

AMENDMENT OF SOLICITATION/MODIFICATION OF CONTRACT

1. CONTRACT ID CODE _____ PAGE OF PAGES _____

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| 2. AMENDMENT/MODIFICATION NO. | 3. EFFECTIVE DATE | 4. REQUISITION/PURCHASE REQ. NO. | 5. PROJECT NO. (If applicable) |
| 6. ISSUED BY CODE _____ | 7. ADMINISTERED BY (If other than Item 6) CODE _____ | | |

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| 8. NAME AND ADDRESS OF CONTRACTOR (No., street, county, State, and ZIP Code) CODE _____ FACILITY CODE _____ | (x) | 9A. AMENDMENT OF SOLICITATION NO. |
| | | 9B. DATED (SEE ITEM II) |
| | | 10A. MODIFICATION OF CONTRACT/ORDER NO. |
| | | 10B. DATED (See Item 13) |

11. THIS ITEM ONLY APPLIES TO AMENDMENTS OF SOLICITATIONS

The above numbered solicitation is amended as set forth in Item 14. The hour and date specified for receipt of Offers is extended, is not extended.

Offers must acknowledge receipt of this amendment prior to the hour and date specified in the solicitation or as amended, by one of the following methods:

- (a) By completing Items 8 and 15, and returning _____ copies of the amendment;
- (b) By acknowledging receipt of this amendment on each copy of the offer submitted; or
- (c) By separate letter or telegram which includes a reference to the solicitation and amendment numbers. FAILURE OF YOUR ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO BE RECEIVED AT THE PLACE DESIGNATED FOR THE RECEIPT OF OFFERS PRIOR TO THE HOUR AND DATE SPECIFIED MAY RESULT IN REJECTION OF YOUR OFFER. If by virtue of this amendment you desire to change an offer already submitted, such change may be made by telegram or letter, provided each telegram or letter makes reference to the solicitation and this amendment, and is received prior to the opening hour and date specified.

12. ACCOUNTING AND APPROPRIATION DATA (If required)

13. THIS ITEM APPLIES ONLY TO MODIFICATIONS OF CONTRACTS/ORDERS. IT MODIFIES THE CONTRACT/ORDER NO. AS DESCRIBED IN ITEM 14.

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| (x) | A. THIS CHANGE ORDER IS ISSUED PURSUANT TO: (Specify authority) THE CHANGES SET FORTH IN ITEM 14 ARE MADE IN THE CONTRACT ORDER NO. IN ITEM 10A. |
| | B. THE ABOVE NUMBERED CONTRACT/ORDER IS MODIFIED TO REFLECT THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES (such as changes in paying office, appropriation date, etc.) SET FORTH IN ITEM 14, PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY OF FAR 43.103(b). |
| | C. THIS SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT IS ENTERED INTO PURSUANT TO AUTHORITY OF: |
| | D. OTHER (Specify type of modification and authority) |

E. IMPORTANT: Contractor is not, is required to sign this document and return _____ copies to the issuing office.

14. DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENT/MODIFICATION (Organized by UCF section headings, including solicitation/contract subject matter where feasible.)

Except as provided herein, all terms and conditions of the document referenced in item 9A or 10A, as heretofore changed, remains unchanged and in full force and effect.

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| 15A. NAME AND TITLE OF SIGNER (Type or print) | 16A. NAME AND TITLE OF CONTRACTING OFFICER (Type or print) | | |
| 15B. CONTRACTOR/OFFEROR _____ (Signature of person authorized to sign) | 15C. DATE SIGNED | 16B. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA _____ (Signature of Contracting Officer) | 16C. DATE SIGNED |

1. On page 69, which discusses the Evaluation Criteria, is there a word missing under 2B of the Management Plan, "Crises and Short Turnaround Response Capability"? The last sentence currently reads as follows: "The offeror shall also be evaluated as to the capabilities of their [? is something missing here ?] with respect to desktop publishing equipment and associated software."

Response: The sentence should read:

“The offeror shall also be evaluated as to their capabilities with respect to desktop publishing equipment and associated software.”

2. Since the Agency, through OCKT, has internal capability for desktop publishing, what would the contractor selected for this award be expected to do (e.g., supplement existing Agency capability? serve as back-up? originate projects? other? etc.)?

