

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Justification and Approval (J&A) For Other Than Full and Open Competition (>\$150K)

Acquisition Plan Action ID: VA261-17-AP-10032

1. **Contracting Activity:** Department of Veterans Affairs, VISN 21, Network Contracting Office (NCO21)

2237#: 640-17-3-4819-0054

2. **Nature and/or Description of the Action Being Processed:** The VA Palo Alto Health Care System has a requirement to collaborate with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD) in conducting a series of formative evaluations to improve future phases of the VHA's implementation of measurement-based care (MBC) for mental disorders. The Contractor shall advise on qualitative study design and sample selection, develop additional interview guidelines to be approved by NCPTSD, recruit study participants, pay incentives to Veterans participating in the study, conduct site visits to participating clinics, conduct qualitative interviews with study participants, transcribe and analyze qualitative interviews, and conduct on-going updates/briefings with NCPTSD leads. The Government anticipates a firm-fixed contract type for this requirement. The anticipated period of performance is 12-months from date of contract award.

3. **Description of Supplies/Services Required to Meet the Agency's Needs:**

- Conduct qualitative research with 20 site champions (from list provided by NCPTSD) from VA clinics involved in measurement based care initiative to identify implementation processes, barriers and facilitators associated with higher and lower rates of implementation of measurement-based mental health care. Develop interview guideline, recruit participants, conduct interviews, record, transcribe, code for themes, and analyze all interviews.
- Recruit 10 VA clinics (and approximately 4-6 clinicians per clinic) (from a list of clinics provided by NCPTSD) to participate in qualitative research on their experiences implementing measurement-based mental health care. Staff in 2 to 4 clinics will be interviewed in person; the remaining interviews will be done either in person or by telephone. Record, transcribe, code for themes, and analyze all interviews.
- Conduct qualitative research with 40 clinicians and 40 patients on how outcomes data are discussed and used in the patient-clinician dyad to enhance Veterans' experience of mental health care, and identify opportunities for improving upon current practices. Recruit 40 clinician/patient dyads from a list of clinicians provided by NCPTSD. Interview 40 clinicians and 40 patients regarding the way that they define and measure patient progress, make treatment decisions, and use outcomes data to inform care. Provide audio-recordings, notes and transcripts from these visits and qualitative interviews. Obtain recordings of 40 sessions in which dyads discuss patient progress, and code those interviews. Provide audio-recordings, transcripts and/or notes from these visits and qualitative interviews
- Conduct qualitative research with 20 clinicians and 20 to obtain clinician and Veteran feedback on different ways of displaying data on patients' progress in mental health care. Draft qualitative

interview guidelines to be approved by NCPTSD. Develop sampling criteria for clinician and veteran participants to be approved by NCPTSD. Develop data display stimuli (e.g., different paper reports of hypothetical data). Conduct qualitative interviews to obtain feedback on different data display prototypes. Pending regulatory approvals, provide audio-recordings, transcripts, and/or notes from these visits and qualitative interviews. Analyze interviews to identify emergent themes and key findings.

- Share findings from these activities through informal briefings to NCPTSD.
- Collaborate with NCPTSD in publishing in academic journals relevant implementation science findings.

Projected Period of Performance: September 15, 2017 – September 14, 2018

4. Statutory Authority Permitting Other than Full and Open Competition:

- (X) (1) Only One Responsible Source and No Other Supplies or Services Will Satisfy Agency Requirements per FAR 6.302-1;
- () (2) Unusual and Compelling Urgency per FAR 6.302-2;
- () (3) Industrial Mobilization, Engineering, Developmental or Research Capability or Expert Services per FAR 6.302-3;
- () (4) International Agreement per FAR 6.302-4
- () (5) Authorized or Required by Statute FAR 6.302-5;
- () (6) National Security per FAR 6.302-6;
- () (7) Public Interest per FAR 6.302-7;

5. Demonstration that the Contractor's Unique Qualifications or Nature of the Acquisition Requires the Use of the Authority Cited Above (applicability of authority): This requirement requires three types of specialized expertise – 1) Methodical expertise in qualitative research, 2) Content knowledge regarding implementing measurement-based care in large health care systems, and 3) content knowledge regarding mental health treatment for veterans or military personnel.

Based upon extensive market research conducted, by the requiring activity between November 2016 and April 2017, it was determined that only one firm, RAND Corporation, has the extensive knowledge, experience, expertise, and capabilities to meet the projects three specialized areas identified above. RAND Corporation has performed similar qualitative research projects using these methods in other VA and Department of Defense (DOD) mental health programs. RAND Corporation is the only firm found to have direct experience in the area of evaluating implementation of measurement-based care for military veterans.

