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Minutes produced by: Jo-Anne Gorah

Minutes – Compulsory briefing session: VCW438/LIMS3/26 - APPOINTMENT OF A SUITABLY QUALIFIED SERVICE PROVIDER FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION, MAINTENANCE AND ANNUAL LICENSING OF LABORATORY INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LIMS) FOR A PERIOD OF THREE (3) YEARS

Venue: Vaal Central Water Head Office

Attendance

Surname	Init ials	Designation	Company	E-Mail	Contact Number
Sethoga	K	ICT Manager	Vaal Central Water	khutsos@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800
Nhanha	O	Systems Administrator - Information Systems	Vaal Central Water	olwethun@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800
Moeketsi	L	Assistant Manager: SCM	Vaal Central Water	leratom@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800
Gorrah	JP	Supply Chain Officer	Vaal Central Water	Jo-anneg@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800
Seale	O	Deputy Manager Scientific - Scientific Services	Vaal Central Water	odettes@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800
Mokhosi	A	Quality Scientist	Vaal Central Water	agnesm@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800
Mojapele	T	Microbiologist- Scientific Services	Vaal Central Water	tsholofelom@vcwater.co.za	051 403 0800

Kindly refer to attached attendance register for Service providers in attendance.

	DISCUSSION
1.	Opening and Welcome The session was attended by officials of Vaal Central Water (VCW) and representatives of prospective bidders who had registered for the tender. All attendees completed the attendance register, including their email addresses, which VCW confirmed would be the only channel used for further communication regarding this tender. Purpose of the Meeting The Chairperson opened the session by welcoming attendees to the compulsory briefing session for the LIMS tender. The purpose of the session was described as an opportunity for VCW and prospective bidders "to find each other" — that is, to clarify aspects of the tender specification that may not be clear, and for VCW to address any gaps in the original tender documentation. The agenda for the session was: introductions; a presentation by VCW covering background, current processes, specifications and scope of work; and a question-and-answer session covering both questions submitted in writing before the session and questions raised from the floor. Communication Protocol The Chairperson emphasised the following ground rules for communication going forward: Following this briefing session, all further communication must be directed to VCW Supply Chain Management (SCM) only, the correct contact details would be provided. VCW will not respond to bidders on a one-on-one basis. Any question raised after the briefing session, and its answer, will be circulated to all registered attendees (based on the attendance register), not only to the bidder who raised it. Bidders were asked to submit any further clarification questions at least three working days before the closing date, as questions submitted on the closing day itself will not be entertained.
2.	DECLARATION OF INTEREST Not applicable.
3.	FINALISATION OF AGENDA No additional items were added to the agenda

4. Presentation Summary

4.1 Background to Vaal Central Water

VCW was established through the integration of two former water boards, forming a multi-regional bulk water utility covering the Free State and Northern Cape provinces. VCW operates two SANAS-accredited laboratories, both fully functional, which perform compliance monitoring of water samples to ensure that water produced by the entity complies with the South African National Standards (SANS) for drinking water.

The proposed LIMS is intended to support organisational goals around data integrity, compliance with ISO/IEC 17025, and improved operational efficiency, and aligns with VCW's IT strategy (2025–2028) and Business Plan (2025–2028), both of which support broader digital transformation and automation of manual processes.

4.2 Current (Manual) Process in Scientific Services

VCW described its scientific services' current processes as largely manual, including:

- Samples received manually and logged into sample log sheets.
- Samples distributed to laboratories manually based on analysis request forms and schedules.
- Results captured manually from laboratory hard copies into Excel.
- Quality control (QC) plotted using Excel spreadsheets, with manual calculation checks.
- Manual transfer of results into electronic form and into test reports, which are then electronically signed.

The proposed system is intended to automate this process end-to-end.