Response:

The contractor will be expected to supplement existing on staff resources. In addition, the contractor will be expected to serve as a backup should the internal workload become too much for AHRQ staff. In addition, there may be a limited number of times when the agency will want the contractor to carry out a special project on a case by case basis.

3. Since this is a cost plus award, what will the labor categories and hourly rates submitted under Section B.2 be used for?

Response: They will be used to determine the appropriateness of the labor categories and the reasonableness of the rates proposed. Additionally, the hourly rates submitted will be reviewed to make sure they do not exceed the salary limitation in Section H.9. This will be a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract not a cost plus award contract.

4. In section G.5, is the "cognizant contracting official" the Defense Contract Audit Agency or your office?

Response: FAR 2.101 defines “Contracting Federal agency” as the Federal agency that, on behalf of all Federal agencies, is responsible for establishing final indirect cost rates and forward pricing rates, if applicable, and administering cost accounting standards for all contracts in a business unit. The cognizant contracting official would be the appropriate contracting official of that agency which could be AHRQ, DCAA or another agency.

5. Section K.16, are you going to require certified cost or pricing data for this solicitation, even if you find that there is adequate price competition?

Response: Prior to award, we request the awardee to submit a Certificate of Current Cost or Pricing Data in accordance with Section K.16. There is no way to know at this time whether or not there will be adequate price competition therefore cost and pricing data is required.

6. Section L.10.A., please define the term "certified." By whom?

Response: Certify means to acknowledge that the data is true and accurate. An official of the company responsible for reviewing the data can certify the truthfulness of the data.

7. Section L.10.A.2., requires an accounting system review to be performed. This may have not been done for a small 8(a) firm. What documentation will take the place of an outside certification?

Response: Section L.10.A.2 does not require an outside review of a companies accounting system. What it requires is an accountant or appropriate official certifying that the offeror has a cost accounting system in place which allows for the collection, tracking and reporting of all costs under a cost-reimbursement contract.

8. It has been our experience with other past performance questionnaire submissions to Contracting Officers (COs) that several of the COs have expressed concerns regarding duplication of their effort when past performance evaluations are available through the DHHS/NIH Contractor Performance System (CPS). Are you willing to use the data from the DHHS/NIH CPS in lieu of direct responses to this RFP's past performance questionnaires? If this is acceptable, we can indicate in the past performance section of the proposal those contracts that can be found in the DHHS/NIH CPS.

Response: Since the CPS collects past performance data on Contractors for a variety of services and the RFP requires past performance only for contracts of similar services to what is contained in the Statement of Work, it is requested that Contractors abide by the instructions in Section L.9 of the RFP. Copies of past performance evaluations completed for the CPS for recent work that is directly related to the requirements of this acquisition are acceptable.

Nature of existing/expiring contract

9. Of the past two years' budgets, what is the proportion of expenses attributable to personnel/labor, direct costs, and other categories?

Response:

Approximately 74% is for direct labor and 26% for other direct costs.

10. What is the number of contract personnel currently assigned fulltime, on site and on site.

Response:

There are 12-15 contract personnel working full-time on site and 2 who work part-time.

11. What are the titles, position descriptions and skill levels of contract personnel currently assigned full-time, on-site and off-site?

Response:

- 1 Sr. Project Director, Director of Health Communications manages the public affairs contract and budget and initiates and responds to activities in the areas of marketing, public relations, research, partnership development, as well as Hispanic and minority outreach. Hires and trains all staff and evaluates program.
- 1 Sr. Managing Editor responsible for managing Web and print release of all publications for the USPSTF and PPIP programs, coordinate and provide oversight for journal publishing for all USPSTF products, hire on-site free lance staff, train staff and evaluate performance. Ensures quality control of all processes and products.
- 1 Sr. Marketing Manager specializing in articles, clinical information systems and case studies.
- 1 Sr. Communications Advisor specializing in general and Hispanic media and marketing.
- 1 Sr. Prevention Program Coordinator focusing on USPSTF recommendations and entertainment outreach.
- 1 mid-level Health Communications Manager specializing in tobacco, partnerships and quality issues.
- 2 mid-level Marketing Managers specializing in patient safety, prevention, and quality issues.
- 1 mid-level Account Supervisor/Marketing Manager specializing in tobacco, Hispanic and general marketing and media.
- 1 mid-level Medical Editor writing and editing work of the PPIP program and USPSTF.
- 1 mid-level Management Supervisor/Deputy to Project Director assisting with account management issues and work assignments in addition to writing and editing case studies and supervising consultants.
- 1 Jr. Account Coordinator working on reports and special projects.
- 1 Jr. Account Coordinator who oversees administrative issues for the account.
- 1 Jr. Editorial Assistant copy editing and proofreading material for PPIP and USPSTF.

