

Although HHS Accelerator has been in place for little more than a year, providers have already experienced reductions in redundancy, staff time spent on procurement, and inconsistency. The system shows great promise despite a few remaining issues. Our study indicates that with continuous, research-based improvement, HHS Accelerator can transform the relationship between the City and providers, increase the quality of human services delivered, and serve as a model for other agencies at the City and State levels.

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[2] Mayor's Office of Contract Services. *Agency Procurement Indicators: Fiscal Year 2014*. Accessed on Oct. 17, 2014, at http://www.nyc.gov/html/mocs/html/research/indicator_reports.shtml. This reflects an increase of $8.2 billion since fiscal year 2004. Mayor's Office of Contract Services. *Agency Procurement Indicators: Fiscal Year 2004*. Accessed on Oct. 17, 2014, at http://www.nyc.gov/html/mocs/html/research/indicator_reports.shtml.

[3] Mayor's Office of Contract Services. *Agency Procurement Indicators: Fiscal Year 2014.*

[4] *Id.*

[5] *Id*.

[6] The Document Vault was launched in March 2013, and the first solicitations were released through the system in October 2013. City agencies began using the Financials module for fiscal year 2015 in July 2014.

Background

New York City relies on nonprofit organizations to deliver human services to residents with a wide spectrum of needs. These essential services, which include job training and placement, early childhood education and afterschool enrichment, violence intervention, legal assistance, homeless shelters, community health services, and senior services,[7] make the City livable for some of the most vulnerable populations. More than 5,600 human services contracts valued at more than $3.1 billion were registered in fiscal year 2014, representing 17% of the total value of registered contracts.[8] Unfortunately, the City's need for human services has outgrown its process for identifying and engaging providers.

As the demand for human services increased in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the problems with the City's cumbersome procurement process became untenable. Providers were expected to deliver more services to more people, but the administrative burdens of procurement and contracting never relented. Copious paperwork and outdated modes of communication taxed the resources of already overextended organizations. For more than half a decade, the Human Services Council (HSC) has been a leading advocate for a more streamlined procurement and contracting process in New York City. HSC has served as a partner to the City and to nonprofit service providers in the design and implementation of a more efficient system.

In 2009, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg convened the Strengthening Nonprofits Task Force to improve City procurement and contracting procedures and bolster the nonprofit sector in other areas.[9] HSC was the City's partner in the research that would inform the new system architecture, conducting focus groups, interviews, and surveys of human services providers that frequently contract with the City. In 2010, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services ("DMHHS") and the Mayor's Office of Contract Services published a concept paper synthesizing their work with HSC and proposing a blueprint for HHS Accelerator, a Web-based procurement system that would maximize existing resources and increase the efficiency of the procurement process. The City then began designing and testing the new system.

In 2013, the Procurement Policy Board promulgated rules making Accelerator the default procurement method for client service contracts, setting forth the policy and criteria governing the prequalification of vendors through HHS Accelerator, and establishing a process for soliciting proposals from prequalified vendors through the system.[10] In March 2013, Accelerator went live. Today, twelve agencies and roughly 1,600 prequalified providers use the system. HSC set out to evaluate the impact of Accelerator and determine how it can be improved. This report is a synthesis of anecdotal evidence and quantitative data that will inform the City's next steps.

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[7] *New York City HHS Accelerator: Achieving High Performance Relationships with Providers of Human Services*. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. Mayor's Office of Contract Services. April 2010. Accessed on Oct. 22, 2014, at http://www.nyc.gov/html/hhsaccelerator/html/about/about.shtml.

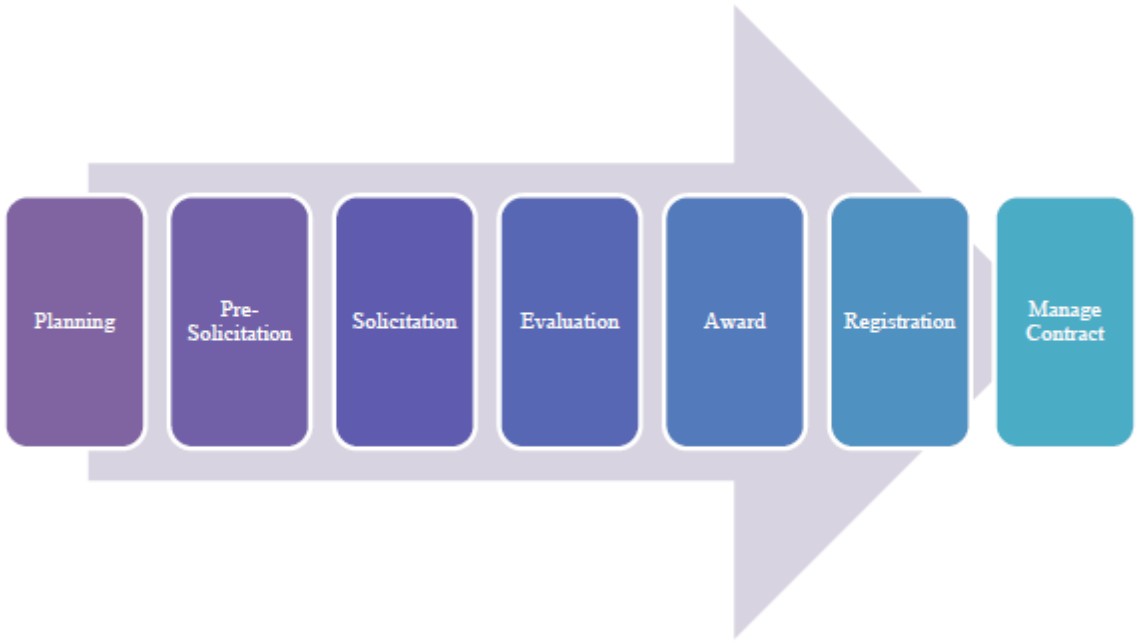
[8] Mayor's Office of Contract Services. *Agency Procurement Indicators: Fiscal Year 2014*.

[9] *Id.*

[10] *Id.* See also PPB 1-01, 2-04, 2-08, 2-09, 3-01, 3-10, 3-16, and 4-12.

Overview of the Procurement and Contracting Process

The procurement and contracting system is the foundation of the relationship between the City and service providers. The purpose of the procurement process is to identify, through fair and transparent competition, the most capable vendor to meet a particular need, with consideration given to cost-effectiveness. An efficient process is essential to the judicious use of taxpayer dollars and the timely delivery of high-quality services. The graphic below summarizes the City's procurement process.



Source: Mayor's Office of Contract Services.[11]

In the planning stage, an agency identifies a need and the Agency Chief Contracting Officer (ACCO) chooses the method of procurement. In this report, we are focusing on the competitive sealed proposal method of procurement. Once the planning is complete, the pre-solicitation phase begins. In this phase, the agency drafts a Request for Proposals (RFP) and evaluation criteria and obtains the necessary approvals. The third step is solicitation, in which the agency publishes the RFP and receives proposals. When the solicitation period expires (*i.e.*, when the proposal submission deadline occurs), the agency begins the evaluation phase. It evaluates proposals, selects a vendor, holds a public hearing, and determines vendor responsibility.[12] The responsibility determination is made using the VENDEX database, which is described below. Once the selected vendor is found to be responsible, the agency can make an award. In the award phase, the service contract is negotiated and signed. Finally, the Comptroller signs and registers the contract package. At this point, the contract is in force and service

[11] Mayor's Office of Contract Services. *Agency Procurement Indicators: Fiscal Year 2012*. Accessed on Nov. 6, 2014, at http://www.nyc.gov/html/mocs/html/research/indicator_reports.shtml.

[12] "A responsible contractor has the technical capability and financial capacity to fully perform the requirements of the contract, as well as the business integrity to justify the award of public tax dollars." Mayor's Office of Contract Services. http://www.nyc.gov/html/mocs/html/procurement/procurement.shtml

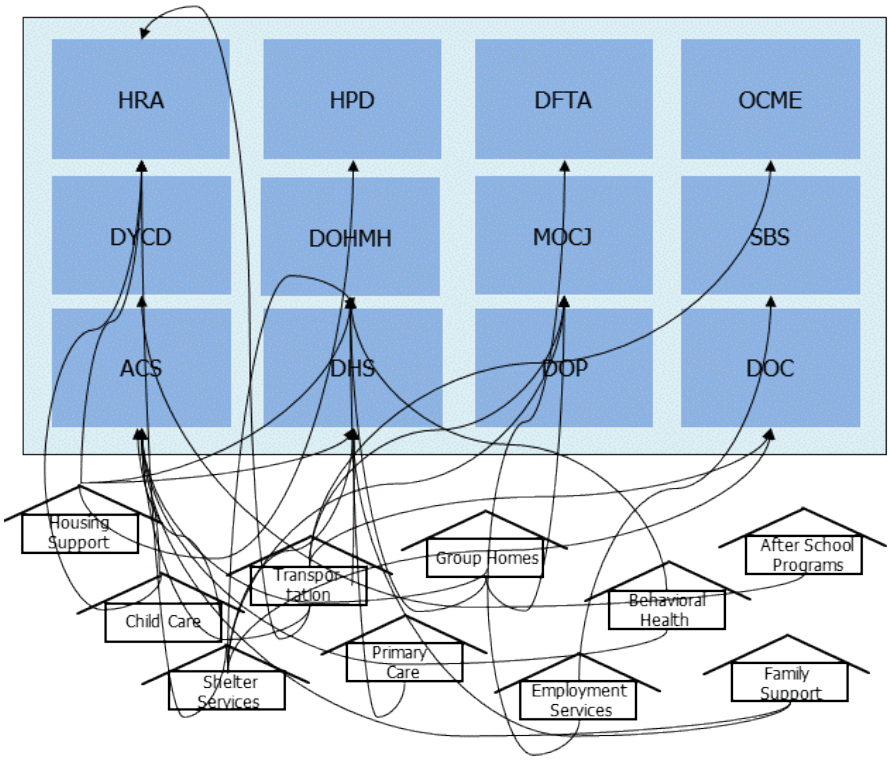
begins. The agency will monitor the vendor's performance and submit evaluations through the VENDEX system.

Key Actors in the Procurement Process

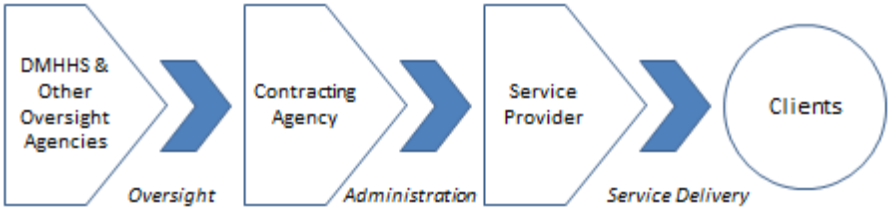
The HHS contracting landscape is notoriously complex, involving ten agencies under the oversight of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services ("DMHHS"), as well as several agencies outside of DMHHS' purview; multiple oversight bodies; and thousands of providers. The principal agencies that contract for human services are:

- Administration for Children's Services ("ACS")
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice ("MOCJ")
- Department for the Aging ("DFTA")
- Department of Correction ("DOC")
- Department of Homeless Services ("DHS")
- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene ("DOHMH")
- Department of Probation ("DOP")
- Department of Youth and Community Development ("DYCD")
- Human Resources Administration ("HRA")
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development ("HPD")
- Department of Small Business Services ("SBS")

Many agencies purchase related services for the same populations in the same neighborhoods. This results in a number of providers contracting with and reporting to multiple agencies, as illustrated below. It can also lead to duplication of paperwork.



Furthermore, multiple legal, fiscal, and contracting oversight entities operate simultaneously to ensure integrity, fidelity, and public accountability throughout the procurement and contracting process. For example, the Corporation Counsel (Law), Comptroller, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS), Department of Investigation (DOI), and Division of Labor Services (DLS) within the Department of Small Business Services play an important role in the contracting process.[13]



VENDEX

The Vendor Information Exchange System ("VENDEX") is the primary means by which agencies make responsibility determinations.[14] VENDEX is a public database housing information about providers' capacity, legal structure, and financial status. The principal sources of this information are the two questionnaires that each current contractor and prospective contractor must complete: the Vendor Questionnaire and the Principal Questionnaire. The Vendor Questionnaire elicits information about the integrity, potential conflicts of interest, legal structure, disciplinary history, and financial soundness of the provider. It is not intended to draw out service-related information in great detail. The Principal Questionnaire elicits similar information from the organization's principal owners and the three officers who exercise the most control over the organization.

[13] Agency Procurement Indicators Report Fiscal Year 2012. City of New York Mayor's Office of Contract Services. Web. 20 March 2014.

[14] While agencies may use other resources as well, they are required by law to use VENDEX for awards totaling more than $100,000.[14]

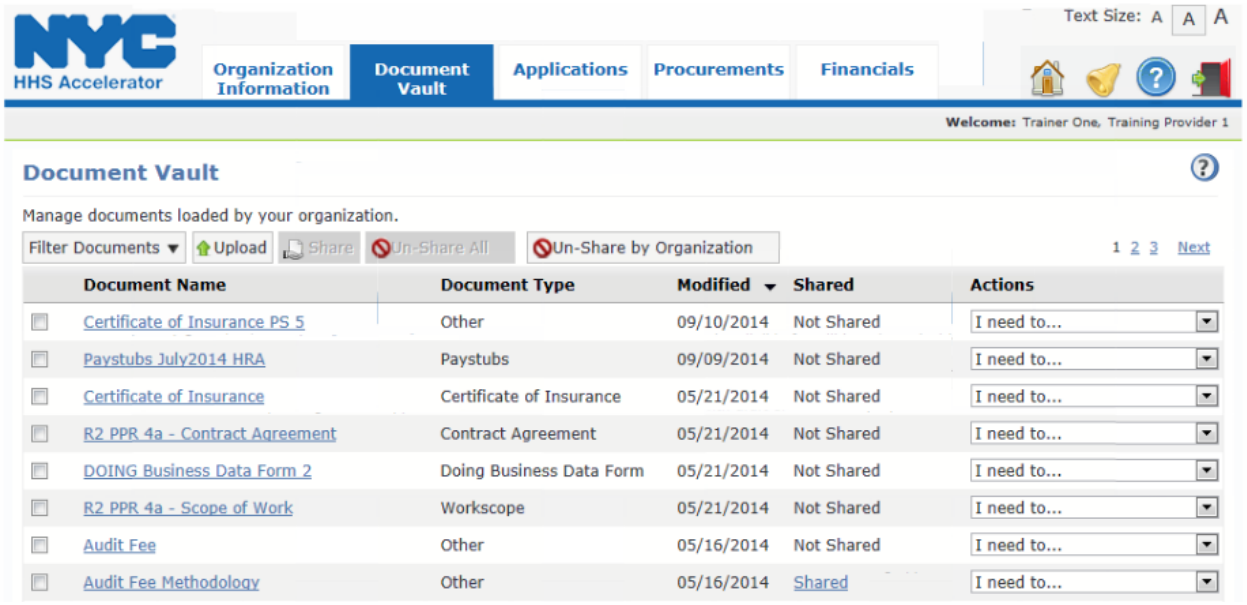
Overview of HHS Accelerator

Accelerator is a comprehensive, Web-based procurement and contract management system through which City agencies and providers communicate, share documents, and collaborate. The system has four main components:

- The Document Vault, which allows providers to store frequently requested documents for viewing by multiple agencies
- The prequalification application, which enables providers to demonstrate their experience, capacity, and business integrity prior to competing for City funds
- The Procurements module, which enables electronic issuance of RFPs, almost-paperless submission and evaluation of proposals, and online management of contract awards
- The Financials module, which allows submission of budgets and invoices for review, as well as processing and tracking of budget modifications and payments[15]

The Document Vault

The Document Vault enables providers to store three kinds of frequently requested documents: 1) corporate structure documents, 2) financial documents, and 3) policy documents.[16] Many of these documents, such as an organization's board list, certificate of incorporation, and independent audit, are required in order to do business with the City.[17] The purpose of the Document Vault is to reduce redundancy in the application process by providing a secure, central repository for organizational documents that is accessible to multiple agencies. Thus, rather than submitting the same documents to multiple agencies separately, organizations can store them in the Vault and select which participating agencies and providers can access them. The Document Vault reduces the risk of lost documents and provides the convenience of having "everything in one place."



