UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

LIFT project – Questions and answers

Questions for RFP-2026-014

1. Could you please clarify whether the contractor is required to purchase and supply a new VTOL aircraft for deployment in Bhutan, or whether the use of existing, leased, or otherwise available aircraft would be acceptable, provided that the equipment meets the required technical and operational specifications? Please also confirm whether the contractor is expected to supply the ground control station, communications equipment, spare parts, maintenance tools, and other associated equipment within the maximum budget of CHF 50,000.

The use of existing, leased, or otherwise available aircraft is fully acceptable. No purchase of equipment by the UPU is foreseen in the tender. The ground control station, communications equipment, spare parts, maintenance tools, and other associated equipment shall be supplied within the budget and are intended to be used only for the pilot project.

2. The RFP indicates that project-related costs, including regulatory approval fees, must be covered within the overall budget. Could you clarify the expected responsibilities and cost allocation for international shipping, customs clearance, import duties, temporary import permits, and other import-related procedures for deploying the aircraft and associated equipment in Bhutan? Additionally, would the relevant Bhutanese authorities or the designated postal operator provide any assistance with import procedures, civil aviation approvals, or local regulatory coordination?

Coverage of the costs for international shipping, customs clearance, import duties, temporary import permits, and other import-related procedures for deploying the aircraft for conducting the flights during pilot and associated equipment in Bhutan all fall under the responsibility of the selected provider. In case the bidder would like to import the equipment only for the purpose of the pilot, the designated postal operator as well as the UPU will both provide support to facilitate import procedures, civil aviation approvals, and local regulatory coordination, with such initial coordination already underway.

3. Could you confirm whether the technical expert or UAV pilot must be physically stationed in Bhutan throughout the entire 16-month project period, or whether a combination of scheduled visits, remote technical support, and local operational personnel would be acceptable? If continuous on-site deployment is mandatory, please clarify whether accommodation, subsistence, international travel, local transportation, insurance, and other personnel-related expenses must all be covered within the CHF 50,000 ceiling.

It is not anticipated that the technical experts or UAV pilots would be physically present in Bhutan throughout the 16-month project period, but they should be for the actual flight operations/execution within the 2-month period identified in the project timeline. Remote coordination of the work is fully acceptable.

4. Please clarify the anticipated number and frequency of flight tests, the expected operational coverage, and the level of maintenance and technical support required during the pilot period. Would the UPU consider a phased implementation approach or a more limited deployment model, provided that the principal objectives and expected results of the pilot project are achieved?

As outlined in section 4.2 of Annex 1 of the RFP documentation, flights are expected four days a week, with one flight anticipated to each of the four offices identified in section 2 of Annex 1, totaling 16 flights per week, or approximately 64 flights over the one-month pilot project. This however does not account for any test flights that may be deemed necessary during the one month test flight period. The operational coverage is that which is noted in sections 1 and 2 of Annex 1 of the RFP documentation. Bidders may propose alternative schedules, without much deviation, given the requirements in the RFP documentation are met within the project timeline.

5. Based on our preliminary assessment, the combined costs of aircraft procurement, shipping and importation, technical personnel, accommodation, travel, maintenance, and spare parts could exceed the maximum budget of CHF 50,000. Could the UPU confirm whether the budget ceiling is fixed and inclusive of all these costs, and whether any flexibility, alternative equipment arrangements, or adjustments to the deployment model may be considered? We would also appreciate confirmation of whether the UPU has an existing aircraft, equipment, local technical partner, or other operational resources that could be made available to support the pilot project.

The budget ceiling of 50,000 CHF is inclusive of all costs to deliver the project requirements as also clarified in the responses above and provided by the UPU with a view of market assessment for the scope of work as specified in the RFP. Please note that any bids exceeding this budget ceiling can not be considered. Ground support will be provided by the designated postal operator, as described in section 1.3 of Annex 1 of the RFP documentation, and following training given by the selected provider.

6. Could you provide further clarification on the minimum operational requirements and expected deliverables for the 16-month pilot, particularly the number of delivery routes, delivery volumes, flight operations, training activities, and performance indicators against which the contractor will be assessed?

These details can be found in Annex 1 of the RFP documentation, found on the UPU website at https://www.upu.int/en/universal-postal-union/procurement/rfp2026014dop

Questions for RFP-2026-015

7. 3.6 Pricing structure: "Bidders shall ensure that their financial proposal does not exceed the budgetary ceiling of 50,000 CHF. Tenders that fail to meet all objectives within the budget or that exceed the budget shall not be considered". Do you confirm the maximum budget available for the entirety of the project is 50,000 CHF, that is for the planning, execution, reporting, but also equipment and travel to the Maldives?

