

Questions to RFQ with Responses

1. Additional Information, the RFQ notes that “the VA will reimburse travel in accordance with all federal travel regulations to NPCs in order to answer the research questions?” Should Travel be included in the proposed cost? Can the Government provide an estimate as to the number of trips it envisions? Could the government provide a not to exceed estimate to promote comparability in offers? Will the contractor be traveling to VAMCs and/or NPC locations, or will the data collection/interviews take place remotely? Is remote data collection acceptable for some information? (section 6)
Answer: The number of trips should be sufficient to provide a representative sample of the sites to ensure data accuracy. Travel reimbursement should not be included in the overall cost proposal from the offeror. Travel will be reimbursed in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation, up to \$50,000. The Offeror should provide, in the technical proposal, the number of trips and locations it expects is needed to complete the tasks and deliverables of the contract. Some remote data collection is acceptable. See attached revised price schedule.
2. The Deliverables Table in Section 5 delineates multiple deliverables including the kick-off meeting; PMP; monthly reporting, agendas, and minutes; and the final written report. However, the Pricing Schedule in Section B.4 appears to request pricing for only the Final Written Report. Would it be acceptable to price only the written report but to use the other deliverables as the basis for an Invoicing Schedule?
Answer: Yes
3. Scope, the Government notes that, “The VA is interested in understanding the Extramural funding mechanism in more detail across the agency and 83 NPCs.” The questions that Government has requested answers to appear to be focused on the NPCs and their relationships with their associated VAMCs, affiliated education institutions, and NIH. Can the Government clarify what it intends through the words, “across the agency?” (SOW)
Answer: The government is looking to determine best practices and trends occurring across all NPCs.
4. Has this study on extramural research funding been performed before? Is there an incumbent contractor?
Answer: This is a new requirement.
5. Does this study inform the annual reports to Congress found on the NAVREF and VA websites?
Answer: The answer to this question does not have any bearing on the technical aspects of the contract.
6. Is there a page limit for the Technical Proposal?
Answer: The technical response is limited to 15 pages including any and all attachments. This amount includes Past Performance responses.
7. Will the contractor be interacting with the academic affiliates that participate/support NPCs?
Answer: The contractor will do whatever it thinks is required to complete the tasks and deliverables of the contract. It is the offeror’s responsibility to present to the VA their approach to completing the contract, using their expertise and knowledge.
8. How much of the quantitative and qualitative data on VAMC/NPC funding and research efforts be provided by the VA Office of Research and Development, compared to collected and aggregated by the contractor?
Answer: VA can provide some quantitative data, but the contractor is expected to collect quantitative and qualitative data. It is the offeror’s responsibility to present to the VA their approach to completing the contract, using their expertise and knowledge.
9. Will the VA Office of Research and Development be providing all the information on NPC/health research policy and procedures?
Answer: VA will provide policy, the contract will obtain information on procedures.
10. Are the Key Personnel titles listed in Section 10 (page 9) used as generic position descriptions? Why there are no specific requirements listed for the four Key Personnel positions? Are Proposers limited to the labor categories and number of personnel listed on page 9 as Key Personnel?
Answer: These are Generic Position Description that the Government anticipates may be utilized to fulfill the requirement.
11. Is there an expectation from the government, based on past evaluation reports on NPCs, about the Level of Effort required for the 12-month analysis?
Answer: It is the Governments expectation that the tasks related to this procurement will be completed in 12 months or less. This is a new requirement.
12. Are there specific data analysis tool requirements that VA anticipates when referring to “capacity for data processing” on page 33?
Answer: No. The offeror will provide in their technical proposal details of the data analysis tools used to fulfill the tasks and deliverables of the contract.
13. Since market research is inconclusive for justifying limiting competition to small business concerns or sub-categories of small business concerns for this RFQ, is the acquisition strategy considered to be full and open with a tiered evaluation of offerors? (Page 33)
Answer: As noted in the solicitation, the evaluation of offers received in response to the solicitation will use a tiered or cascading order of precedence.

14. If this RFQ is full and open and not considered to be a small business set-aside, do the requirements of 52.219-14 Limitations on Subcontracts apply? (page 32)

Answer: This solicitation was posted as unrestricted and as such 52.219-14 is not applicable.

15. Is there a page limit associated with the technical response? (Instructions to Offerors)

Answer: The technical response is limited to 15 pages including any and all attachments.

16. What government furnished information (GFI) will be provided to the contractor (e.g., NPC-submitted data, by site)? (SOW)

Answer: VA can provide some quantitative data, but the contractor is expected to collect quantitative and qualitative data. It is the offeror's responsibility to present to the VA their approach to completing the contract, using their expertise and knowledge.

17. What is the background security sensitivity (i.e., NACI, MBI, or HBI) for staff supporting this effort? (SOW)

Answer: the background security sensitivity for this effort will be a NACI.

18. Will the contractor have access to VA Researcher data from the following tools (SOW):

- a. RDIS/RDIS Part II
- b. ePROMIS
- c. VERA

Answer: The contractor will not need access, VA will provide appropriate reports.

19. Is information from each local NPC managed already and included in NPC Annual Reports? (SOW)

Answer: Yes

20. Does "university" in this solicitation include all research and education activities, across all departments) (SOW)? RC's

Answer: No, only related to VA participation in that research.

21. Does the government want information from both the NPC and the university affiliate re: "policy directing VA investigators with dual university appointments which institution should serve as the grant institution"(SOW)?

Answer: Yes

22. How many of interviews with relevant stakeholders (NPC, university affiliates, etc.) is the contractor expected to perform?

Answer: The contractor will do whatever it thinks is required to complete the tasks and deliverables of the contract. It is the offeror's responsibility to present to the VA their approach to completing the contract, using their expertise and knowledge.

23. Will the contractor have access to financial data such that the contractor may be conflicted out of future OR&D opportunities?

Answer: The VA cannot provide an answer to a question that speculates on future needs of the VA.

24. In performing this work, will the contractor have access to Sensitive Personal Information (SPI) data? If so, how many records?

Answer: The VA does not anticipate any PHI or PII transferred to the offeror under this contract.

25. What is the anticipated award date for this solicitation?

Answer: It is anticipated that award will be made prior to the end of the fiscal year.

26. Much of the data needed for the study would appear to be best collected through surveys or interviews. OMB restricts the collection of data from individuals that are not federal employees. Does the VA have a waiver for the collection of this data or would the successful offeror need to go through the OMB/Federal Register data collection approval process? Or does the Government have another solution?

Answer: OMB approval is not needed to survey VA employees. OMB requirements for interviews aren't covered the same way as surveys. If surveys are a necessary strategy, VA and the offeror can partner with NAVREF to satisfy the requirements