HHS Accelerator screenshot

[15] Mayor's Office of Contract Services. *Agency Procurement Indicators: Fiscal Year 2014*.
[16] http://www.nyc.gov/html/hhsaccelerator/downloads/pdf/About%20HHS%20Accelerator_February%202014.pdf
[17] *Id.*

The Prequalification Application

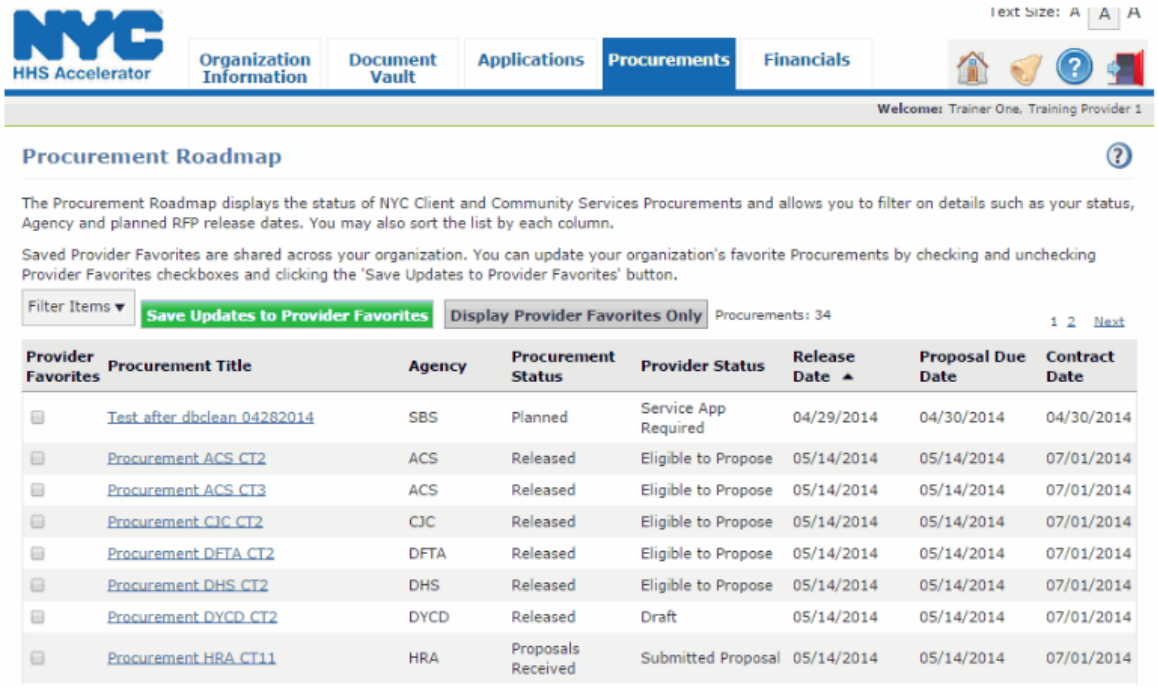
Providers establish their "Eligibility to Compete" through a two-part prequalification process within Accelerator. In the first part of this process, called the Business Application, organizations tell the City *who they are*. In the second part, called the Service Application, they tell the City *what they do*. The purpose of the Business Application is for organizations to prove their legal identity and fiscal soundness to the City, which they must do through regulatory filings and organizational documents. The purpose of the Service Application is for them to demonstrate their experience and capacity in the service areas of their choosing.

The Service Application is important because it dictates the kinds of RFPs that will be made available to each prequalified provider. For example, a provider that demonstrates only experience delivering homelessness prevention services will not be able to respond to solicitations for workforce development services. This limitation is intended to optimize the problem-solution matching process by ensuring that providers receive the RFPs that are best aligned with their capabilities. At the same time, the Service Application taxonomy encourages organizations to think more expansively about their services by notifying them of opportunities that they have the infrastructure to undertake that may be beyond their existing repertoire. For example, an organization that provides meals to homebound seniors could easily expand to provide home visits for HIV/AIDS individuals as well. In this way the system promotes strategic growth among providers. The complete catalog of services from which providers may choose can be viewed here.

Procurements

The Procurements module is the heart of Accelerator and the principal means by which agencies and providers interact. It was designed to standardize solicitation and competition and save time for both the City and providers. Within the Procurements module, the Procurement Roadmap serves as a customizable dashboard from which providers can find, monitor, and respond to RFPs.[18] Providers can manipulate their view of RFPs by issuing agency, procurement status, release date, proposal deadline, contract date, and even provider status. The screenshot below shows the layout of the Procurement Roadmap.

[18] Note that Accelerator is not the only means by which providers can learn about RFPs. Notices regarding where to find human services RFPs are published in the City Record (and on each Agency's site). In addition, the public Accelerator website lists summaries of all planned or released RFPs. Thus, providers do not need to have an Accelerator account to *be aware* of RFPs, although they do need to have an account and be prequalified in order to *respond* to them.



Source: HHS Accelerator

Financials

The Financials module enables ongoing financial tracking and management once a contract is executed. Designed to reduce accounting errors, facilitate communication regarding budgets and amendments, and streamline payment, it is a critical tool in the contract management process. As of April 2015, six City agencies were actively using this module: Department of Homeless Services, Human Resources Administration, Administration for Children's Services, Department of Small Business Services, Department of Probation, and Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Three HHS agencies (Department for the Aging, Department of Youth and Community Development, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene) were *not* using the Financials module.

Alerts

Another important feature of Accelerator is the Alerts functionality. This feature notifies users via email when relevant solicitations are released. Notifications are based on the services that a provider is prequalified for in its Service Application. Another feature that users find helpful is notifications when credentialing documents that have been uploaded to the system expire.

Accelerator Usage

As of April 2015, twelve City agencies had issued RFPs through the system. Those agencies are:

1. Administration for Children's Services (ACS)
2. Department for the Aging (DFTA)
3. Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)
4. Department of Education (DOE)
5. Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
6. Department of Homeless Services (DHS)
7. Department of Probation (DOP)
8. Department of Small Business Services (SBS)

9. Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)
10. Housing and Preservation Department (HPD)
11. Human Resources Administration (HRA)
12. Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice (MOCJ)

All other agencies have users as well. Nearly 3,000 providers had Accelerator accounts, more than 70 RFPs had been issued through the system, and more than 800 awards had been made.

HHS Accelerator Statistics as of April 2015	
City agencies on board	12
Providers with accounts	2,971
RFPs issued	72
Awards made	860

Source: HHS Accelerator

Methodology of this Report

The aim of this report is to assess the initial impact of the Accelerator system on the procurement and contracting process in the New York City Health and Human Services (HHS) sector so that progress and challenges to date may inform next steps for further improvement. To that end, from December 2014 through April 2015, HSC administered a Web-based survey to 41 human services organizations regarding their experiences prior to the introduction of Accelerator and with Accelerator in place. In addition, we conducted interviews with representatives from twelve of our member organizations to gain a deeper understanding of some of the issues they are facing and how Accelerator has affected their procurement and contracting experience. We promised all participants anonymity in order to encourage candor.

Participant Selection

The organizations selected for interviews vary in budget size, number of employees, number of City contracts held, services provided, and constituents served. Our goal was to canvas as diverse a group of providers as possible. Nearly all of the survey respondents held a City contract at the time of the survey, and all of the interviewees held at least one City contract. Representatives were selected based on their knowledge of the procurement process before and with Accelerator. Where possible, interviews were conducted with the individuals directly responsible for handling proposals and/or managing contracts.

Survey and Interview Questions

The survey and interview questions were designed to elicit both quantitative information and candid observations about the procurement process. Both open-ended questions and directed questions were used to ensure that key points were addressed while giving participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences. Given the novelty of Accelerator, the majority of the questions address procurement under the old system, with a few questions eliciting information about procurement through Accelerator to enable comparison. The survey questions are included in this report as Appendix 1. The questions were grouped as follows:

- Questions regarding the responding organization (size, budget, funding configuration, etc.)
- Questions about the prequalification process
- Questions regarding identification of RFPs
- Questions regarding the proposal production process

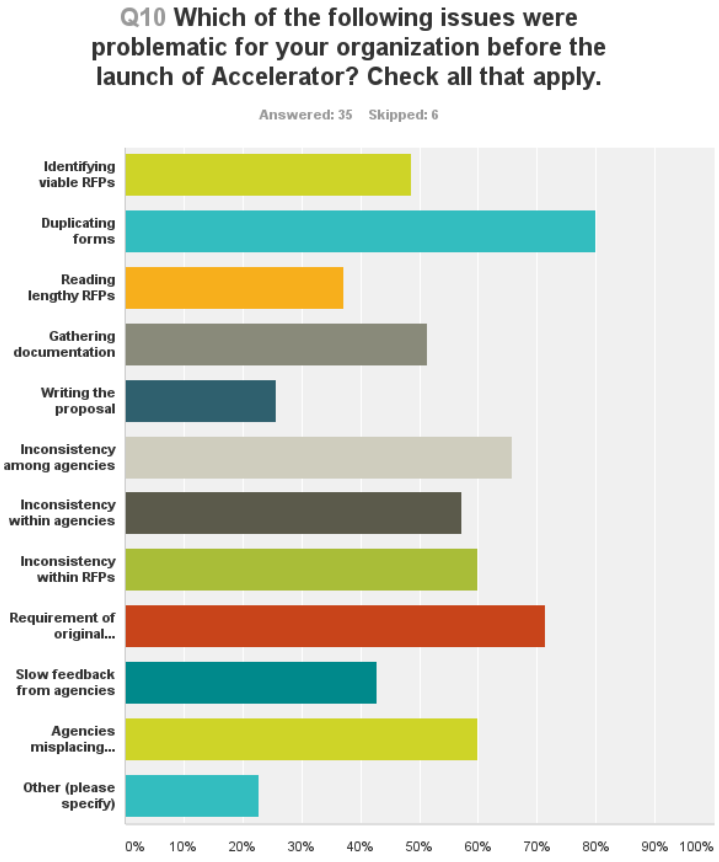
The Impact of HHS Accelerator

Prior to the launch of Accelerator, there was consensus among HHS providers that the City's procurement systems did not meet the growing need for timely identification and engagement of qualified, cost-effective service providers. This need was underscored by catastrophic events such as the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and Hurricane Sandy. HHS providers played a pivotal role in the response to these emergencies, and yet they were subjected to cumbersome processes that took time and resources away from service delivery. The old processes were marked by inefficiency, redundancy, and delays, all of which cost the City, providers, and taxpayers.

The main issues cited were:

- Duplication of effort
- Inconsistency within and across agencies
- Disjointed notification of opportunities
- Voluminous RFPs and burdensome documentation requirements

The table below shows common problems with the pre-Accelerator process.



Interview and survey participants described the pre-Accelerator process as "extremely paper-driven," "incredibly inefficient," "administratively intensive," "redundant," and even "horrendous." They described Accelerator, on the other hand, as a more "efficient," "streamlined," and "much easier" system that alleviates some of the stress associated with responding to RFPs. Although Accelerator was launched just over a year ago, providers have already noticed improvements in the procurement process: 77 percent believe that it has made the procurement process more efficient. They describe the technical support as "outstanding." The table below shows the descriptors used by participants to describe the process before and with Accelerator.

Pre-Accelerator Process	Accelerator Process
Paper-driven	Streamlined
Inefficient	Efficient
Intensive	Easier
Disjointed	Straightforward
Burdensome	Well put together
Lengthy	Quicker
Redundant	Concise
Clunky	Logical
Painful	Organized
Stressful	User-friendly
Horrendous	Wonderful

Duplication Curtailed

An overarching problem with the pre-Accelerator City procurement process was duplication of effort. Duplication may result from multiple requests for the same document by the same agency (in some cases due to the original submission being lost), or by different agencies (as a result of lack of interagency coordination). It can also mean the production of multiple copies of a voluminous proposal package. In any case, duplication costs providers valuable time and money, which are ultimately paid for by taxpayers. Every minute spent completing and submitting the same form more than once is a minute wasted.

The vast majority of survey respondents (80 percent) identified duplication of forms as a problem before the implementation of HHS Accelerator, with 50 percent rating it "a serious problem" and twelve percent rating it "a very serious problem." In response to the open-ended question, "What was the single most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the pre-Accelerator SOLICITATION/PROPOSAL process?", 57 percent of respondents invoked duplication. Furthermore, several interviewees expressed frustration with the repetitive requirements for the same information by different agencies. One interviewee recounted her frustration in submitting the same document to the same agency "over and over," while others lamented the lack of coordination among agencies to reduce requests for identical information.

The majority of survey respondents and interviewees indicated that Accelerator has reduced the amount of duplication involved in the solicitation process. For example, 79 percent indicated that

Accelerator had alleviated the most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the old solicitation/proposal process (which, for most respondents, was duplication). As one interviewee explained, by reducing duplication, Accelerator allows his organization to devote more time to the substance of its proposals. It is not surprising, then, that 70 percent of survey respondents said that reduced the overall amount of time that their organization spends responding to RFPs, and 77 percent indicated that Accelerator has reduced their administrative burdens thanks to the Document Vault. Several individuals expressed a need for broader use of the Document Vault, noting that not all City agencies (or departments within them) are using it.

Inconsistency Reduced

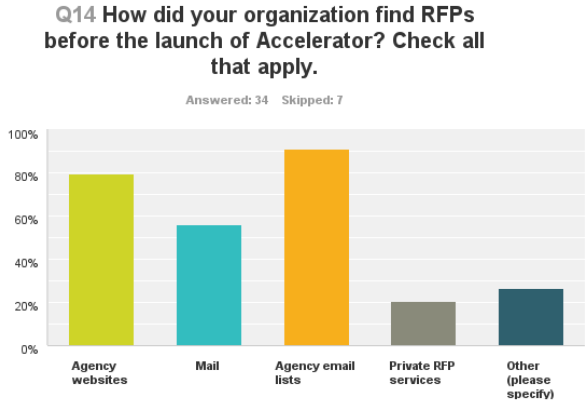
Another result of each agency having its own procurement process was the lack of a uniform system across HHS agencies. Many providers contract with multiple agencies, and although most City procurement is subject to the rules promulgated by the Procurement Policy Board, each agency has its own way of conducting the process. This is a corollary of duplication; providers are often required to submit the *same information* in *different formats* depending on the soliciting agency. While each agency has different service needs, information needs are generally the same across agencies. For example, all agencies need information about an organization's past experience in a given service area.

Still, most survey respondents identified inconsistency among—and even within—agencies as a problem. For 66 percent of respondents, inconsistency *among* agencies was a problem, while inconsistency *within* agencies was a problem for 57 percent of respondents. Most respondents (60 percent) also noted inconsistencies within individual RFPs. Two interviewees referenced a "special form" required by one agency in particular. One interviewee even mentioned inconsistency within one agency, with questions regarding the same contract eliciting different answers depending on which agency staff member was reviewing it. Providers have noticed increased consistency within and among RFPs since the implementation of Accelerator.

Notification of Opportunities Streamlined

Publication of RFPs is critical to the City's ability to engage the most qualified providers. It is also essential to providers' livelihood. If providers cannot find relevant opportunities in time to respond—or if they spend too much time searching—their survival is jeopardized. Before Accelerator, each agency published its solicitations through the media of its choosing. This resulted in providers subscribing to multiple mailing lists and notification services, both electronic and postal.