12. What is the number of person-days provided by the current contractor in each of the past three years?

Response:

The contract staff works almost full-time for AHRQ, with the exception of training/administrative hours that are billed to overhead.

2001: 3,621 person days
2002: 3,760 person days
2003: 2,555 person days (through 6/30/2003)

13. Does a fulltime on-site contract person(s) currently provide Spanish-language translation ability?

Response: An onsite contract staff person has the ability to provide Spanish language translation services but because of his other workload, most of translation activities is outsourced to other vendors.

14. Who currently supervises the on-site contract personnel?

Response: Ms. Jane Steele is the Acting Project Manager.

Scope of work

15. Who will serve as AHRQ's principal point(s) of contact for the project manager and on-site personnel?

Response: This information will be provided upon Contract Award.

16. From whom with AHRQ will the project manager and on-site personnel receive direction, guidance and feedback?

Response: This information will be provided upon Contract Award. As far as the responsibilities of AHRQ's Project Officer, this is spelled out in Section G.2 of the RFP.

17. Are costs - materials, printing, duplication and distribution outside the scope of the contract and budget, or are they to be included in the proposal? If there are to be included, what are the total costs for printing, duplication and distribution for each of the last five years – and what are the estimated total costs for the next five years?

Response:

These costs, materials, printing, duplication and distribution are handled by AHRQ through other mechanisms. The printing of publications, for instance, is handled through GPO and the distribution of AHRQ research is handled by the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse, under a separate contract.

18. What is the average monthly volume of material (in page or word counts) requiring translation from English to Spanish; Spanish to English?

Response:

The volume of material translated into Spanish is actually relatively low. On average, 5-7 short consumer brochures are translated in any given year. This activity is not a consistent day to day activity but instead occurs sporadically throughout the year.

19. How frequently is information pitched or presented in Spanish to media, organizations, or other audiences?

Response:

The outreach to Spanish language media has become increasingly more important in the last 2 years. This work is handled by one on-site contractor who spends about 25% of his time on this activity and by 2 consultants who work on projects about 50 hours per month. There are 2-3 times a year when AHRQ staff meet with Spanish language media or potential partners in cities such as Miami or Los Angeles.

20. What are the other languages and volume of other translations required over a period of time?

Response:

While we would like to translate some of the agencies consumer publications into various Asian languages, resources constraints have made this a rare occasion.

21. (Section C.2.1) What is the typical duration (number of days and exhibit hours) of the 3-6 scientific and professional meetings at which AHRQ expects to exhibit annually?

Response:

The typical meeting at which AHRQ exhibits usually lasts 2-4 days. The hours worked during these days varies from all day to part of days to correspond to breaks in the meetings or receptions held in the exhibit hall.

22. (Section C.2.2) What proportion of research results, articles, manuscripts, publications and other technical material are drafted by AHRQ employees (or other contractors) for proofing, editing and production by personnel under this contract?

Response:

The vast majority of AHRQ research and publications, etc., are produced by grantees of the Agency or by in-house researchers. These Agency publications are edited, proofread, and desktop published by AHRQ personnel who work within the Division of Print and Electronic Publishing of the Office of Healthcare Information. The major exception to this is that contract staff edits and proofs the work produced by the US Preventive Services Task Force. The Task Force is an independent panel of experts who develops recommendations in the area of prevention.

23. (Section C.2.2) What is the type and volume of products to be written, reviewed, proof read, edited, revised or rewritten, etc. – as outlined in this section – in terms of average number of various products/projects monthly and approximate number of pages involved?