6. Description of Efforts Made to ensure that offers are solicited from as many potential sources as deemed practicable: As noted above, the requiring activity conducted market research between November 2016 and April 2017 to attempt to identify as many potential sources who had the qualifications, experience and expertise to meet the project requirements.

The following methods were utilized to solicit potential sources:

- Used PUBMED database of all peer-reviewed medical studies to identify researchers that have published in the past 5 years on implementation of measurement-based mental health care and on evaluation of VA or DoD mental health programs.
- Solicited recommendations from other VA researchers at multiple sites.
- Reviewed potential vendor websites for capabilities and lists of prior projects

Competition is limited primarily by the lack of experience in the measurement-based care and implementation of such programs in the industry. This project will rely heavily in the firm's ability to interpret the data received on their experience, and content knowledge about measurement-based care and VA mental health programs.

7. **Determination by the Contracting Officer that the Anticipated Cost to the Government will be Fair and Reasonable:** Because the Government intends to negotiate a sole-source firm fixed price contract with RAND Corporation; the Government will require that RAND provide other than certified cost and pricing data to allow the Government to perform a cost and price analysis of the quoted price to determine price fair and reasonableness. The Government will utilize one or a combination of the price analysis techniques described in FAR 15.401-1 to ensure the price is determined to be fair and reasonable prior to contract award.
8. **Description of the Market Research Conducted and the Results, or a Statement of the Reasons Market Research Was Not Conducted:** Market research, in accordance with FAR Part 10, was conducted by synopsis of the proposed acquisition, advising industry of the pending acquisition and soliciting inquiries from interested parties.

Sources sought notification was posted to the Federal Business Opportunities (FBO) website from June 5, 2017 – June 26, 2017. To further expand the market research and solicit the maximum potential sources practicable, a request for information (RFI) was also posted to the GSA eBuy website. There were no responses received from the GSA eBuy RFI, however, three (3) responses were received from the FBO sources sought notification. Those three (3) firms are identified in item 10 of this report (RAND, GiaCare, Westat).

9. **Any Other Facts Supporting the Use of Other than Full and Open Competition:** Full specifications and statement of work for this project have been developed in such a manner as to not limit full and open competition. There is not a large industry base for this type of project. As noted earlier in this report (item 6) competition is primarily limited by the lack of in-depth industry expertise in measurement-based health care.

10. **Listing of Sources that Expressed, in Writing, an Interest in the Acquisition:**

RAND Corporation (Kimberly Hepner, hepner@rand.org) Non-Profit Organization
Atlas Research (Julia Rollison, jrollison@atlasresearch.us) SDVOSB
New England Research Institute (Lisa Marceau, LMarceau@neriscience.com) WOSB
Westat (Laurie May, LaurieMay@westat.com) Large Business
GiaCare, Inc. (Daniel Hammer, DHammer@giacare.com) S/SDB/WOSB

11. A Statement of the Actions, if any, the Agency May Take to Remove or Overcome any Barriers to Competition before Making subsequent acquisitions for the supplies or services required:

Subsequent actions are unlikely. This project is being funded by a one-time increase in the NCPTSD's budget for FY2017. In addition, should there be future acquisitions as follow-on (or standalone) projects to this requirement, the pool of firms may expand as scientific research on measurement-based care and on implementation progresses. The increase of available firms to fulfill requirements like this project is dependent upon those firms gaining expertise and experience in measurement-based care and implementation.

12. Requirements Certification: I certify that the requirement outlined in this justification is a Bona Fide Need of the Department of Veterans Affairs and that the supporting data under my cognizance, which are included in the justification, are accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Rosen, Craig

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ou=InternalStaff, cn=Rosen,
Craig
Date: 2017.07.20 15:47:05 -07'00'

Name: Craig Rosen, Ph.D.
Title: Deputy Director NCPTSD Dissemination
& Training Division
VA Palo Alto Health Care System

Date 7/20/2017

13. Approvals in accordance with the VHAPM, Volume 6, Chapter VI: OFOC SOP.

- a. **Contracting Officer or Designee's Certification (required):** I certify that the foregoing justification is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Jet I. Flores

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Jet Flores
Contracting Officer

Date 07/27/2017

- b. **Director of Contracting /Designee (Required over\$ 150K but not exceeding \$700K):** I certify the justification meets requirements for other than full and open competition.

Michael Hodahkwen

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Michael Hodahkwen
NCO21 Acting Branch Chief, Services I

Date 07/27/2017