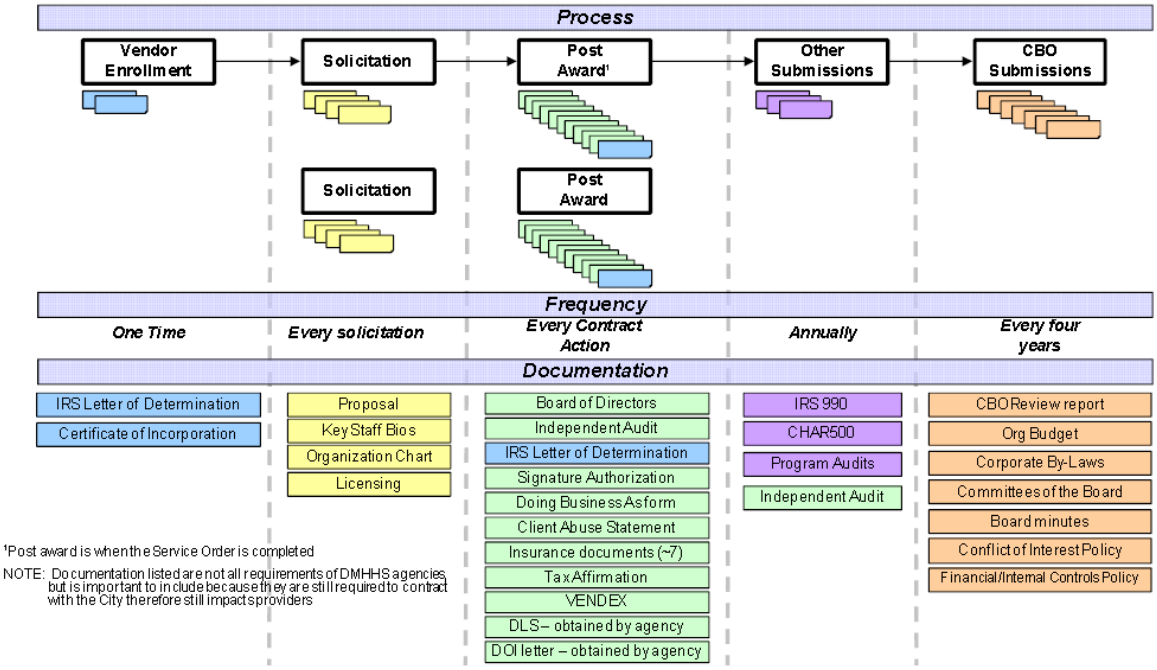
Nearly half (49 percent) of the organizations surveyed indicated that they had difficulty finding opportunities before the launch of Accelerator, though they did not consider this to be as serious a problem as duplication of effort. Prior to the implementation of Accelerator, providers learned of RFPs in what one interviewee described as a "totally ad hoc" manner. Sources included agency websites, mail, agency email lists, other organizations' email lists, private RFP services, contacts within agencies, word of mouth, and prior RFPs. Agency email lists were the most popular means of notification, relied on by 91 percent of survey respondents.



Two interviewees mentioned that they missed some opportunities prior to the launch of Accelerator, whereas now they are notified of more opportunities. Since its launch, Accelerator has surpassed agency email to become the most relied upon source of notification about RFPs, with 90 percent of survey respondents indicating that they now learn about opportunities through the system. An interviewee from a small provider noted that the RFP notifications have been especially helpful in letting her know the full range of services that her organization is eligible for, leading her to think about expanding its services. While many organizations continue to use other sources as well, 93 percent of survey respondents indicated that Accelerator has made identification of RFPs easier.

Voluminous RFPs and Burdensome Documentation Requirements Mitigated

For many organizations, the length and density of RFPs, along with sheer volume of documentation required in the procurement are a significant burden. For 21 percent of survey respondents, reading lengthy RFPs was "a serious problem" prior to the release of Accelerator, while 23 percent identified gathering documentation as "a serious problem." From lengthy narrative requirements to requests for detailed organizational and financial documents, substantial staff time goes into gathering and preparing a complete proposal. The graphic below, taken from the Accelerator concept paper, illustrates the volume of paper associated with the old process.



Source: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services.
http://www.nyc.gov/html/hhsaccelerator/html/about/about.shtml

While only 21 percent of survey respondents identified as "a serious problem," 64 percent said that RFPs are shorter now that Accelerator is in place. Interviewees explained that the principal value in the Document Vault is having frequently requested documents in one centralized repository that is accessible to multiple agencies. Corporate documents, in particular, can be difficult to gather under time pressure—especially when the staff responsible for them are off-site and the proposal writer is focusing on the content of a proposal. In fact, six survey respondents identified document sharing through the Document Vault as the single most helpful feature of HHS Accelerator. Several interviewees praised the Document Vault as a significant time saver and stress reducer.

Requests for Original Documents Minimized

The City's requirement of original documents has been a significant procurement hurdle for providers. Most survey respondents (71 percent) indicated that this requirement is a problem, with 24 percent characterizing it as "a serious problem" and 24 percent finding it "a very serious problem." The procurement rules authorize the use of electronic documents and electronic signatures in the procurement process. Section 1-04(b) provides: "To the extent permissible under applicable law and these Rules, agencies may store the contents of agency contract files electronically, and may use and may allow vendors to use, electronic documents and signatures in the course of procurements."[19] Thus, in most cases, the PPB does not require original documents or signatures. Agencies continued to

[19] In defining the term "in ink," Section 1-01(e) provides: "Wherever these Rules provide that an action be taken "in ink," this requirement may be satisfied, if provided for in the solicitation, through the use of electronic signatures."

require them, however, causing substantial inconvenience for providers. One interviewee described a harrowing pre-Accelerator experience in which the printer at his organization's headquarters broke down before a looming deadline. He went to another site in search of a functioning printer, only to find a technical problem with that one as well. Ultimately, he ended up at a print shop, constrained by the capabilities of the print shop staff and equipment. Interviewees described the paper-driven process as "environmentally unfriendly," "antiquated," and "not a good use of resources."

Accelerator has significantly reduced the paper burden for providers. Ten out of twelve interviewees expressed relief that Accelerator reduced the amount of paper required in the procurement process. Interviewees described the document upload process as "smooth" and stated that it "reduced stress and anxiety," in contrast to the former system. Uploading files eliminates the need for printing, shipping, courier service, and hand delivery. Unfortunately, providers indicated that some agencies continue to require original documents in certain circumstances.

Building on Success: Possible System Improvements

The response to Accelerator has, overall, been extremely positive. As laid out above, survey and interview participants generally believe that Accelerator is a marked improvement over the former procurement process. Several participants did raise the following suggestions, however, for making the system even more efficient and user-friendly.

Enhance the Document Vault

While most study participants greatly appreciate the convenience of the Document Vault, some expressed a desire for better organization of documents so that they are easier to find. They suggested that the system allow for creation of subfolders or labeling of documents so that they may easily be identified with specific proposals or types of information. Their concern is that as they respond to more and more RFPs over time, it will become difficult to locate specific files. In addition, some participants requested an easier mechanism for removing documents that contain outdated information. Organizations are subject to many changes, including relocation and board and staff turnover. It is important that they be able to update their uploaded documents easily.

Increase File Size Limits

Some participants suggested that the system file size limit (currently 12 MB) be increased to accommodate the types of files that are often uploaded. Proposal narratives in particular can be long documents containing graphics, tables, and formatting, all of which contribute to larger file sizes. The current limit has presented a problem for several users, who had to compress their files or divide them into multiple documents.

Enhance Learning Opportunities

The Accelerator team provided numerous in-person trainings upon the launch of the system and continues to deliver face-to-face trainings frequently. In addition, webinars are available at all times on the Accelerator website. Nonetheless, several participants expressed interest in attending further trainings to learn how to make better use of the system. Now that providers are comfortable with the

system, HSC will partner with the Accelerator team to explore the best approaches to enhance learning experience. Some participants also suggested that government agencies should be required to participate in training sessions so that they understand how to access uploaded information and process invoices through the system.

Streamline RFP Notifications

As explained above, Accelerator informs pre-qualified providers of new RFPs as they are released in the system through automatically generated emails. These notifications are based on the service areas selected by each organization. Several participants indicated that the volume of RFP notifications is too high, however, and that not all of the notifications that they receive are relevant. For example, a senior care center that provides some adult education services received the Universal Pre-kindergarten RFP notice. Additionally, some participants stated that emails alerts are being sent to too many of their colleagues. One interviewee, for example, said that when an uploaded document is about to expire, notifications go to the CEO of his organization and the chair of his board, creating anxiety and confusion. This in turn creates more work for him because he must explain that these notices are routine and automatic. The Accelerator team is currently working on refining the notifications and alerts and has already implemented changes to permissions and notification for active users based on feedback from providers. Alerts and notifications now target only procurement or financials users, unless dual permissions are in place. The team will explore further refinement of updates.

Enforce and Expand Use Requirements

Although providers are generally very satisfied with Accelerator, several participants expressed disappointment and frustration with agencies that either do not use the system or use parts of it while circumventing others. According to some participants, several agencies continue to require original documents and hard copies in lieu of (or in addition to) electronic submissions. Some agencies continue to superimpose their own form and formatting requirements on the procurement process, leading to the inconsistencies mentioned above. These practices defeat one of the key purposes of the system and make the procurement process more complicated. The use requirement should be expanded to all City agencies that contract for human services, and these agencies must refrain from creating additional requirements that are already satisfied by Accelerator.

Conclusion

Overall, study participants viewed Accelerator as a dramatic turnaround from the historically low-tech, high-stress procurement process. In addition, many praised the prompt and "outstanding" customer support provided by the Accelerator team. Most notably, our study shows an increased level of satisfaction with respect to the administrative aspects of procurement. As many participants pointed out, they still have to do the hard work of writing the proposal narrative, but Accelerator gives them more time to do so. The improvements suggested in this report, when compared to the old process and to other procurement systems, are minor. Accelerator is already a model of efficient procurement, and it will be even more powerful when all of the City's human services contracting agencies fully commit to using it. The City, under Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and Director of the Mayor's Office of Operations Mindy Tarlow, and the Accelerator team continue to be strong partners in the effort to better the system and to expand the streamlining to other areas of procurement.

Appendix 1: HHS Accelerator Follow-up Survey

April 2015

Powered by SurveyMonkey

41

Total Responses

Date Created: Monday, October 27, 2014

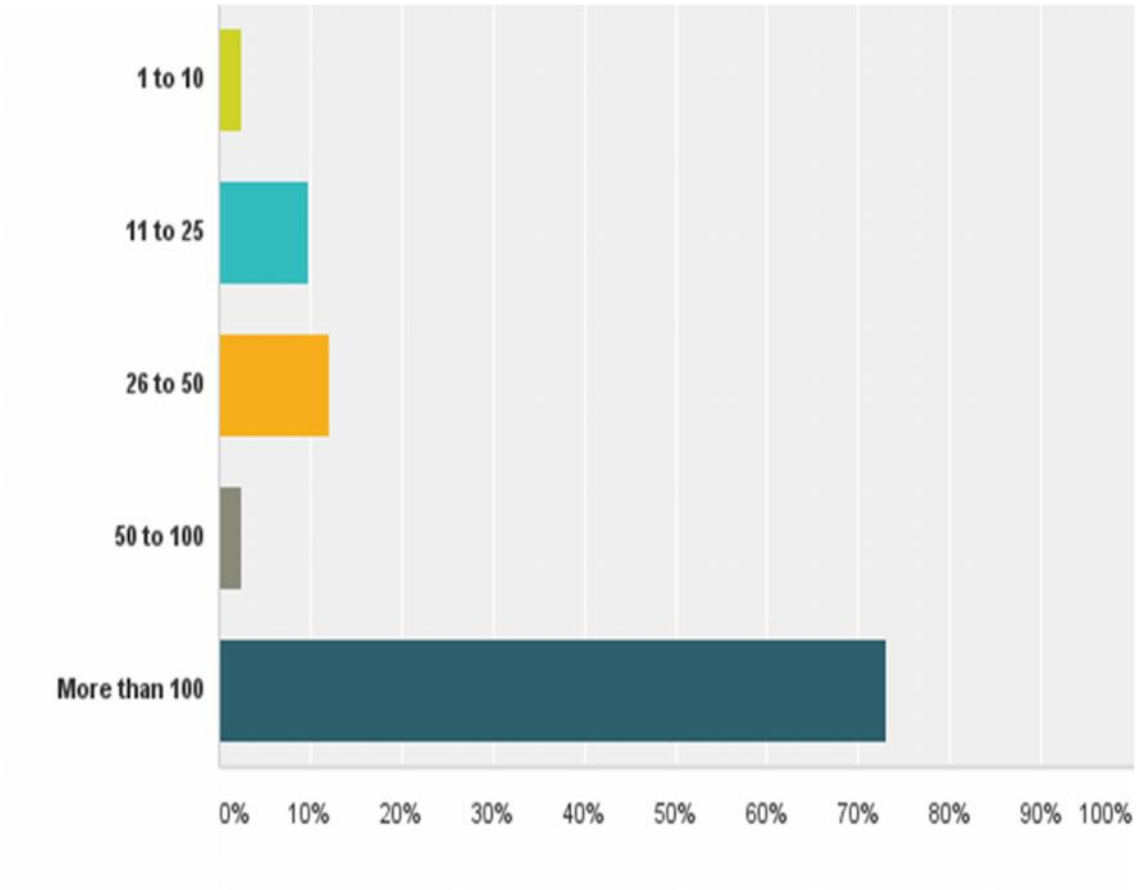
Complete Responses: 32

Q1: What is the name of your organization? Note that your organization's name will not be included in our report. All responses will remain anonymous. Names allow us to track who has responded.

Omitted to protect respondents' anonymity

Q2: Including full-time and part-time staff, how many employees does your organization have?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0



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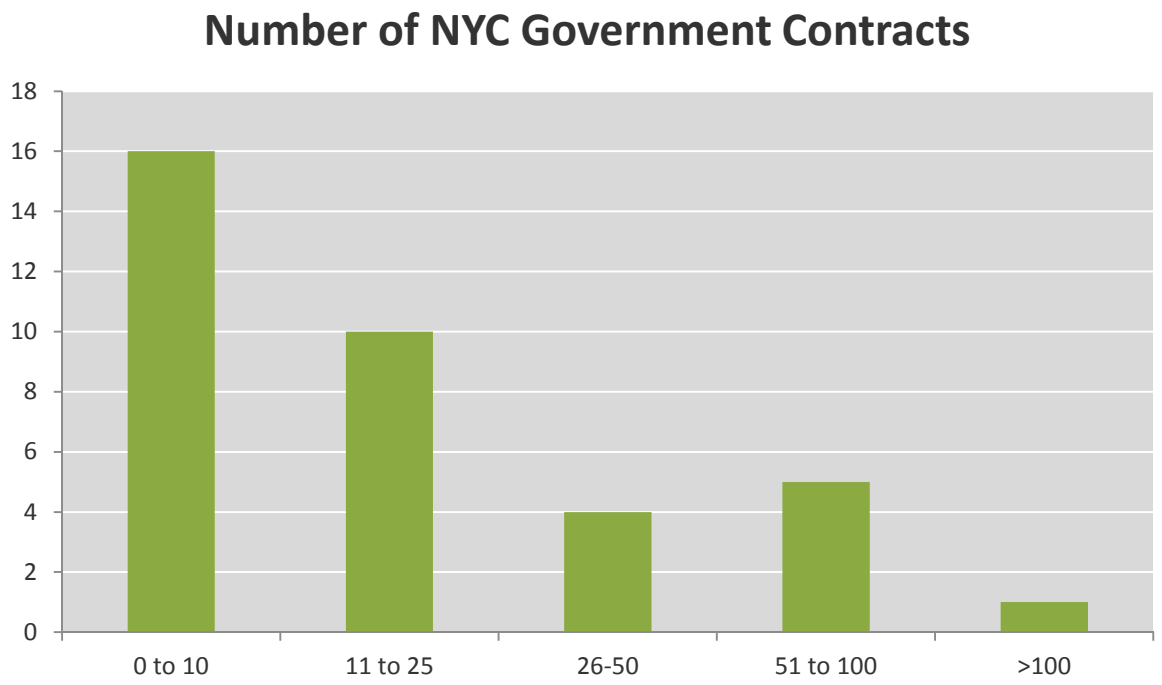
Q2: Including full-time and part-time staff, how many employees does your organization have?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
1 to 10	2.44%	1
11 to 25	9.76%	4
26 to 50	12.20%	5
50 to 100	2.44%	1
More than 100	73.17%	30
Total		41

Q3: How many contracts with NYC government does your organization have? Please provide a number.