Response:

With regard to the USPSTF and PPIP project, the number of products depends on how many topics are released by the task force, and the necessity to update existing products or to develop new ones. On average, the Task Force (TF) is releasing recommendations on 12 topics per year. Each topic involves 3 products—a Recommendation and Rationale Journal Article (about 2,000 words) a Summary of the Evidence (about 4,000 words) Journal Article, and a Systematic Evidence Review (Technical Report between 50-150 pages) published as a Web-only product. Each of these requires editorial review and coordination with the publishing journal. Many topics require original writing of fact sheets to summarize the TF recommendation for the educated lay public. TF recommendations and summaries of the evidence are compiled twice annually in a periodic update notebook. This update requires proofreading and copy editing as well as indexing and making the product available via CD. Products related to the implementation of TF recommendations include writing and handling all aspects of production for comprehensive patient guides for adults, children, and adults over 50 years of age (sample products can be found on the AHRQ Web site). In addition, all products must be proofread for the Web. Additional materials include various fact sheets and products for a variety of audiences that could potentially include clinicians, patients, and health systems. Products such as generic fact sheets related to prevention and information kits are also produced on a fairly regular basis. In addition, AHRQ periodically requires additional general writing editing support for non-prevention related topics. These are intermittent

assignments at this point, but the average is about 500 pages per year of non-prevention-related material.

24. (Section C.2.3) What is the expected number and type of presentations and graphic design projects required monthly as outlined in this section?

Response:

The number of presentations or graphic design projects required will be limited because the contractor provides back-up to existing agency staff who perform these functions. Therefore, probably less than 5-6 projects per year will be done by contract staff.

25. (Section C.3.2) What is the type and volume of products to be researched, prepared, reviewed, proof read, edited, revised or rewritten, etc. – as outlined in this section – in terms of average number of various products/projects monthly?

Response:

As stated in C.3.2, a number of different types of products need to be worked on by contract staff. The number of products varies day by day depending on demands placed on the Agency by outside entities including the media, Congress and various constituent organizations. In general, approximately 12-15 projects are worked on each month. To learn the types of partners, see C.3.2, 3rd bullet.

26. (Section C 3.2) Describe and provide detail of AHRQ current practices for accessing a “diverse array of scientific, technical, and consumer products.” For instance, which health policy research databases have been used in the past as well as which “consumer publications for the general population and for various ethnic groups” have been included in the dissemination strategy in the past year?

Response:

The policy databases include AHRQ’s MEPS and HCUP Databases and other tools. Please see AHRQ Website for a complete listing – specifically, go to the Newsroom on the Web site to see the press releases written about various databases and consumer products.

27. (Section C.3.3) What is the frequency and specifically preferred research methodology currently used for audience research? For example, how many Focus Groups were conducted last year?

Response:

Focus groups are the preferred method used for audience research. This occurs 5-6 times per year. In addition, there are a few occasions each year when the

agency conducts meetings with experts on the nature of a particular programmatic area in the field of health services research. At times, these experts address briefly the issue of dissemination to particular target audiences.

28. (Section C.3.3) Has AHRQ used Professional Qualitative Research Moderators and Assistant Moderators for the development of recruitment screeners and Discussion Guides (facilitator script) in the past?

Response:

Yes, the contractor is expected to provide these services as well as to schedule the field house, pay the participants, write up the summary of the focus groups and present these findings to AHRQ staff.

29. (Section C.3.3) Has any lifestyle or psychographic analyses, which would include market segmentation strategies, been employed in the past to recruit selected/ethnic participants?

Response:

Every time we conduct focus groups we segment the audience into appropriate groups.

30. (Section C.3.3) What level of pre-testing of AHRQ products is expected to be required? For example, will there be tests of all communication strategies including rough copy testing of materials and products? Or will the researchers be working with finished products that require minor revision to make certain that all information is culturally relevant.

Response:

Focus group testing is usually done on a near finished product to ensure that the needs of the target audiences are being met. With a few exceptions, these products are targeted to consumers, not professional audiences.

31. (Section C.3.4) What is the expected volume and type of work required monthly in terms of average number of various products/projects monthly, in relation to the requirements outlined in this section? For example, what is the average monthly number of new AHRQ and AHRQ-funded research projects requiring analysis and follow-up communications?