4.3 Key Specifications, Deliverables and IT Requirements

VCW confirmed the tender document contains approximately 21 deliverables in full and directed bidders to the tender document for the detailed list. The Chairperson highlighted the following points for particular emphasis and, in some cases, clarification of the tender document:

- Hosting model: The tender document referenced both on-premises and cloud hosting. Mr. Sethoga confirmed to bidders must price for a cloud-based / Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) hosting model only — the on-premises option should be disregarded.
- Data centre location: Any hosting must be within South Africa, in view of VCW's obligations under the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and other applicable legislation. Hosting outside South Africa's borders will not be accepted.
- Data ownership: All data held in the system will remain the intellectual property of VCW, including in the event the contract is not renewed or the service provider is changed in future.
- System integration: The system must have the capability to integrate with other enterprise systems, including a future ERP system (not yet implemented — separately out on tender), SCADA, asset management solutions, and the Department of Water and Sanitation's (DWS) IRIS reporting system. VCW clarified that this is a capability requirement for the life of the anticipated 3-year contract (including support and maintenance), not a requirement that full integration take place at initial implementation.
- Customisation: VCW is seeking an off-the-shelf, best-practice LIMS solution requiring minimal customisation, rather than bespoke development. Some configuration to meet VCW's processes is expected and should be catered for by bidders.

	<i>DISCUSSION</i>						
	• Training and support: Skills transfer and training for VCW's scientific services and IT staff must form part of the project, so that VCW's internal teams can support end-users directly (e.g. user management) rather than relying solely on the service provider for routine support. • Compliance and standards: The system must support compliance with ISO/IEC 17025, POPIA, and other applicable governance, risk and compliance (GRC) requirements, as well as environmental and social requirements where applicable. • Data security: The system must provide audit trails and data encryption to support VCW's ability to respond to audit requirements. • Disaster recovery (DR): As the solution will be hosted as SaaS, bidders must include Disaster-Recovery-as-a-Service in their pricing, describing how business continuity will be assured in the event of a disaster. • Value-added proposals: Bidders were encouraged to propose additional features or capabilities beyond the stated specifications where these could benefit VCW; such value-adds will be considered. 4.4 Scope of Work VCW intends to appoint a suitable service provider to supply and implement a LIMS for a period of three years, covering the following broad areas: • Supply and implementation of an off-the-shelf LIMS solution, configured (not custom-developed) to meet VCW's requirements. • Project management support through implementation, given VCW's scientific services will be the primary end-users. • Technical expertise to ensure a smooth implementation without unresolved technical issues. • Training and skills transfer to VCW staff, in addition to ongoing support and maintenance. • Hosting, data centre and disaster recovery services as described in Section 4.3 above. 4.5 Tender Timeline and Evaluation Criteria <table border="1" data-bbox="292 1420 1497 1619"> <tr> <td>Advertised</td><td>19 August 2026</td></tr> <tr> <td>Compulsory Briefing Session</td><td>27 August 2026</td></tr> <tr> <td>Closing Date</td><td>10 September 2026 (closing time per the tender document)</td></tr> </table> SCM confirmed a staged evaluation process: • Stage 1 — Administrative compliance: standard administrative/mandatory requirements as set out in the tender document. • Stage 2 — Technical evaluation (desktop): scored out of a total described as 75–80 points, covering functionality; bidders must meet a minimum threshold of 60 points to proceed. • Stage 3 — Technical evaluation (live demonstration): a live demonstration of the proposed solution, scored out of 20 points.	Advertised	19 August 2026	Compulsory Briefing Session	27 August 2026	Closing Date	10 September 2026 (closing time per the tender document)
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	• Combined threshold: the combined score from Stages 2 and 3 must total at least 80 points for a bidder to proceed to the pricing stage. • Stage 4 — Price and preference: evaluated on an 80/20 principle (price/B-BBEE preference), reflecting VCW's expectation that proposals will fall below the R50 million threshold. Bidders were reminded to provide exactly the type of supporting documentation requested against each specific goals/scoring requirement in the tender document for example, a certified copy where a certified copy is specifically requested. 5. Correction Notice — Technical Evaluation Methodology (Section 3, page 41) <i>VCW identified an error in the scoring description under Section 3 (bid evaluation methodology) of the tender document and confirmed a formal addendum will be issued to correct it.</i> The Mr. Moeketsi advised that page 41, Section 3 of the tender document currently lists two evaluation criteria with identical wording, each intended to assess a bidder's demonstrated ability to deliver on turnaround times, roles, responsibilities and other related parameters across the full scope of work and deliverables. The distinction between the two rows is as follows, and will be corrected in an addendum: • Where a bidder demonstrates delivery covering ALL deliverables in the scope of work: 25 points (maximum). • Where a bidder's demonstration does NOT cover all deliverables: 5 points. • Where a bidder's demonstration covers none of the deliverables: 0 points. 6. Questions and Answers VCW first addressed a set of questions submitted in writing prior to the session before opening the floor for further questions. A summary of the questions and VCW's responses follows. 6.1 Questions Submitted in Writing Q: How many users will require access to the system? A: VCW indicated a preference for every laboratory staff member to have access so that staff can work simultaneously; current lab headcount is approximately 70. However, for licensing purposes VCW asked bidders to price based on an initial estimate of 20 users, while noting this number may grow as the entity grows. The system is expected to be a web application usable at both of VCW's laboratory sites, with role-based permissions and configurable access levels. Q: Is the required solution intended to manage only laboratory operations and the sample lifecycle, or does VCW also require organisation-wide functionality for water quality monitoring programmes, sampling schedules, monitoring points, trend analysis and consolidated SANS 241 compliance monitoring beyond the laboratory? A: VCW's core concern is eliminating manual, duplicate data entry — currently test results are captured in the LIMS-equivalent process and then re-captured manually into the DWS IRIS system, creating discrepancies during quarterly reporting. The desired system should also support calibration/asset management tracking (e.g. flagging expired equipment calibration) in line with ISO/IEC 17025, and should integrate equipment data export toward IRIS. VCW confirmed it already has access to IRIS.