Answered: 39 Skipped: 3 Other: 2



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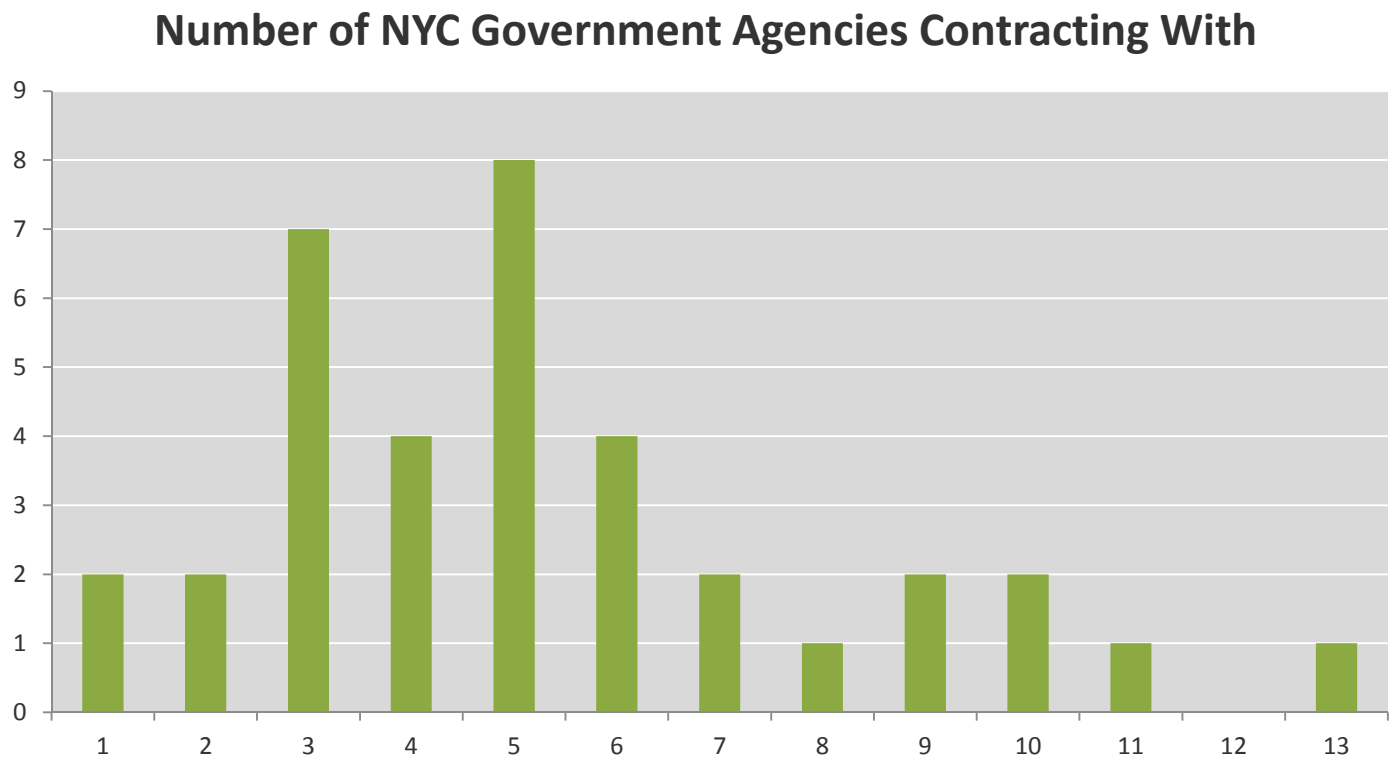
Q4: With how many NYC government agencies does your organization have contracts? Please provide a number.

Answered: 38 Skipped: 4 Other: 1



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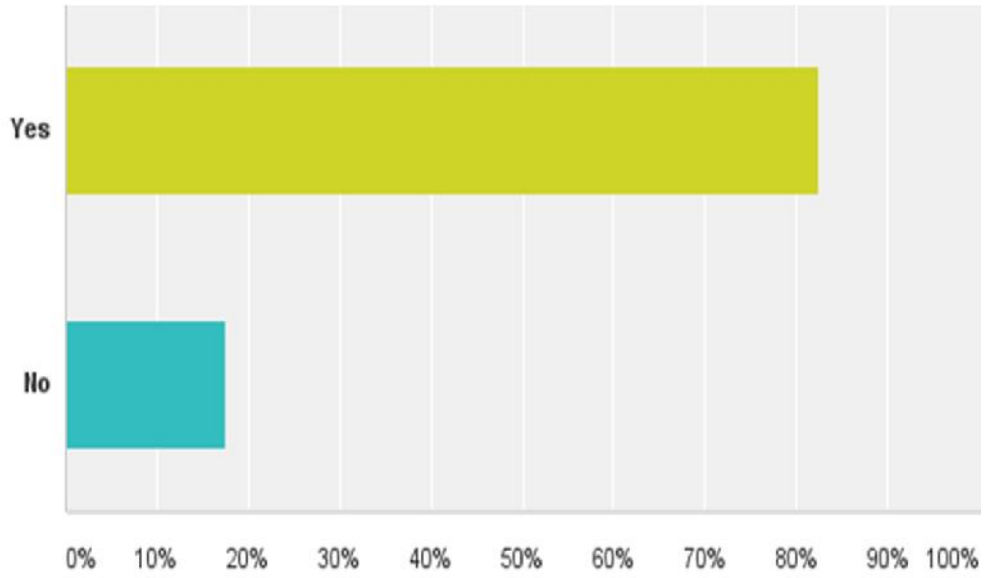
Q5: Does your organization have a dedicated proposal writer (either on staff or as a consultant)? "Dedicated" does not necessarily mean that this person works on proposals full-time. It just means that the person's primary duties include writing and/or managing the development of proposals (as opposed to providing limited input).

Answered: 40 Skipped: 1



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q5: Does your organization have a dedicated proposal writer (either on staff or as a consultant)? "Dedicated" does not necessarily mean that this person works on proposals full-time. It just means that the person's primary duties include writing and/or managing the development of proposals (as opposed to providing limited input).

Answered: 40 Skipped: 1

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	82.50%	33
No	17.50%	7
Total		40

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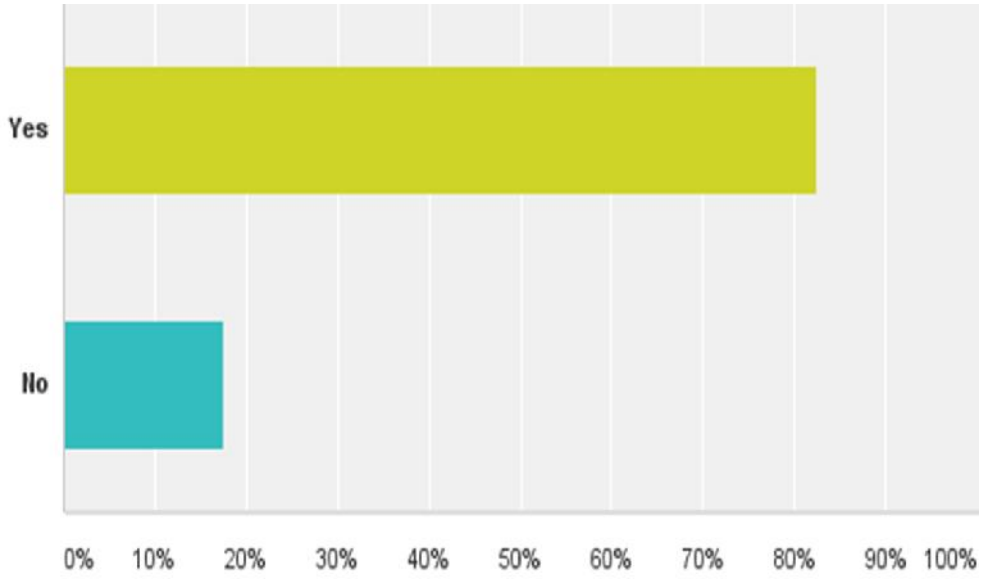
Q6: Does your organization have a dedicated grants/contracts manager?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 1



Powered by SurveyMonkey

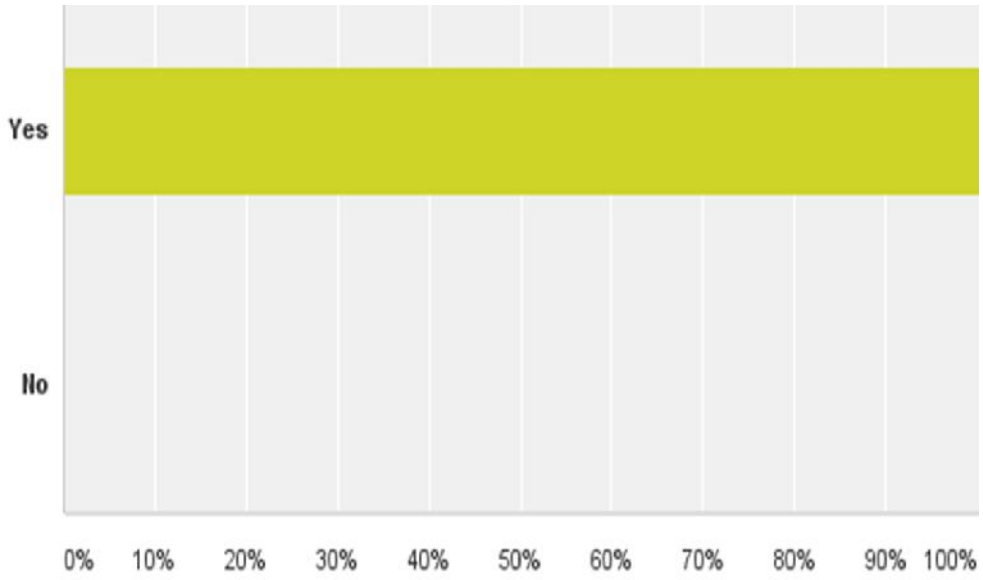
Q6: Does your organization have a dedicated grants/contracts manager?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 1

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	82.50%	33
No	17.50%	7
Total		40

Q7: Does your organization have an HHS Accelerator account?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0



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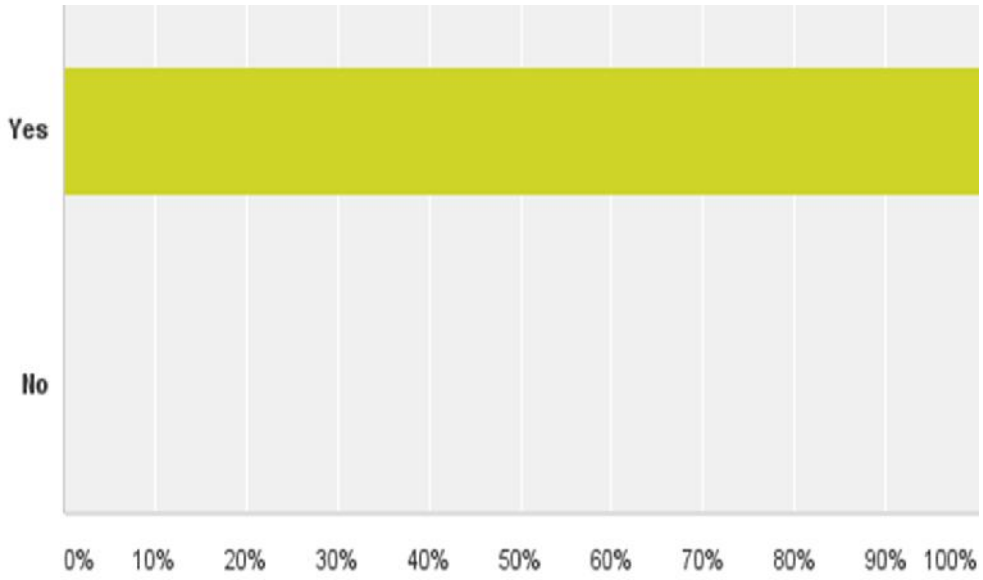
Q7: Does your organization have an HHS Accelerator account?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	41
No	0.00%	0
Total		41

Q8: Is your organization pre-qualified through HHS Accelerator?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0



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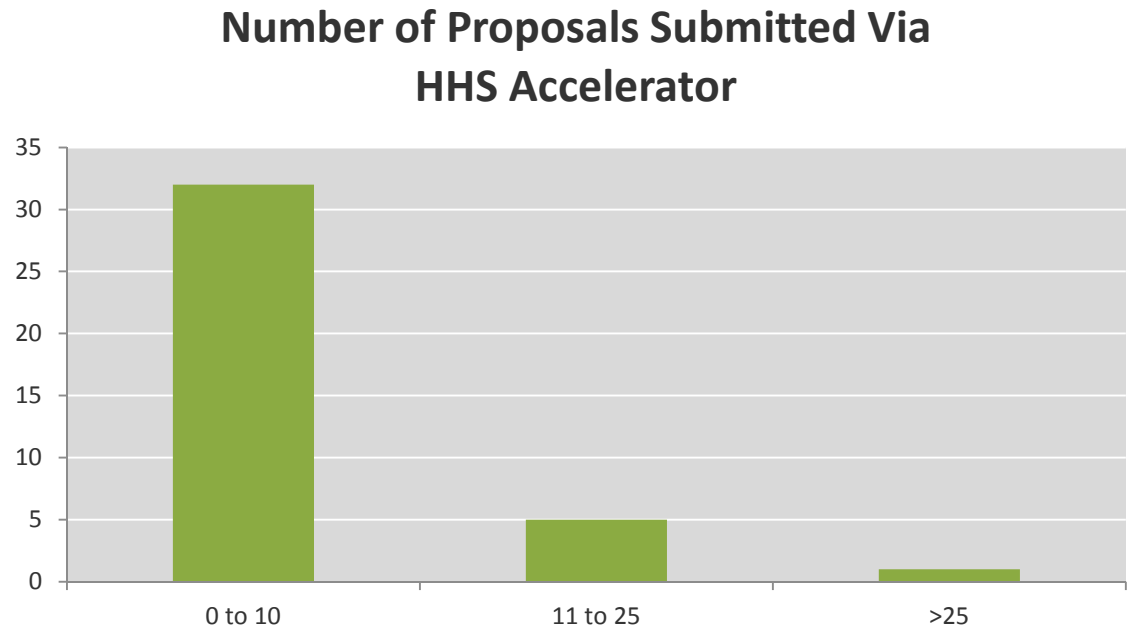
Q8: Is your organization pre-qualified through HHS Accelerator?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	41
No	0.00%	0
Total		41

Q9: How many proposals has your organization submitted through Accelerator?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 2 Other: 1



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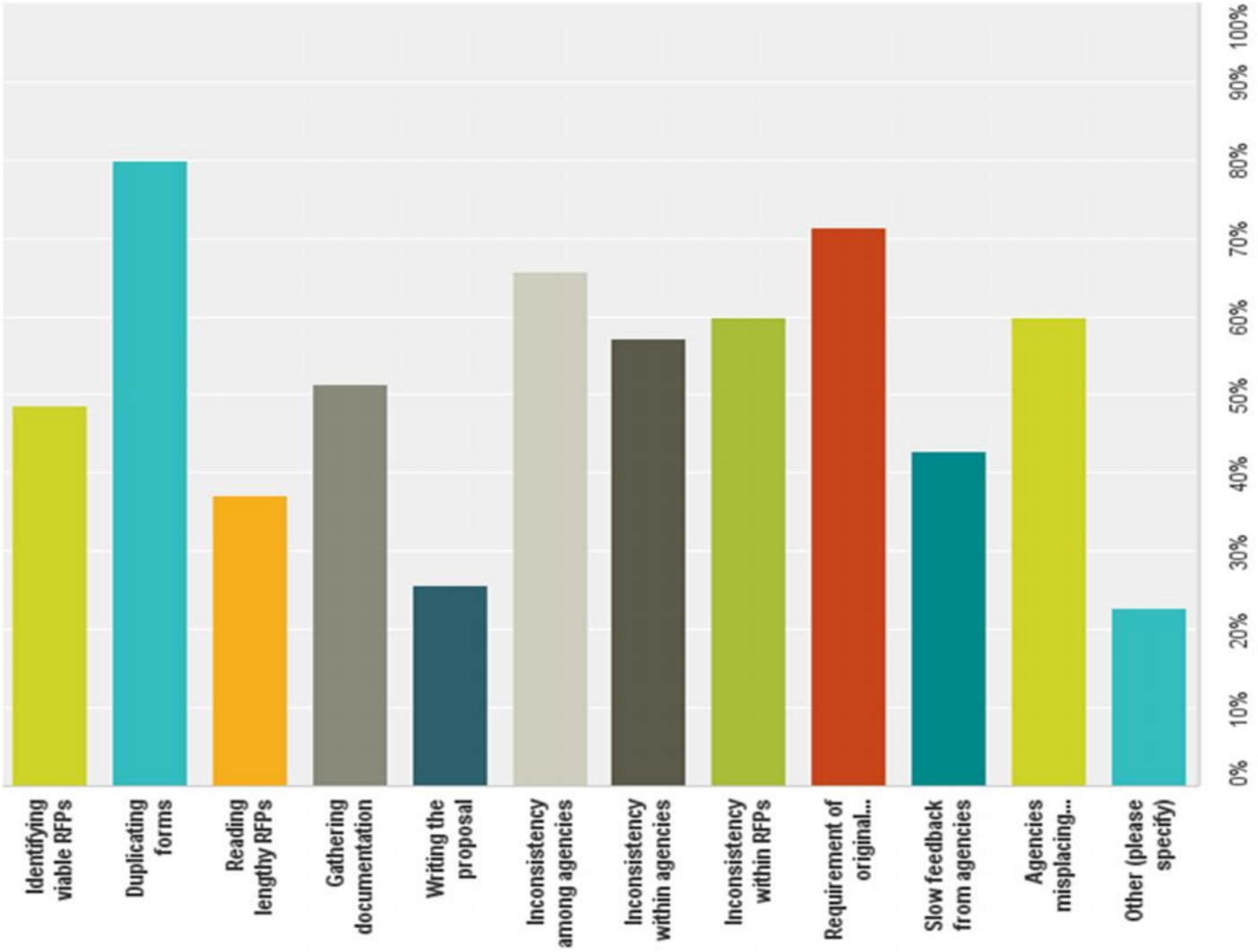
Q10: Which of the following issues were problematic for your organization before the launch of Accelerator? Check all that apply.

