

Questions and Responses: VA786A-13-R-0004 RFP for Interpretive Signs at Civil War Cemeteries

1. Please confirm that the proposal offeror is required to provide a bond, as specified in the Pledges of Assets (Page 21, Clause 52.228-11).

Response: The Clause 52.228-11 is hereby deleted from the solicitation. No performance or bid bond required.

2. Please confirm that the bid guarantee requirement (Page 24, Clause 52.228-1) is actually a requirement for this proposal.

Response: The Clause 52.228-1 is hereby deleted from the solicitation. No bid guarantee is required.

3. The description of CLIN 0001 and 0002 indicates that draft designs and text exist. Can we receive a copy so that we're clear what we're working with?

Response: See Amendment Attachment 1 for an example of a design for CLIN 0002.

4. CLIN 0003 to 0010 indicate that the contractor is responsible for "assembling all content and design for the signs and submission to NCA Historians for approval." From what sources would such assembly take place? Are they all readily available books, articles, or websites or will all sources be provided by NCA to the client? If neither, then will the contractor be expected to pursue research in federal or local repositories?

Response: Sources may vary; there is a lot of information available in the NCA History Program files as is indicated in the SOW. However, ultimately the contractor will be responsible for pursuing **reputable and verifiable** additional avenues of information, which may include research in federal or local repositories.

5. Would the basic template for all site-specific signs (CLIN 0003 – 0010) be the same or would each Network or location's templates be unique?

Response: Template would only be the same in terms of color scheme, font style and sizes, general layout, and required features such as the DVA seal. Each will be different in terms of text content and graphics.

6. It appears that pricing must include bases, panels, and shipping but not installation. Is this correct? If so, we need to include shipping costs in our price proposals. Can you provide shipping addresses now for a more precise estimate?

Response: Yes, see Amendment Attachment 2 for shipping addresses.

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7. We note that NCA shall provide access to all NCA graphics. If images are selected from outside the NCA collections, will NCA manage and pay for acquisition of those images? Or must the contractor build into our bids fees for image acquisition? If the latter, how many images do you anticipate (per CLIN)?

Response: In general, we anticipate that the majority of images needed to produce these signs are in the NCA History Collection or can be obtained from Federal repositories that do not charge a fee for reproduction or use, and we encourage the incumbent to seek these out as a preferred option.

8. Will the contractor be involved in making recommendations for locating panels at each cemetery? If not, because waysides should ideally interpret something in the view, will locations be identified to the contractor, along with photographs of those locations?

Response: Not necessarily. If the panels address a particular portion of the cemetery, they will be sited in an appropriate area. But generally, these are overview panels that will be sited near the main entrance or administrative building within the cemetery where pedestrian and vehicular traffic will see them easily.

9. The statement of work references “full-size proofs” of the panels. Are we correct to understand that such proofs should be provided by fabricator for every panel or is it for a selection of representative panels?

Response: Every panel that is original. We do not require multiple full-size proofs of a single design such as that for CLIN 0001.

10. Are the frames a part of the contract?

Response: Yes.

11. Are you able to provide a list of the specific cemeteries to which the signs will be shipped? This is necessary to provide an accurate freight estimate and will help with more accurately understanding the scope of research required.

Response: Yes, see Amendment Attachment 2 for shipping addresses.

12. The RFP text specifies that all signs are to be “traditional low profile signs,” but the figure provided shows a cantilevered base. Which is preferred?

Response: Text should state low profile cantilevered base; we want what is in the figure provided as Solicitation Attachment 4.

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13. Will the NCA provide the desired font(s), or will the contractor be required to purchase them? Similarly, will the NCA provide standard Pantone colors?

Response: The contractor is required to purchase everything related to the manufacture of the interpretive panels and bases.

14. The scope specifies that the contractor should provide up to three designs for each sign. Is it anticipated that three designs will be required for each sign, or do you expect that early on the NCA and contractor will establish a standard design template that will be applied to all signs to maintain a consistent look?

Response: A standard design is already available and we expect submittals to adhere to that design as far as color scheme, font style and sizes, general layout and required features such as the DVA seal. The layout of text and graphics within the panel is likely to change from sign to sign. We reserve the right to see up to three potential layouts for each unique interpretive sign. However, text and graphic will be decided upon prior to layout, i.e. each of up to three layouts will have the same text and graphics.

15. The scope specifies that if adequate images or graphics are not provided by the NCA or identified at other repositories, they may be “purchased or commissioned as necessary.” Since such expenses are difficult to estimate prior to conducting research, do such fees need to be included in the proposal, or will they be negotiated later if determined necessary by the NCA and the contractor?

Response: In general, we anticipate that the majority of images needed to produce these signs can be obtained from Federal repositories that do not charge a fee for reproduction or use or the NCA History Collection has them already, and we encourage the incumbent to seek these out as a preferred option.

16. Is it reasonable to assume that the CLINs will be issued in the order in which they are listed? Do you expect that they will be grouped or issued individually?

Response: CLINS 0001-00004 will be issued together as a base award. The optional CLINS may be issued as one group, multiple groups, or single CLINS. For pricing purposes at this time each CLIN should be treated as a stand-a-lone.

17. Will the NCA allow alternative fee scenarios in the proposal where certain efficiencies may be possible? That is, for example, a fee if all CLINs were to be issued concurrently or in a set number of groups.

Response: No, alternative fee scenarios are not allowed. The CLINs have been arranged to take advantage of efficiencies in printing and shipping to the extent possible based on operational needs.

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18. Is it the expectation of the NCA that all research can be accomplished in Washington D.C.?

Response: Sources may vary; there is a lot of information available in the NCA History Program files as is indicated in the SOW. However, ultimately the contractor will be responsible for pursuing **reputable and verifiable** additional avenues of information, which may include research in federal or local repositories.