Yes, this figure is the budget ceiling for the complete project, including planning, execution, reporting, equipment and travel to the Maldives. The bidder may use any existing, leased, or temporarily imported equipment for the project.

8. 1.3 Contract model: "The contract model shall be “drone as a service”" The main point is what will happen to the drone equipment once the 10-month project has ended. Do you expect the drone to be transferred to the local UPU drone team, or will it be returned to us? Do you plan to buy the equipment?

No, this project foresees no purchase of equipment by the UPU. The drone will be arranged by the selected service provider, which will recoup the drone following the pilot project. Please note that the drone is required during the pilot execution phase only, which is scheduled for two months (one month for test flights, necessary updates/upgrades and one month for scheduled operating flights), as well as some time allowance for shipping and import on either end if required, but does not need to be physically present in the Maldives during the entire 10 months of the project.

9. Given that the CHF 50,000 ceiling is inclusive of all costs (including international travel, duties, training, import taxes, regulatory fees, and insurance), is this the total allocation to the project as we foresee the 10-month operation to be quite substantial in terms of costing?

The budget ceiling of 50,000CHF is inclusive of all costs to deliver the project requirements. As specified in the response above the actual deployment for operations is envisaged for the period of flight tests and pilot flights, not entire 10 months. Please note that any bids exceeding this budget ceiling can not be considered.

10. The payment schedule allocates 30% upon civil aviation approval, 40% upon completion of the pilot, and 30% upon the final report. Given the 10-month timeline with heavy upfront deployment costs, will the UPU consider an advance payment or milestone-based working capital disbursement to support initial mobilization?

A payment schedule based on project deliverables or outcomes may be considered by the UPU at its discretion. Advanced payment can not be considered.

11. Section 8 notes that procedures for flight authorization with the Maldives Civil Aviation Authority (MCAA) lack formal structure and durations may fluctuate. If MCAA permit approvals face prolonged delays beyond the anticipated pre-pilot phase, how will this impact the contract timeline, milestones, and final payment schedules?

As reflected in the Call for tenders (CFT), the UPU and the selected bidder shall work closely, e.g. Section 4.7 of the CFT, which emphasizes the obligation of the selected bidder to provide monthly reports to the UPU about the progress of the services provided warrants such close cooperation. As such, issues concerning any delays in the timeline associated to MCAA's lack of formal structure shall be the object of coordination between the UPU and the selected bidder.

12. If the MCAA denies authorization for certain over-water routes specified in Table 1, what is the expected protocol and timeline for approving alternative routes proposed by the Vendor?

The overall time schedule has a certain built-in cushion to adjust to such possible delays, however as also explained above, should this situation arise, specially due to the circumstances beyond the control of the bidder, the UPU and the selected provider will agree together in good faith to these aspects with reasonable adjustments.

13. Table 4.4 notes that local post offices currently lack dedicated electrical supply for high-capacity charging (380 V) and backup generators. While the Vendor is expected to supply necessary equipment (generators, landing pads, wind barriers), who will bear the specific capital and installation costs for electrical grid upgrades or site modifications at the Kulhudhuffushi hub and local post offices?

These will be born by the designated postal operator in the Maldives. Please note however that upgrades may not be possible at local post offices.

14. Are Maldives Post staff fully dedicated to handling all battery swaps, cargo loading, and refuelling tasks under Vendor supervision, or will the Vendor be required to station permanent technical staff at each spoke location throughout the live operating period?

Maldives Post staff will be fully available to carry out these tasks, following adequate training provided by the selected provider.

15. Section 4.2 states a requirement of six flights per week (covering all post offices) with a minimum of 24 flights per month, while the milestone timeline allocates one month for test flights and one month for scheduled operating flights. Does the one-month live execution phase represent the entire flight window for the pilot, or are live operations expected to run continuously across multiple months within the 10-month term?

The flight requirement of at least 'six flights per week (covering all post offices) and 24 flights per month' applies to the one-month live execution phase. Additional test flights may be deemed necessary during the one-month test phase directly preceding the one-month execution phase. It is not expected to run flights during the entire 10-month overall project time frame.

16. The tender mandates comprehensive insurance. Given that flights operate entirely over water across open sea channels in the Maldives, are there specific minimum coverage limits (third-party liability and hull insurance) mandated by the UPU or MCAA that bidders must factor into their pricing?

No, there are no minimum coverage limits mandated by the UPU.