Answered: 35 Skipped: 6



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q10: Which of the following issues were problematic for your organization before the launch of Accelerator? Check all that apply.

Answered: 35 Skipped: 6

Answer Choices	Responses	
Identifying viable RFPs	48.57%	17
Duplicating forms	80.00%	28
Reading lengthy RFPs	37.14%	13
Gathering documentation	51.43%	18
Writing the proposal	25.71%	9
Inconsistency among agencies	65.71%	23
Inconsistency within agencies	57.14%	20
Inconsistency within RFPs	60.00%	21
Requirement of original documents	71.43%	25
Slow feedback from agencies	42.86%	15
Agencies misplacing documents	60.00%	21
Other (please specify)	22.86%	8
Total Respondents: 35		

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Q11: How much of a problem were the following issues BEFORE the launch of Accelerator?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 6

	Not a problem	A minor nuisance	A serious problem	A very serious problem	Total Respondents
Identifying viable RFPs	**29.41%** 10	**55.88%** 19	**11.76%** 4	**2.94%** 1	34
Duplicating forms	**5.88%** 2	**32.35%** 11	**50.00%** 17	**11.76%** 4	34
Reading lengthy RFPs	**38.24%** 13	**38.24%** 13	**20.59%** 7	**2.94%** 1	34
Gathering documentation	**28.57%** 10	**40.00%** 14	**22.86%** 8	**8.57%** 3	35
Writing the proposal	**57.58%** 19	**30.30%** 10	**9.09%** 3	**3.03%** 1	33
Inconsistency between agencies	**12.12%** 4	**36.36%** 12	**33.33%** 11	**21.21%** 7	33
Inconsistency within agencies	**18.18%** 6	**39.39%** 13	**27.27%** 9	**15.15%** 5	33
Inconsistency within RFPs	**9.68%** 3	**51.61%** 16	**25.81%** 8	**16.13%** 5	31
Requirement of original documents	**20.59%** 7	**32.35%** 11	**23.53%** 8	**23.53%** 8	34

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Q12: What was the single most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the pre-Accelerator SOLICITATION/PROPOSAL process? Please limit your response to ONE item.

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11

1. Requirement of original documents in multiple copies.
2. none
3. gathering and duplicating the same documents for all proposals
4. Finding viable RFPs and reading through them.
5. The endless addendum process that can be confusing, conflicting and fosters a frustrating proposal revision process.
6. gathering documents
7. Making multiple copies of large proposal packages for hard copy submissions.
8. duplicating forms. Packaging the proposals for funder submission
9. The process is not frustrating at all.
10. lack of meaningful Q & A. the info sessions were not helpful.
11. not receiving a completed listing of the documents required.
12. Having to submit the same forms several times
13. Gathering documentation and making multiple copies of it (like audited financials).
14. Lengthy/Unnecessary work
15. Duplicating and delivering large numbers of forms and proposal documents.

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Q12 cont.: What was the single most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the pre-Accelerator SOLICITATION/PROPOSAL process? Please limit your response to ONE item.

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11

16. Duplicating and delivering large numbers of forms and proposal documents.
17. Submission of documents already on file.
18. Inconsistencies between agencies and within RFPs themselves.
19. Duplicating documents (multiple proposal sets)
20. Providing original documents via in-person submission
21. Agencies requesting the same documents multiple times
22. Trying to get "pre-qualified"
23. Having to prepare originals and multiple copies of an entire proposal on 30% post-consumer recycled paper
24. Duplicating forms, packaging, mailing.
25. Receiving information about available RFPs
26. packaging materials for up to 50 submissions at a time (e.g. OST)
27. Submitting numerous copies
28. Multiple copies to be hand delivered
29. Gathering all of the pieces
30. When applying to the same RFP for more than one program location, we needed to provide duplicate documentation.
31. The redundancy in the process.

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Q13: What was the single most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the pre-Accelerator CONTRACTING process? Please limit your response to ONE item.

Answered: 27 Skipped: 14

1. Answering the RFP section by section.
2. resending documents
3. Lack of clear information/communication from the city agency
4. Gathering and submitting identical documentation o multiple funders.
5. Duplicative requests for verifying documents.
6. Multiple requests from within agencies for the same document.
7. The process is not frustrating at all.
8. the constant submission of documents that had been submitted before many times over.
9. the need to duplicate the submitting of documents
10. same as above, duplication of forms
11. Gathering documentation
12. Lengthy/Unnecessary work
13. None
14. Identifying payments.
15. Agencies misplacing documents, especially those with original signatures.

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Q13 cont.: What was the single most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the pre-Accelerator CONTRACTING process? Please limit your response to ONE item.

Answered: 27 Skipped: 14

16. Continuous and repeated requests for the same documents by multiple agencies for multiple contracts, including requests for original documents
17. Things expiring during the time it took agencies to review them
18. Repetitive paperwork
19. Agencies requesting the same documents multiple times
20. Trying to get agencies to contact me in a timely manner
21. Unclear guidance regarding the number of original documents required for contracts
22. conflicting information from different points of contact within agencies
23. Providing the same documentation to each agency
24. submitting numerous copies of signed original documents
25. Slow response times
26. The amount of paper wasted.
27. That the documents were not being pulled from there and we had to keep sending copies after uploading them.

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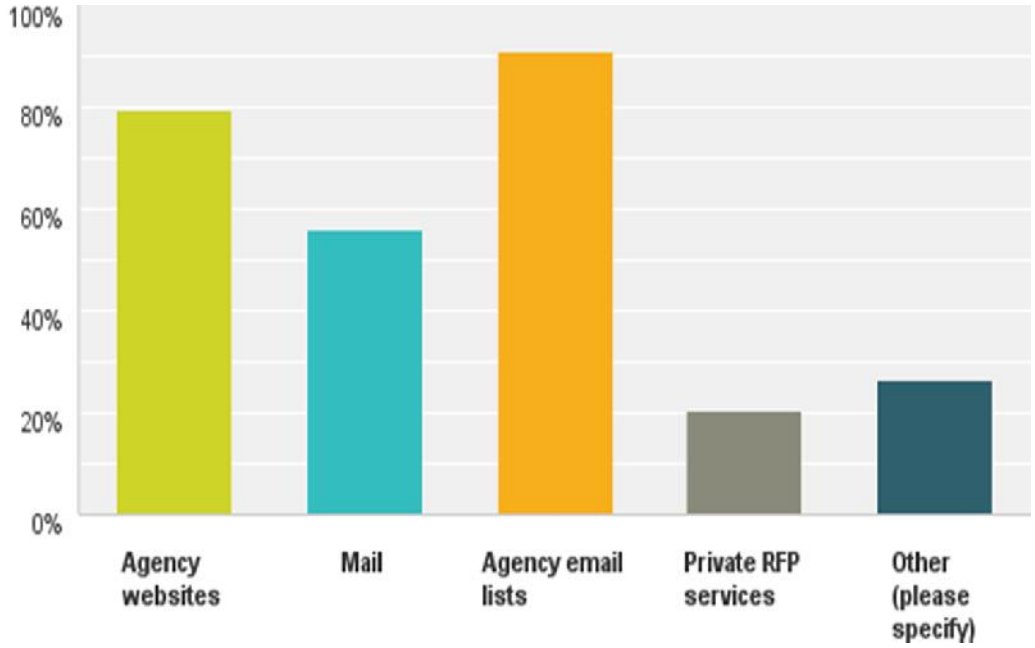
Q14: How did your organization find RFPs before the launch of Accelerator? Check all that apply.

Answered: 34 Skipped: 7



Powered by SurveyMonkey

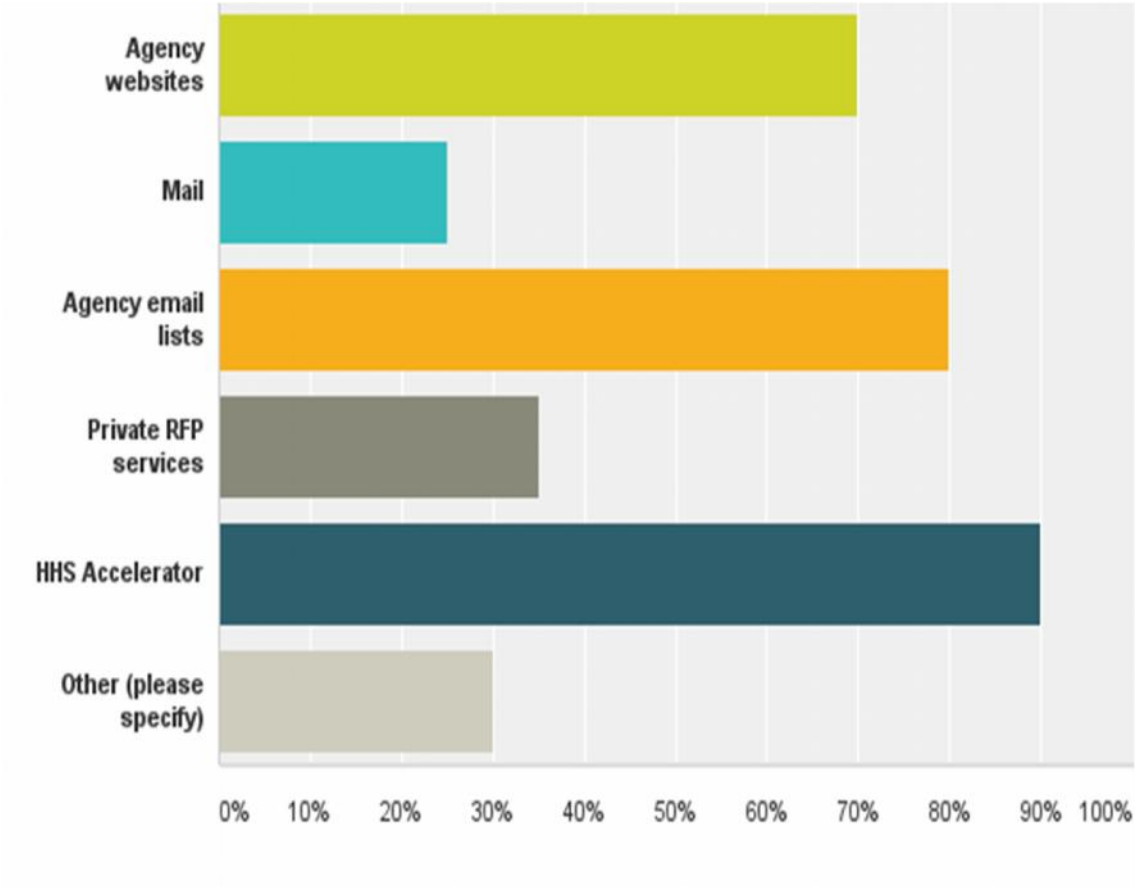
Q14: How did your organization find RFPs before the launch of Accelerator? Check all that apply.

Answered: 34 Skipped: 7

Answer Choices	Responses	
Agency websites	79.41%	27
Mail	55.88%	19
Agency email lists	91.18%	31
Private RFP services	20.59%	7
Other (please specify)	26.47%	9
Total Respondents: 34		

Q15: How does your organization find RFPs now? Check all that apply.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 21



Powered by SurveyMonkey

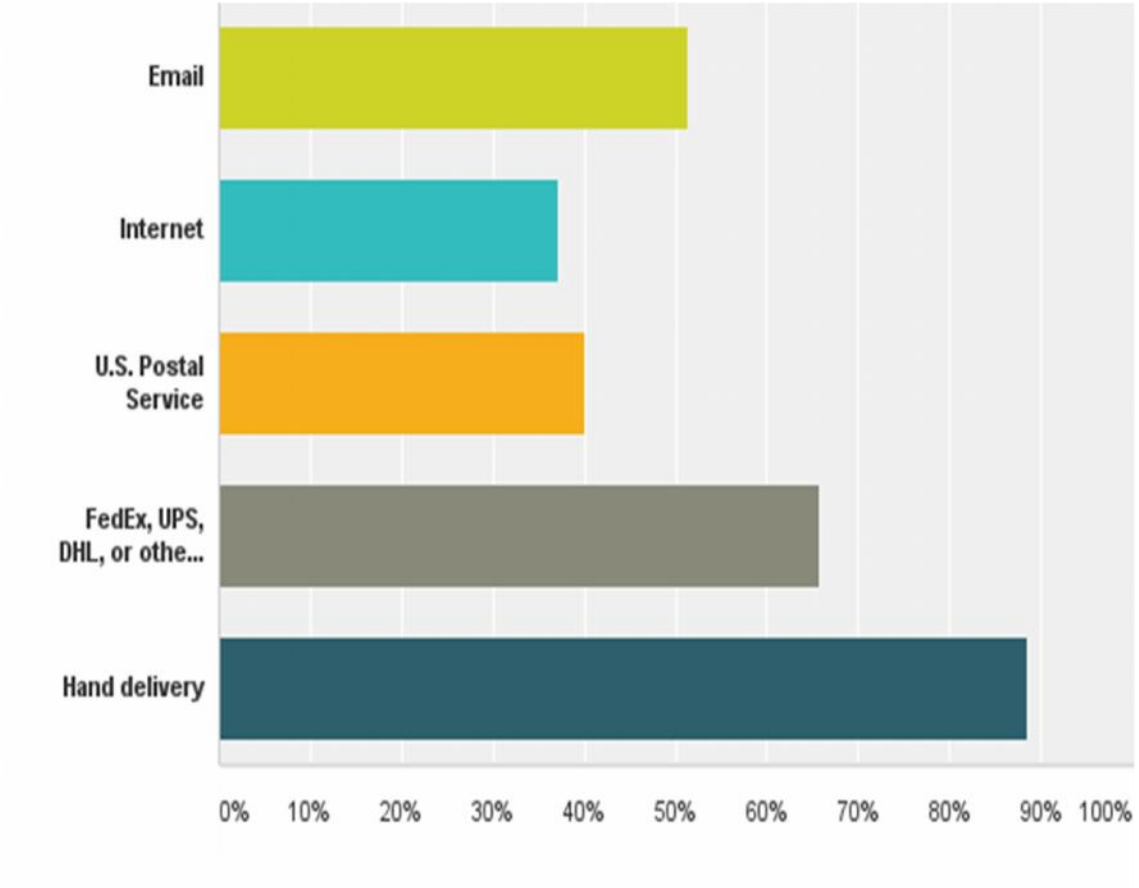
Q15: How does your organization find RFPs now? Check all that apply.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 21

Answer Choices	Responses	
Agency websites	70.00%	14
Mail	25.00%	5
Agency email lists	80.00%	16
Private RFP services	35.00%	7
HHS Accelerator	90.00%	18
Other (please specify)	30.00%	6
Total Respondents: 20		

Q16: How did your organization submit proposals before the launch of Accelerator? Check all that apply.