Response:

The type of work is outlined in C.3.4 including fact sheets, flyers, direct mail letters, print ads, video scripts, and others. The number of products requiring

marketing varies but is in the range of 4-8 products per month. Again, most of these are targeted to professional audiences.

32. (Section C.3.5) What is the type and volume of products to be researched, prepared, reviewed, proof read, edited, revised or rewritten, etc. – as outlined in this section – in terms of average number of various products/projects monthly?

Response:

Again, the type of products is mentioned in C.3.5. The range of number of products is stated above in the answer to question 31.

33. (Section C.3.5) With how many and what type of intermediary organizations and partners does AHRQ already have good relationships for purposes of regular communications?

Response:

AHRQ has many, many different partners to help us disseminate our research. These partners range include consumer organizations, health plans, policymakers, at both state and federal level organizations, business coalitions and many other groups based on the nature of a particular product.

Requirements for on-site personnel

34. Is there a defined wage rate or parameters to be used? No wage determination attached to RFP

Response: There is no defined wage rate or parameters to be used in paying staff to work on this project other than the salary limitation in Section H.9 and the fact that this is a competitive requirement.

35. Is this a Union or Service Contract Act contract? If Union is their a Collective Bargaining Agreement?

Response: It is neither one.

36. Can we get a list of employees with longevity for the purposes of vacation time when bidding under Service Contract Act?

Response: The Service Contract Act as delineated in FAR 37 does not apply to this RFP. The principal purpose of the services to be furnished shall not be met by providing service employees. This is a nonpersonal services contract under which the personnel rendering the services are not subject to the supervision and control usually prevailing in relationships between the Government and its employees.

37. (Section L.10B(3)(a)) What facilities and equipment will be provided by the government for on-site personnel, and what will remain the responsibility of the contractor (e.g. computer work stations, desks, chairs, file cabinets, etc.)?

Response:

The agency will provide all facilities and equipment needed by the contract staff to fulfill their responsibilities.

Requirements for proposal

38. (Sections B and L.10) For clarification, are Proposed Labor Rates required to be included in the proposal, or only upon contract award?

Response: Rates should be included in the offeror's proposal as stated in Section L.10 and will also be incorporated into the contract.

39. Who will serve as the evaluators of proposals submitted?

Response: The technical proposals will be evaluated by an Independent Peer Review. Please see Section L.11 for additional details.

40. (Section L.3.(c)) Will AHRQ accept a CD-ROM to demonstrate one or more of the communications capabilities to be proposed (e.g. data-based tracking system required under C.2.1)?

Response:

While, we appreciate the use of technology as a communications technique, for the purpose of this solicitation, we would like material submitted in a print format.

41. When will answers to these questions be available to facilitate proposal submission by the July 28, 2003 deadline?

Response: The answers to the questions received will be provided both in the FedBizzOpps and on AHRQ's web site at www.ahrq.gov as soon as possible after their receipt on 7/11/03.

42. May we have AHRQ's responses to questions from other candidates responding to this solicitation with questions?

Response: The amendment to the RFP will respond to all to the questions received and will be in question and response format.

43. What is the level of effort for the direct labor?

Response:

Approximately 74% of contract dollars are spent for direct labor and 26% for other direct costs.

44. What are the languages for the translations?

Response:

The agency translates its consumer publications into Spanish. We would like to translate these consumer publications into various Asian languages but we are limited by resources.

45. How many people does AHRQ need on site and what are their duties?

Response:

The contractor is expected to provide 12-15 onsite staff. This staff performs a variety of functions often changing on a daily basis. These functions include writing and editing agency products including fact sheets, press releases, consumer brochures, developing and implementing marketing plans, preparing pitches to the media, developing partnerships with organizations to help disseminate our products ,helping to prepare and conduct focus groups. The RFC cites the kinds of activities required.

46. What is the level of effort (total hours of FTE's) required for this SOW?

Response:

Please see the response to questions 9 and 12.

47. How many on-site contractor staff does AHRQ anticipate as part of this procurement? In which positions and how many FTE's?

Response:

See the answers provided to questions 11 & 45.

48. Are printing activities taken care of through OCKT's Division of Printing and Publishing or is the contractor responsible for these costs?

Response:

The agency is responsible for all printing activities.