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	Q: Can VCW provide interface specifications, templates, file formats or API documentation for the required DWS IRIS export, and confirm whether direct system-to-system integration is required or whether export of data is sufficient? A: VCW does not currently have full technical specifications for the IRIS interface to share. For initial implementation, VCW requires the appointed service provider to be able to produce report/data templates matching the formats VCW currently submits to IRIS, so that reporting can be pushed through in the correct format. Direct system-to-system integration is a longer-term goal, not a mandatory requirement for initial implementation. Q: Can VCW provide a list of laboratory instruments currently in use at the two laboratories that are expected to interface with the LIMS (manufacturer, model, communication/export method), and confirm whether this interfacing is required at initial implementation or only as a future capability? A: VCW named several instruments requiring integration, including ICP-OES units (Thermo Fisher and PerkinElmer), TOC/related analytical equipment, HPLC and other laboratory instruments, and indicated further instruments are being procured on a separate, ongoing tender and will be added to the list. VCW is compiling a fuller instrument list, including exact make and model (which determines the specific communication/software interface method), to be shared with bidders after the session, since the exact make and model materially affects integration feasibility. Q: What is the expected volume and format of historical laboratory and water quality data to be migrated, including years of history, record volumes and source formats? A: Data migration is required. ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation requires retention of accredited laboratory data for 10 years, so all data within that retention period must be migrated. Historical data exists in mixed formats — Excel spreadsheets, PDF and Word documents. Completed/archived results (largely PDF) need to be retrievable/viewable rather than editable, whereas current, "live" working documents such as standard operating procedures and active templates need to remain editable within the new system. Q: Does VCW have a preferred hosting model (cloud vs on-premises), or should bidders price for both? A: Confirmed as cloud-based/SaaS only — see Section 4.3 above. Q: Will comparable LIMS / water quality management projects that have been awarded but are still under implementation be accepted as reference projects for technical evaluation, or must reference projects be fully completed? A: Only completed reference projects will be accepted for scoring purposes; projects that have been awarded but are still under implementation will not count as a completed reference. Q: Is the system expected to manage and report water quality compliance by water supply system, bulk customer and associated sampling/monitoring points, including consolidated compliance and trend reporting against standards such as SANS 241? A: Yes. Regions/customers provide VCW with agreed sampling programmes and determinants (monitoring parameters) that must be captured in the system. The system should support trend reporting on sample performance, both against external standards and VCW's internal quality specifications, for both potable water and bulk/other customer relationships.