Answered: 35 Skipped: 6



Powered by SurveyMonkey

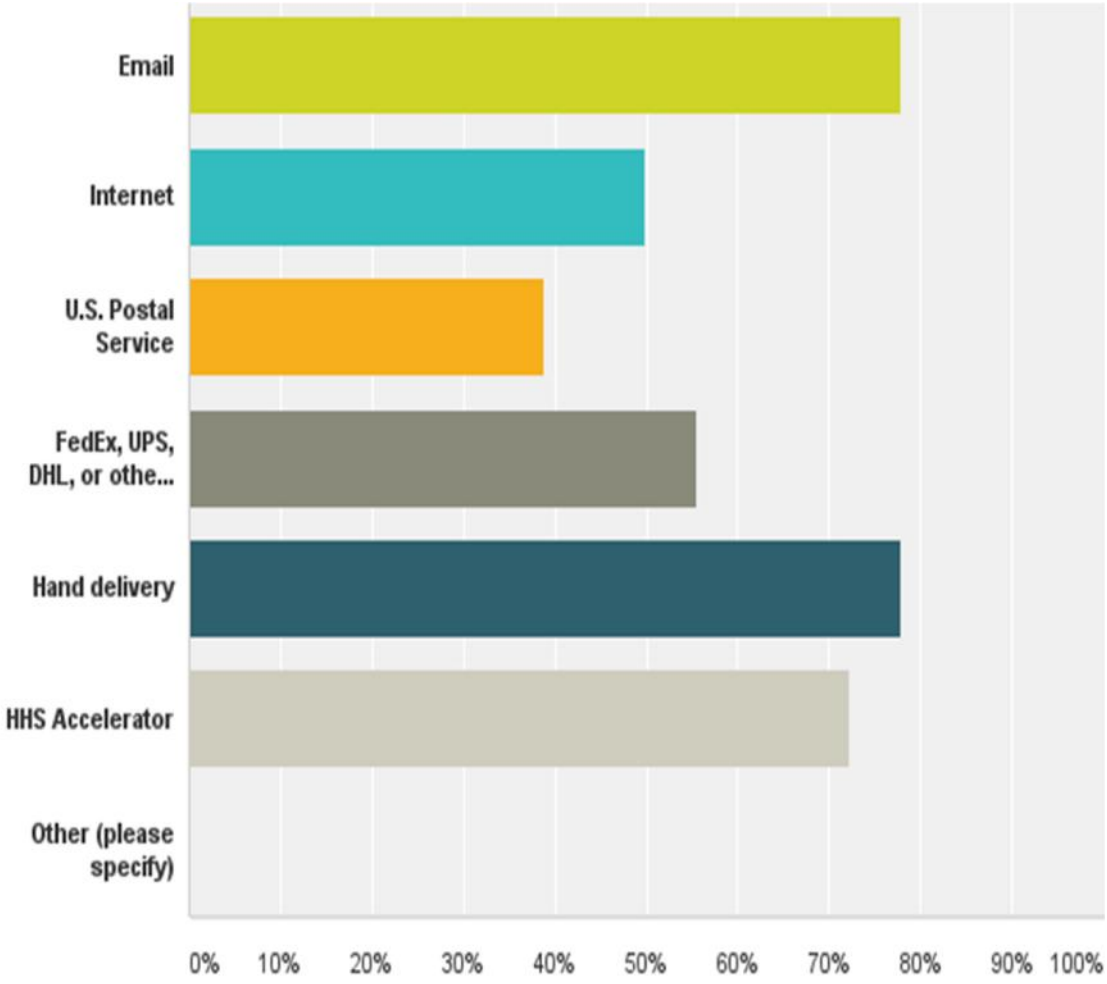
Q16: How did your organization submit proposals before the launch of Accelerator? Check all that apply.

Answered: 35 Skipped: 6

Answer Choices	Responses	
Email	51.43%	18
Internet	37.14%	13
U.S. Postal Service	40.00%	14
FedEx, UPS, DHL, or other private express shipping service	65.71%	23
Hand delivery	88.57%	31
Total Respondents: 35		

Q17: How does your organization submit proposals now? Check all that apply.

Answered: 18 Skipped: 23



Powered by SurveyMonkey

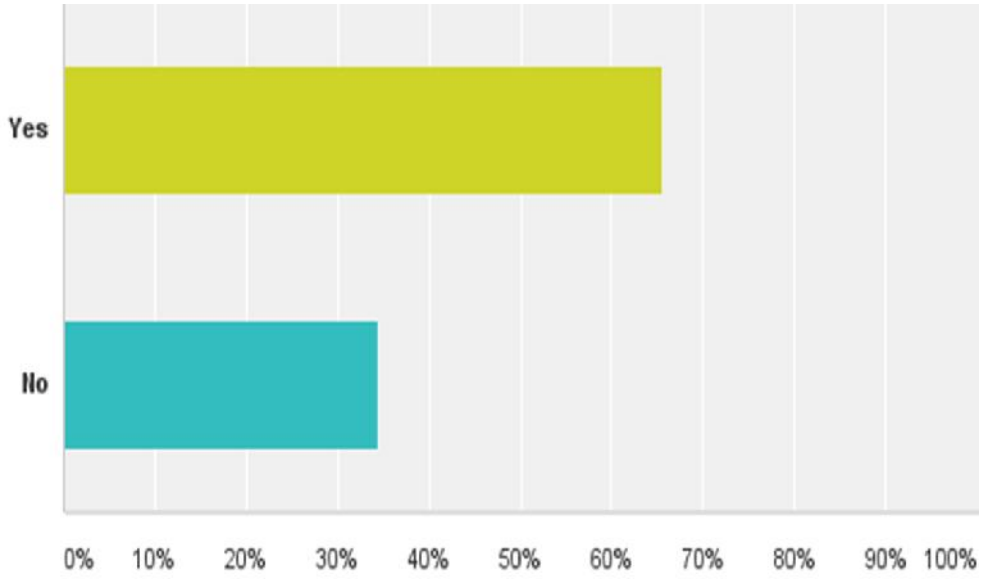
Q17: How does your organization submit proposals now? Check all that apply.

Answered: 18 Skipped: 23

Answer Choices	Responses	
Email	77.78%	14
Internet	50.00%	9
U.S. Postal Service	38.89%	7
FedEx, UPS, DHL, or other private express shipping service	55.56%	10
Hand delivery	77.78%	14
HHS Accelerator	72.22%	13
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 18		

Q18: Are all of the NYC human services agencies with which you contract using Accelerator?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 9



Powered by SurveyMonkey

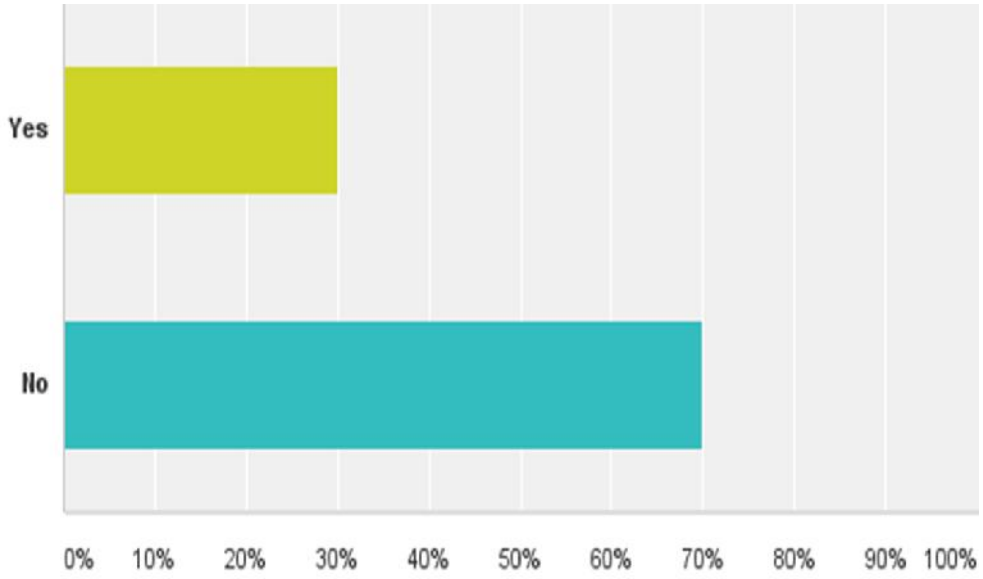
Q18: Are all of the NYC human services agencies with which you contract using Accelerator?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 9

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	65.63%	21
No	34.38%	11
Total		32

Q19: Are any of the agencies you contract with imposing their own additional requirements on the proposal process? If so, please give examples.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 21



Powered by SurveyMonkey

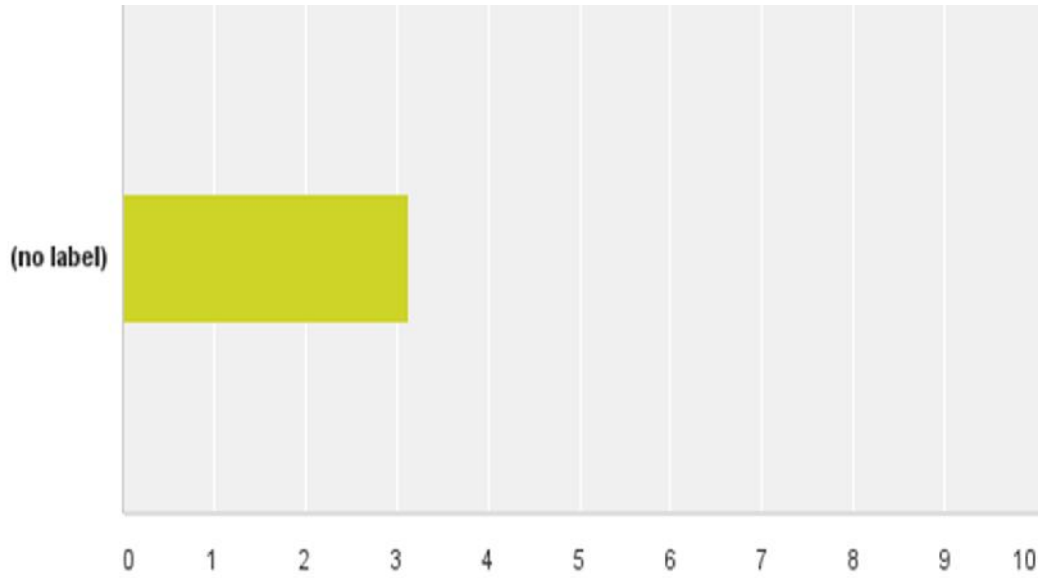
Q19: Are any of the agencies you contract with imposing their own additional requirements on the proposal process? If so, please give examples.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 21

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	30.00%	6
No	70.00%	14
Total		20

Q20: How easy was the Accelerator pre-qualification process?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 10



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Q20: How easy was the Accelerator pre-qualification process?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 10

	Very difficult	Difficult	Neither easy nor difficult	Easy	Very easy	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00% 0	12.90% 4	64.52% 20	19.35% 6	3.23% 1	0.00% 0	31	3.13

Q21: From starting the application to receiving approval, how long did the pre-qualification process take your organization?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 18

#	Responses	Date
1	It took a while to finish different section. Actual time to put in the info was approximately 3 weeks.	4/8/2015 4:48 PM
2	It's been a while since that happened. It could have only taken 2 or 3 days at the most.	2/11/2015 3:14 PM
3	a number of weeks	1/30/2015 5:40 PM
4	don't recall	1/20/2015 10:12 AM
5	Less than an hour.	1/15/2015 2:06 PM
6	not very long. the process was long, but relatively straightforward.	1/13/2015 6:23 PM
7	a day	1/13/2015 12:27 PM
8	several weeks	1/13/2015 11:45 AM
9	A few days	1/13/2015 11:03 AM
10	A few days	1/9/2015 4:58 PM
11	2 months	1/9/2015 11:30 AM
12	a few days	1/8/2015 2:11 PM
13	Not long.	1/5/2015 11:22 AM
14	At least 6 months -- once we completed the application, the approval came shortly afterward, so the major delay was mostly on our part since the application process was quite extensive.	12/29/2014 11:35 AM
15	Don't recall	12/22/2014 3:58 PM
16	A few weeks tops, mostly a few days -but we were a test case when rollout began	12/21/2014 2:54 PM
17	2 months	12/17/2014 1:13 PM
18	1-2 months	12/16/2014 10:47 AM
19	Approximately 3 months	12/15/2014 4:27 PM
20	2 months	12/12/2014 6:59 PM
21	a while, we had to appeal	12/12/2014 6:32 PM
22	1 month	12/12/2014 1:54 PM
23	24 hours	12/11/2014 2:12 PM

Q21 cont.: From starting the application to receiving approval, how long did the pre-qualification process take your organization?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 18

Q22: How often do you log into Accelerator?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 13

1. A couple times a week at least, and whenever there is an alert email related to our services.
2. not very often
3. Personally, not often. But I have finance staff that use it several time a month.
4. infrequently -- maybe once a month or less. E-mails about solicitations provide similar information. Log in is mostly to update information.
5. Weekly
6. very often
7. At least 2 or 3 times daily.
8. not very often
9. weekly
10. once a week
11. Every few days
12. once per month
13. a few times per week
14. At lease once a week.

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Q22 cont.: How often do you log into Accelerator?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 13

15. Daily
16. Don't know -- others in the organization log on
17. Personally never, but my staff is on every week, often every day
18. At least weekly, but often more often when we received email notifications etc.
19. It varies. When there is an RFP we may be interested in and when we receive an email that a document needs to be updated.
20. once per month
21. Almost every day
22. weekly
23. when I'm actively engaged in the submission of a proposal or when I receive relevant notifications
24. Weekly
25. occasionally, usually when I get a notification
26. frequently
27. weekly, sometimes daily
28. for awhile once a week to check paperwork was accepted.

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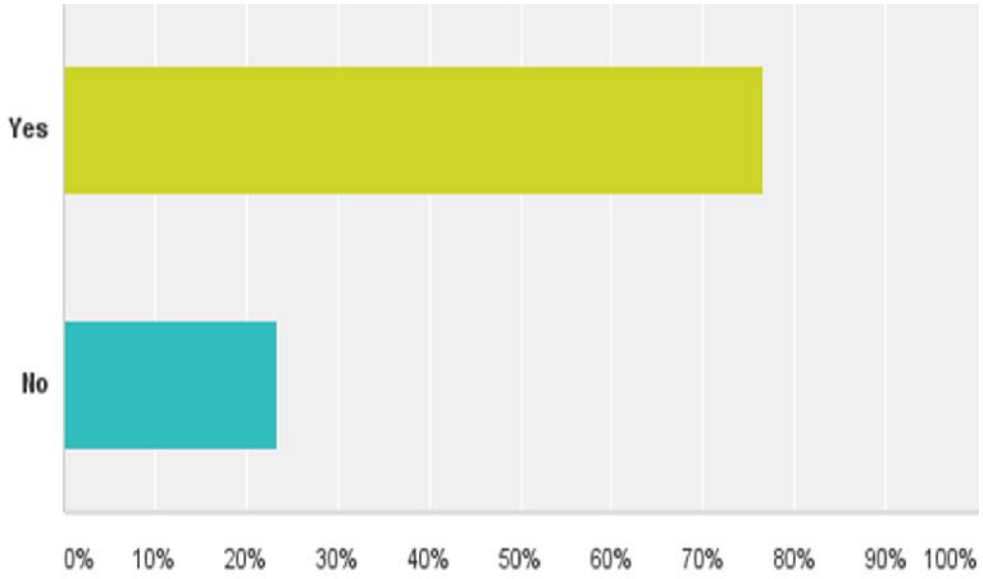
Q23: Has Accelerator reduced any administrative burdens related to the procurement and contracting process?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11



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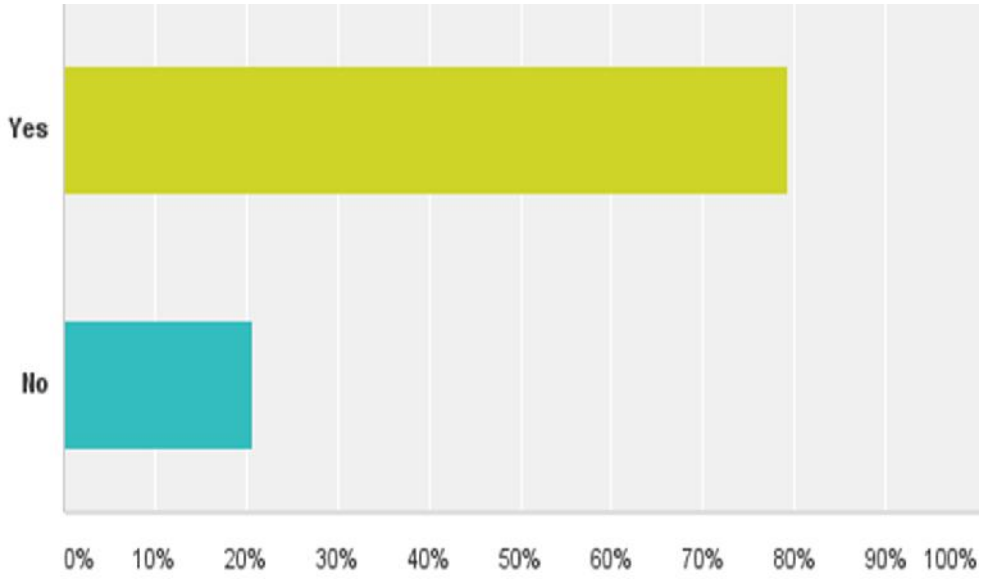
Q23: Has Accelerator reduced any administrative burdens related to the procurement and contracting process?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	76.67%	23
No	23.33%	7
Total		30

Q24: Has Accelerator alleviated the most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the old solicitation/proposal process?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12



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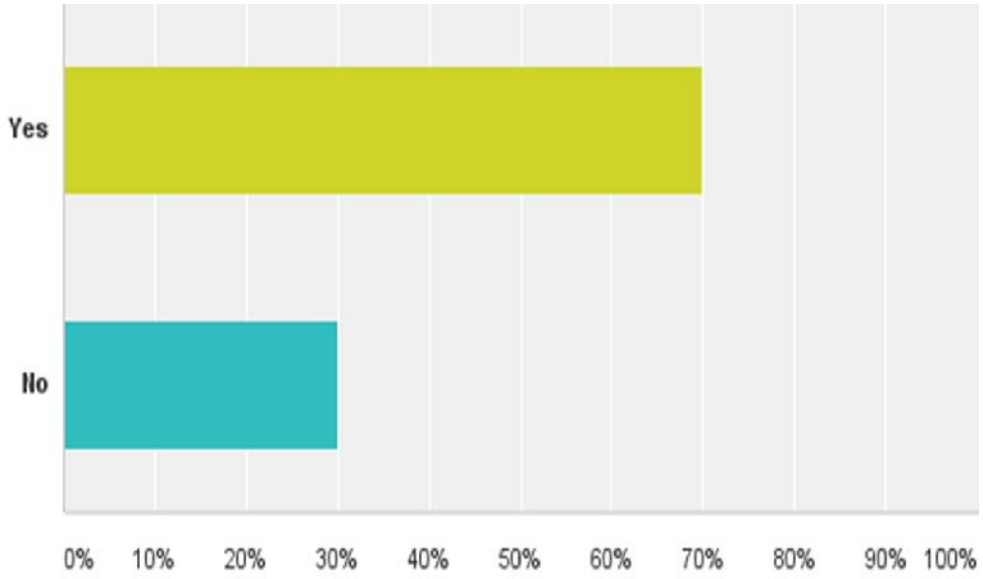
Q24: Has Accelerator alleviated the most time-consuming and/or frustrating aspect of the old solicitation/proposal process?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	79.31%	23
No	20.69%	6
Total		29

Q25: Has Accelerator reduced the overall amount of time that your organization spends responding to RFPs?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11



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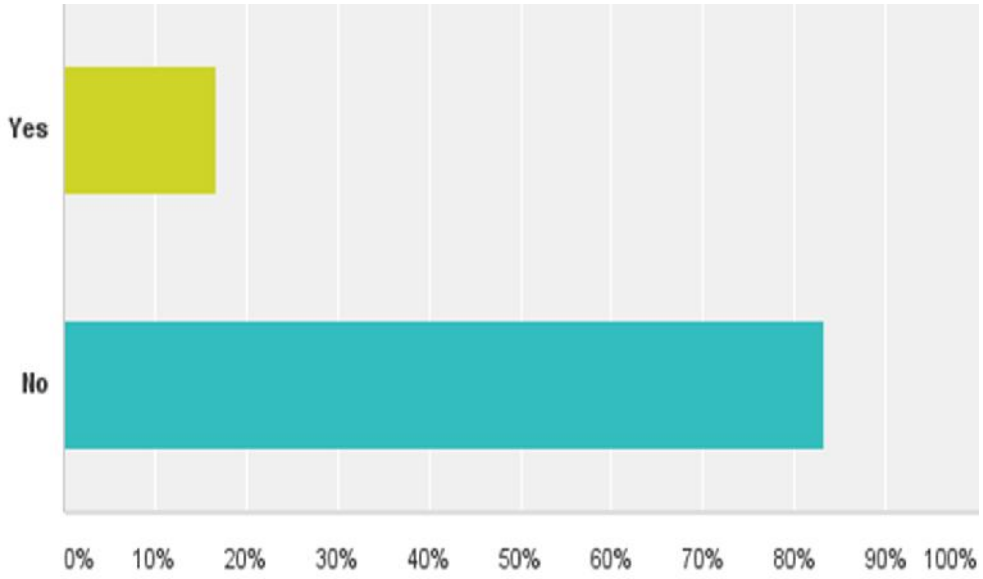
Q25: Has Accelerator reduced the overall amount of time that your organization spends responding to RFPs?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	70.00%	21
No	30.00%	9
Total		30

Q26: Has Accelerator reduced the number of your staff members (or consultants) involved in the proposal process?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11



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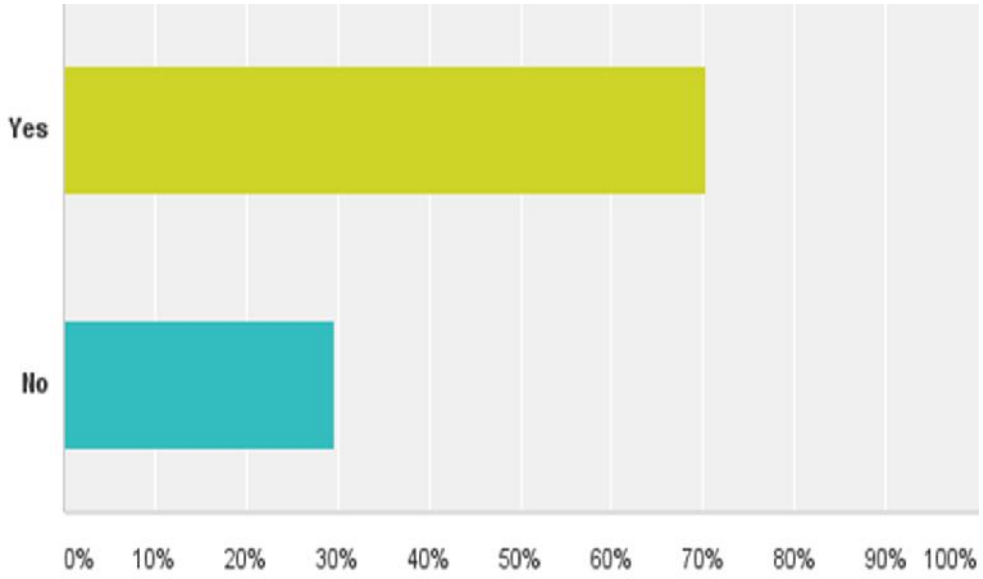
Q26: Has Accelerator reduced the number of your staff members (or consultants) involved in the proposal process?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	16.67%	5
No	83.33%	25
Total		30

Q27: Are RFPs easier to understand with Accelerator in place?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 14



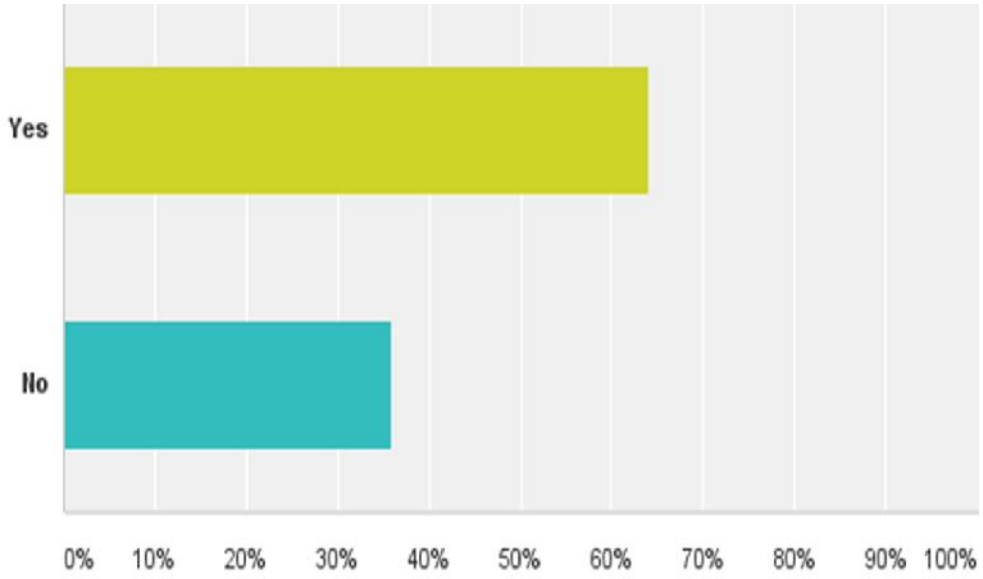
Q27: Are RFPs easier to understand with Accelerator in place?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 14

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	70.37%	19
No	29.63%	8
Total		27

Q28: Are RFPs shorter now that Accelerator is in place?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 16



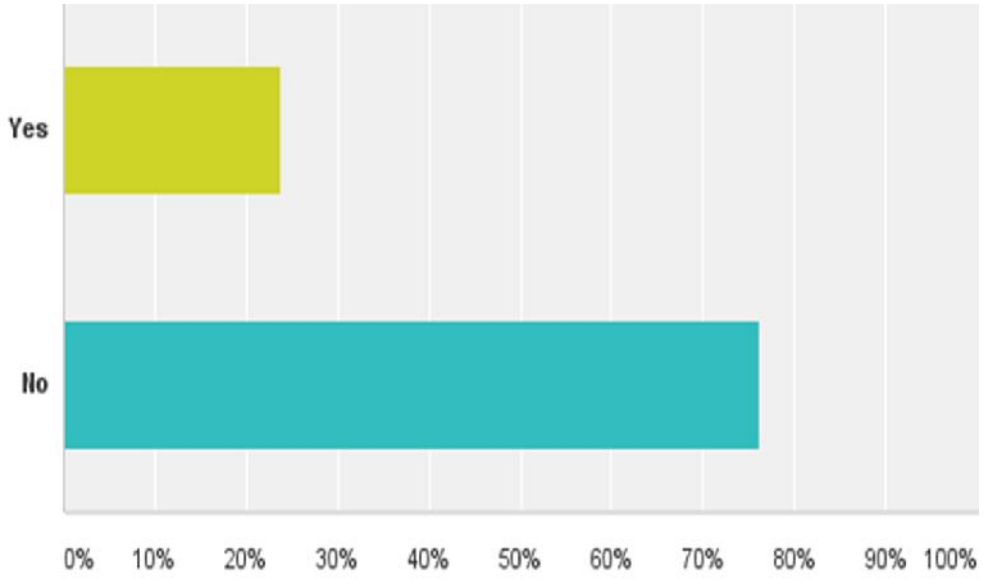
Q28: Are RFPs shorter now that Accelerator is in place?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 16

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	64.00%	16
No	36.00%	9
Total		25

Q29: Are there questions or requirements in RFPs that you have already answered in the Business Application or Service Application?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 20



Q29: Are there questions or requirements in RFPs that you have already answered in the Business Application or Service Application?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 20

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	23.81%	5
No	76.19%	16
Total		21

Q30: If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, please give examples of redundancies.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 37

1. Since our contracts are outside of Accelerator, everything RFPs request are a duplication of what may already be in Accelerator
2. Too many to list
3. Giving agency background relating to specific RFP.
4. There continues to be some overlap win the areas of organizational capability (nonprofit best practices) and in discussion of staffing.

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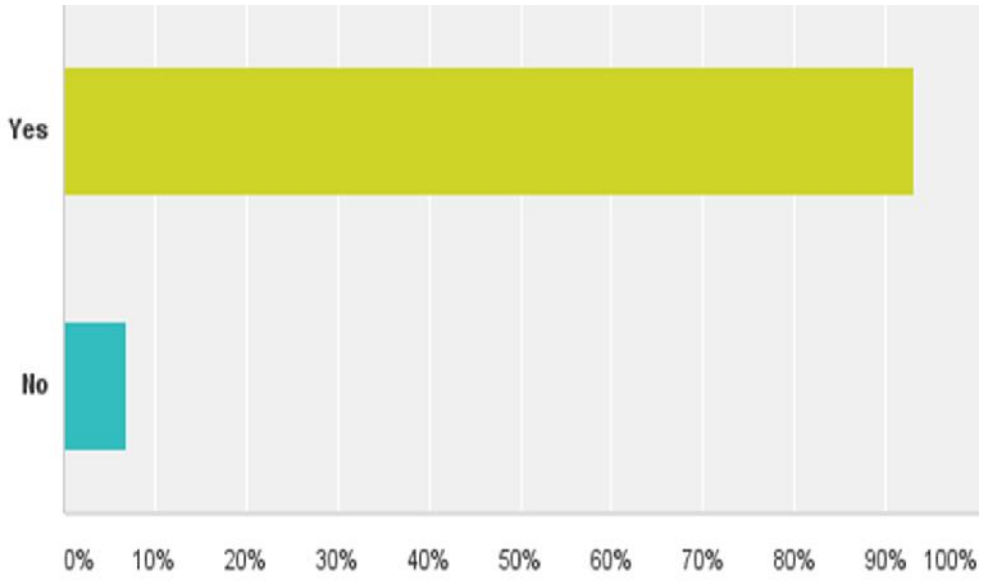
Q31: Is it easier to identify and monitor relevant RFPs with Accelerator in place?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12



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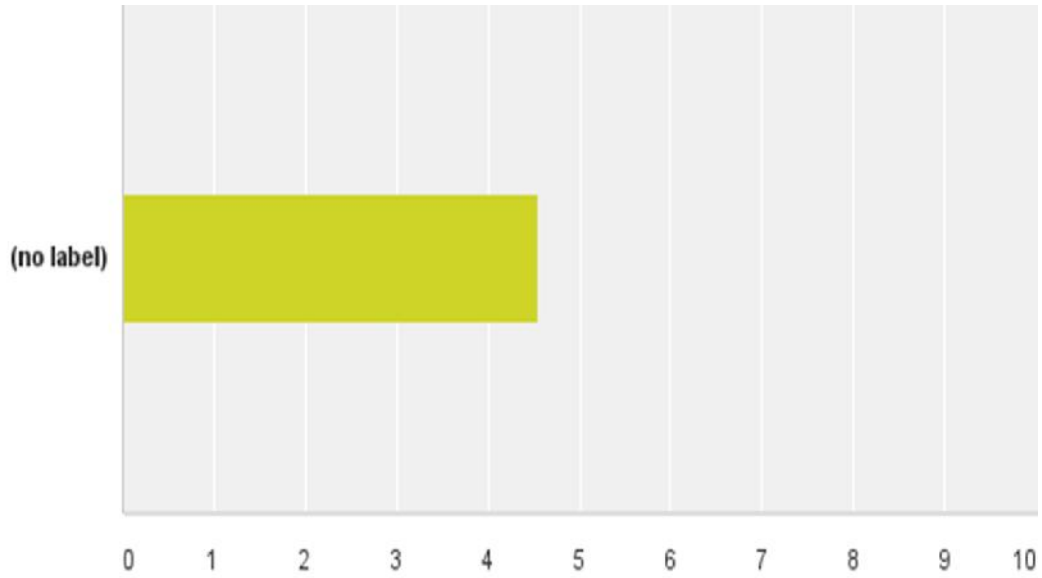
Q31: Is it easier to identify and monitor relevant RFPs with Accelerator in place?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	93.10%	27
No	6.90%	2
Total		29

Q32: How satisfied are you with the technical support for Accelerator?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 10



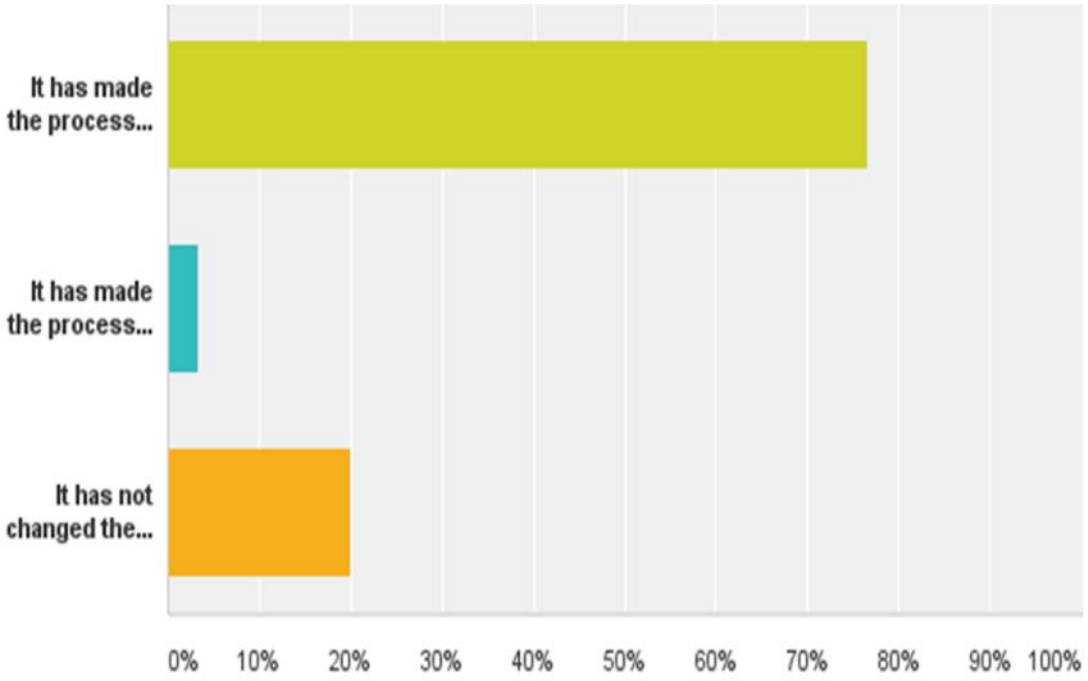
Q32: How satisfied are you with the technical support for Accelerator?