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	Q: What are the network connectivity requirements between VCW's sites? A: Not fully addressed on the recording; VCW indicated this would largely be resolved by the confirmed cloud/SaaS hosting model, as both sites will access the same centrally hosted system. Q: How many hard copies of the tender submission are required (original plus duplicates), and is an electronic copy (e.g. USB) also required in addition to hard copies? A: VCW deferred to the tender document for the exact number of copies and format required; bidders should refer to the tender document / Supply Chain Management for this requirement, as it was not restated in detail during the session. 6.2 Questions from the Floor Q: Can VCW confirm what other systems (besides ERP and IRIS) the LIMS may need to integrate with, e.g. SCADA? A: VCW confirmed the systems referenced are ERP (not yet implemented — separately out on tender) and DWS IRIS, together with the general requirement for SCADA and asset management integration capability referenced in the specifications. VCW is not aware of other specific systems requiring integration at this stage but reiterated the general requirement for integration capability to be built into the solution, should it be required in future. Q: Regarding licensing, can VCW provide an estimated split between named-user and concurrent-user licences per site, to help bidders price accurately? A: VCW indicated it could work with a mix of named-user licences (suggested estimate of around two per site for managers/administrators) and concurrent-user licences for technical/laboratory staff (a working estimate in the order of 15 per site was discussed). VCW agreed this would assist in finalising an estimated licence-count list to share with bidders. Q: How many label/report templates does the current system use, and are these customer-specific? A: VCW currently uses two report/label templates — one for external (client-facing) reports and one for internal scientific use — both of which are customer/customised per sample point, location and description. Q: How many dashboards should be included in the solution? A: VCW did not specify a fixed number. The requirement is for a flexible, configurable dashboard capability — for example, discipline-specific views (such as microbiology or chemistry) as well as consolidated views, and dashboards tailored to different user and management levels — rather than a single static dashboard. Q: Does the solution need mobile capability, so that laboratory staff are not confined to a single workstation? A: Yes — VCW confirmed a preference for mobile-capable functionality so that staff are not restricted to a fixed computer. Q: For reference projects, is VCW's preference limited to projects completed in South Africa, or can this be extended to projects outside the country? A: This question was raised on the floor but was not conclusively answered during the session; bidders should confirm the position via Supply Chain Management or await the written response to the pre-submitted and floor questions.

	<i>DISCUSSION</i>
	7. Closing Remarks and Action Items • VCW Supply Chain Management to issue a formal addendum correcting the technical evaluation scoring description under Section 3 (page 41) of the tender document — see Section 5 above. • VCW to compile and circulate a fuller list of laboratory instruments (with exact make and model) requiring interfacing with the LIMS. • VCW to compile and circulate an estimated user/licence-count breakdown (named vs concurrent users) per site to assist bidders with pricing. • Written responses to all questions addressed during this session, together with any further written questions received, will be consolidated and circulated to all attendees on the attendance register — VCW will not respond to individual bidders directly. • Bidders were reminded that any further clarification questions should be submitted at least three working days before the closing date of 10 September 2026; questions submitted on the closing date itself will not be entertained. • All further communication regarding this tender must be directed to VCW Supply Chain Management only.
7.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING TBC
8.	CLOSURE The Chairperson closed the meeting at approximately 11:57

Certified to be an accurate and true reflection of the Compulsory briefing session meeting held on 27 August 2026 at Vaal Central Water.

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Chairperson	Mr. K Sethoga - Manager: ICT	<i>Khutso Sethoga</i>	27 August 2026