Answered: 31 Skipped: 10

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
(no label)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.13% 5	19.35% 6	58.06% 18	6.45% 2	31	4.55

Q34: Overall, how has Accelerator affected the efficiency of the NYC solicitation/RFP process? Please choose one answer and use the comment box to list the changes (e.g., easier identification of solicitations, reduction in paperwork, reduction in production time, reduction in duplication).

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11



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Q34: Overall, how has Accelerator affected the efficiency of the NYC solicitation/RFP process? Please choose one answer and use the comment box to list the changes (e.g., easier identification of solicitations, reduction in paperwork, reduction in production time, reduction in duplication).

Answered: 30 Skipped: 11

Answer Choices	Responses	
It has made the process MORE efficient.	76.67%	23
It has made the process LESS efficient.	3.33%	1
It has not changed the efficiency of the process.	20.00%	6
Total		30

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Q33: What is the most helpful feature of Accelerator? Please identify only ONE feature.

Answered: 24 Skipped: 17

1. Documents shared among multiple agencies. I.E. Certificate of No Change, Audit Report, List of Board of Directors.
2. You only have to gather documents once. With multiple contracts you end up sending documents over and over.
3. Reducing the paper back and forth and keeping it updated. If our agencies used it, it would be helpful.
4. document vault
5. Procurements
6. The technical support. The HHS Accelerator team is outstanding. You call or email and you get an answer in 5 or 10 minutes. I take my hat off to Rien Murray and the others!
7. up loading documents
8. Quick access to RFP's
9. The document vault
10. Ease of information
11. Alleviates the need to resubmit paperwork that is now in our document vault.
12. Getting feedback quickly.

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Q33 cont.: What is the most helpful feature of Accelerator? Please identify only ONE feature.

Answered: 24 Skipped: 17

13. The online submission for RFPs.
14. Notices of RFPs of potential interest
15. Tickler for the expiration of credentialing documents
16. Identification of relevant RPFs
17. the automatic emails that state that RFP's were released
18. Being able to check the status of a proposal that's been submitted
19. that multiple staff members can upload documents as they are ready - this is great for organizations with a team of members contributing
20. One single and paperless RFP submissions
21. Online proposal submission
22. document vault
23. Elegant and user-friendly design (especially compared to the State site)
24. The electronic submission process.

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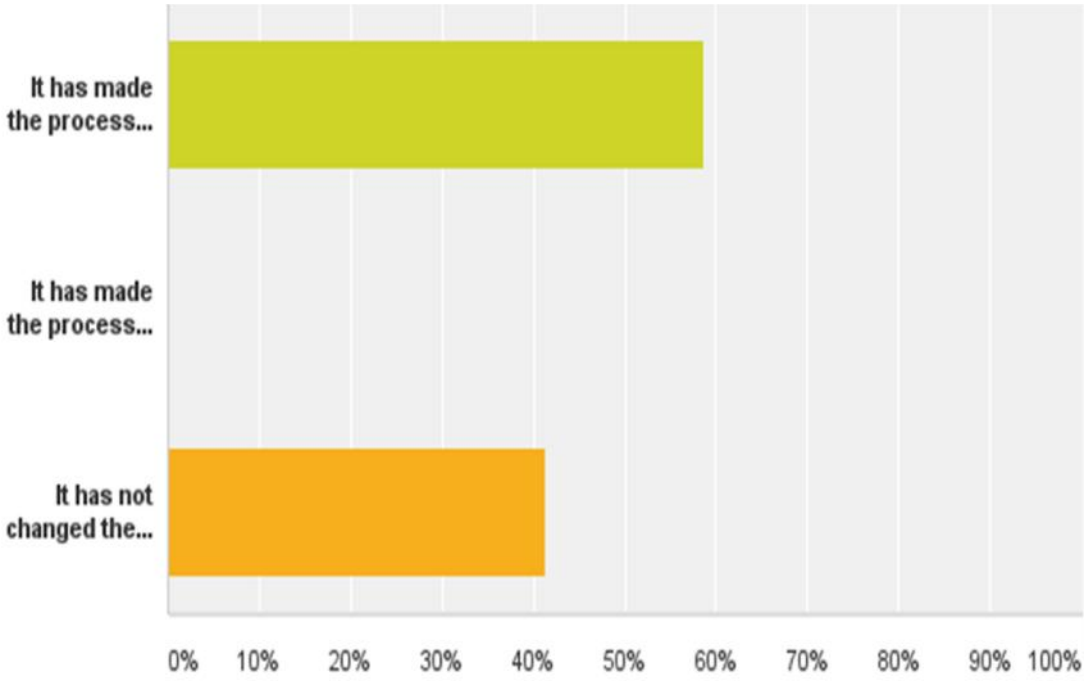
Q35: Overall, how has Accelerator affected the efficiency of the contracting process? Please choose one answer and use the comment box to discuss the changes (e.g., reduced inconsistency, shorter negotiation time, reduced paperwork).

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12



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Q35: Overall, how has Accelerator affected the efficiency of the contracting process? Please choose one answer and use the comment box to discuss the changes (e.g., reduced inconsistency, shorter negotiation time, reduced paperwork).

Answered: 29 Skipped: 12

Answer Choices	Responses	
It has made the process MORE efficient.	58.62%	17
It has made the process LESS efficient.	0.00%	0
It has not changed the efficiency of the process.	41.38%	12
Total		29

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Q36: What three adjectives would you use to describe the procurement process BEFORE Accelerator? Please use only three words.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 22

1. Burdensome, lengthy, and redundant.
2. cumbersome bureaucratic redundant
3. painstaking, clumsy, frustrating
4. frustrating, stressful, complicated
5. Filled with paper.
6. frustrating, burdensome, cumbersome
7. time consuming
8. inefficient inefficient inefficient
9. lengthy annoying harder
10. Duplicative. Inefficient. Time consuming.
11. Burdensome, lengthy, time consuming
12. Convoluted, repetitious, burdensome
13. Frustrating, duplicative, burdensome
14. Time-consuming; burdensome; tedious
15. inefficient, unfair, old-fashioned
16. Dated duplicative slow
17. tedious, duplicative, red-tape-filled
18. time-consuming, document-heavy
19. burdensome, redundant, inefficient

Q37: What three adjectives would you use to describe the procurement process now that Accelerator is in place?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 25

1. Concise, efficient, convenient.
2. efficient
3. efficient, consistent, user-friendly
4. Much less paper.
5. easier efficient less time consuming
6. shorter efficient easier
7. Faster. More efficient. User-friendly.
8. Streamlined, helpful, proactive
9. Logical, organized, transparent
10. Streamlined, less burdensome, less duplicative
11. Time-consuming; burdensome; tedious
12. efficient, logical, wonderful
13. efficient, fair, state-of-the-art
14. Accessible modern simple
15. efficient, easy, streamlined
16. streamlined, efficient, faster

Q38: What would you change about Accelerator?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 24

1. Better management system in Document Vault. Now there are too many documents because of the required documents in Financial portion. And most of them are only needed as one-time. I suggest an Archive folder for documents related to submitted & finalized RFP and previous fiscal year budgetary/claim related documents.
2. Nothing
3. A function/tab where funder alerts CBO of why they were not selected for funding
4. I would clone it and replace the state's Grants Gateway process. The Accelerator is very efficient in its own way; it's easy to track what has been submitted and when.
5. Ensure that all City funders use it to the same extent
6. nothing; it's great
7. I would add more assistance, particularly help desk staff
8. None.

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Q38 cont.: What would you change about Accelerator?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 24

9. I think the next step for the HHS system is to have agencies agree on a streamlined contracting process and/or at least using the same contracting forms. If there would be any way to use electronic signatures for even some of the documents, that would also be a tremendous help.
10. The Accelerator system should apply to ALL contracts (including discretionary contracts) and ALL documents. For example, we are still asked to provide documents such as the Board resolution authorizing the Executive Director to sign contracts. That should only be requested once, for all City contracts. Some agencies even require a new resolution for every new contract, which is absurd. Finally, it isn't clear why we keep getting requests for original documents -- PDFs should be sufficient.
11. Give Accelerator more power to enforce against agency practices that defeat its purposes
12. Make it more intuitive

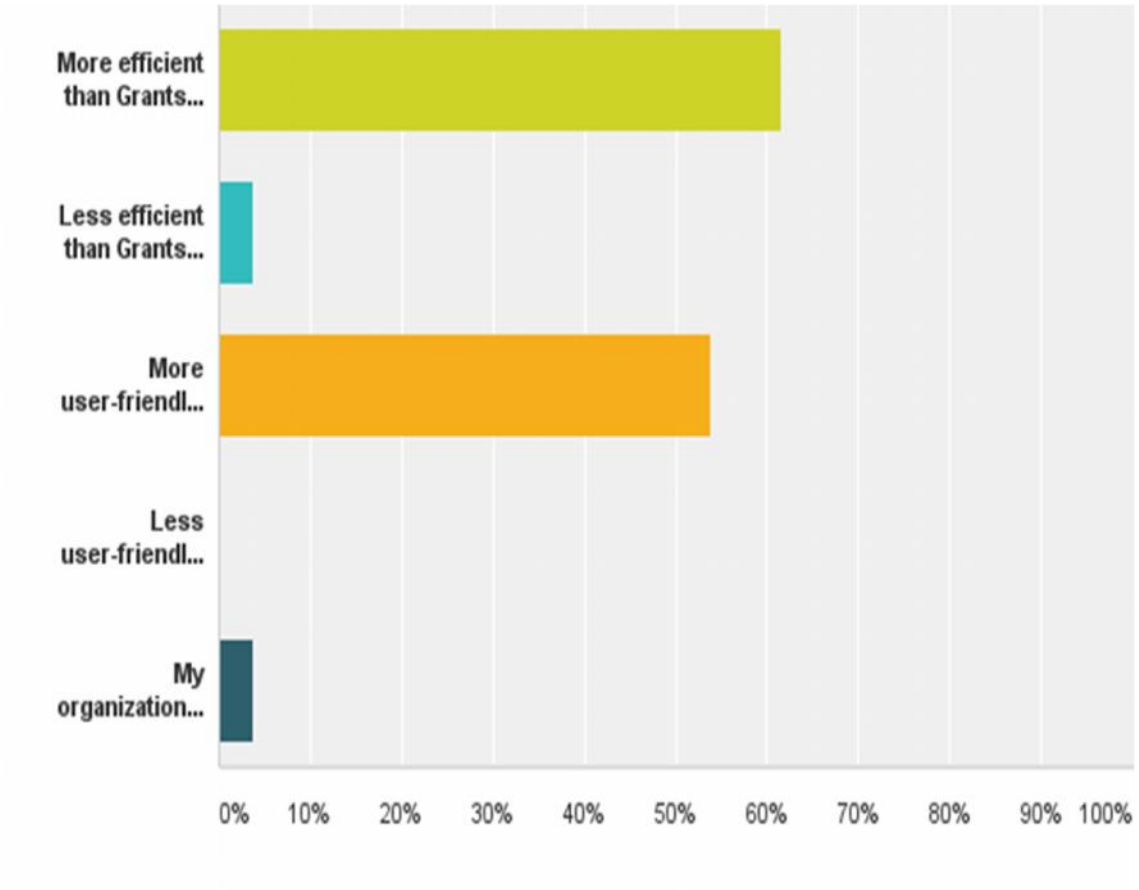
Q38 cont.: What would you change about Accelerator?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 24

13. Add links to all contract documents that vendors are asked to complete; ensure that City agency contract managers can see exactly what vendors are uploading into the system; ensure as a matter of process that City agencies are providing clear and unambiguous instructions about the number and types of contract forms required (e.g., number of original broker certification forms needed)
14. The basic information page sometimes asks for repetitive information.
15. too many notification messages when new RFPs come out
16. The structured proposal forms can be confusing, and the character limits are too strict (overall section page limits offer better flexibility).
17. 1) Require that all City Agencies participate 2) Incorporate the School Age Child Care licensing process

Q39: How does Accelerator compare to Grants Gateway? Accelerator is:

Answered: 26 Skipped: 15



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Q39: How does Accelerator compare to Grants Gateway? Accelerator is:

Answered: 26 Skipped: 15

Answer Choices	Responses	
More efficient than Grants Gateway	61.54%	16
Less efficient than Grants Gateway	3.85%	1
More user-friendly than Grants Gateway	53.85%	14
Less user-friendly than Grants Gateway	0.00%	0
My organization does not use Grants Gateway.	3.85%	1
Total Respondents: 26		

Q40: Please share any observations, concerns, or ideas that you have regarding procurement and contracting that are not addressed elsewhere in this survey.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 30

1. Two steps for submitting claims similar to DFTA CAMS system will be appreciated to have a check and balance- a preparer for uploading claims and an approver (higher level manager) taking responsibility.
2. I appreciate the notification of funding status
3. The process is still time-consuming, but not because of the Accelerator. We have to spend a lot of time going back and forth to define a concept, clarify its parameters, and align the concept's parameters to a budget. Most of our narrative submissions go through 8 to 12 edits before finalization. That's not something the Accelerator can help change.
4. N/A
5. None.
6. It would be really great if we could convince ALL city agencies to agree to use the HHS system so we just have once city-wide system. If there was any way to also link the HHS and Grants Gateway systems (or to improve Grants Gateway to be more like the HHS system), that would be incredibly useful. Many agencies receive funding from all three levels of government, so it would be a tremendous benefit, if possible.

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Q40: Please share any observations, concerns, or ideas that you have regarding procurement and contracting that are not addressed elsewhere in this survey.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 30

7. The use of the RFP tool is overrated
8. We would like be able to save/print budgets submitted on Accelerator for our records and organize our document vault by contract (i.e. create folders).
9. Technical support for Accelerator is far superior than that for Grants Gateway, which is much appreciated! Accelerator is also far more intuitive than Grants Gateway.
10. Appreciate that DYCD did a contractor training on use of HHS Accelerator; appreciate the quick confirmation of submitted proposals, I want to know more (through training?) how HHS helps with the contracting process
11. The system has definitely made life easier, particularly with the RFP submission process. It would be great if every city agency got on board with it.

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