19. The Scope of Work specifies that the base award will include CLINs 0001 and 0002. However, The CLIN schedule and the Delivery Schedule state that the base award will include CLINs 0001 through 0004. Which is correct?

Response: The base award is for CLINs 0001 through 0004 as reflected in the CLIN schedule and the Delivery Schedule. The Scope of Work is duly revised to reflect this.

20. Under the Scope of Work, it states that NCA shall provide "Draft content (text and graphics) for one "Origins" interpretive sign" and for the signage for eighteen Confederate cemeteries. Will this draft content have been approved for use by NCA prior to delivery to the contractor, or will the contractor be expected to make revisions? How significant might those revisions be?

Response: All content for interpretive signs for CLIN 0001 and 0002 will be approved by NCA prior to submittal. The contractor is not expected to make revisions.

21. Under the Scope of Work, it states that NCA will provide access to various records in the Washington, DC office and "information about records at other locations will be provided, as necessary." Is travel to other locations anticipated, or will the contractor be able to request material from other locations if needed?

Response: Sources may vary; there is a lot of information available in the NCA History Program files as is indicated in the SOW. However, ultimately the contractor will be responsible for pursuing **reputable and verifiable** additional avenues of information, which may include research in federal or local repositories.

22. Will NCA be responsible for installing the signs on-site, or should that be part of the bid?

Response: NCA will be responsible for installing the signs on-site.

23. What is the anticipated length of text for each sign?

Response: No more than 750 words, not counting captions; 450-500 words is preferable.

24. What is the anticipated number of graphics, such as maps and photographs, that will be included on each sign?

Response: Three to five graphics.

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25. In the Scope of Work, it asks for three alternative design/layout options. Is this asking for three unique designs for each different panel? Or would you like to see three different designs at the start of the project, of the typical panels, so you can make decisions at that point? Or are we reading this incorrectly, altogether?

Response: A standard design is already available and we expect submittals to adhere to that design as far as color scheme, font style and sizes, general layout and required features such as the DVA seal. The layout of text and graphics within the panel is likely to change from sign to sign. We reserve the right to see up to three potential layouts for each unique interpretive sign. However, text and graphic will be decided upon prior to layout, i.e. each of up to three layouts will have the same text and graphics.

26. Do you have any desired submittal schedule? For typical NPS project, we have a draft/revised/final submittal. Is this acceptable, or would you like to see more/less?

Response: Draft, revised and final submittal are requested.

27. In Section B, it states that “draft design... (text and graphics) exists...”. When provided, will this contain high-resolution graphic files? (CLIN 0001 and 0002)

Response: Yes.

28. Can you estimate how many images will be used per panel?

Response: Three to five graphics.

29. What percentage of the imagery will be provided by Veterans Affairs? Of the images provided, are use rights already established, or will we need to acquire new usage rights for this project?

Response: In general, we anticipate that the majority of images needed to produce these signs can be obtained from NCA History Program archives or Federal repositories that do not charge a fee for reproduction or use, and we encourage the incumbent to seek these out as a preferred option.

30. Can we see the mock-ups during the bidding stage?

Response: See Amendment Attachment 1 for one of the interpretive panels to be produced under CLIN 0002 and Amendment Attachment 3 for three recent interpretive signs erected at national cemeteries.

31. After reading the proposal, it sounds as though cartography would be a useful element in this project. Has mapping been considered? If so, could you please tell us a little more about that?

Response: No, mapping has not been considered and is really not deemed necessary for this project.

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32. In Section B, it states that “draft design... (text and graphics) exists...”. When provided, what stage will the text be at? (CLIN 0001 and 0002) Will we be receiving already written, ready to go text? Or will we need to do research, and write text from scratch?

Response: The successfully bidder will receive text, graphics and the basic design layout for CLIN 0001 and 0002; for these CLINs the work involves manufacturing the panels and bases, and shipping them to the required addresses.

33. Does VA have subject matter experts that we can talk to to acquire any necessary research? Can you tell us more about what resources you have?

Response: There are three historians at NCA who are subject matter experts on the national cemeteries. The History Program maintains extensive vertical files and photo collections on each cemetery. Additionally we have detailed finding aids for National Archives and Records Administration collections pertaining to the national cemeteries.

34. Is any illustration being considered for this project? If so, please tell us a little more about what may be desired.

Response: There is no need for the creation of new illustrations.

35. It appears as though there will be 191 signs (113 unique) with all options awarded. However, in the second paragraph of Section C, it states 202 signs. Could you explain the difference?

Response: The second paragraph of Section C does not state 202 signs; note that the 4th line reads “up to 90”; in fact there will only be 79 unique interpretive signs for the national cemeteries. The numbers of signs in the CLIN schedule is correct; the total is 119 signs, 113 being unique.

36. The prototypical signs at Cave Hill, Florence and Salisbury – could you share with us who designed these panels?

Response: Yes, see Amendment Attachment 3.

37. Are there any photographs available of these exhibits?

Response: Yes, see Amendment Attachment 3.

38. The frame style submitted in the image is what you are looking for, correct?

Response: The base/frame should be the low-profile cantilevered style depicted in Solicitation Attachment 4.

39. For in-ground installation, will you be installing into concrete?

Response: That is the intended installation method.

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40. Is the end date flexible?

Response: No.

41. Is the schedule flexible up to the end date – in other words, as long as we finish the project on time, do you have any preference to what the interim dates end up being?

Response: No.

42. Do you have any minimum review periods on your end?

Response: Minimum of 5 and maximum of 25 working days. Review for CLINs 0001 and 0002 will likely be shorter as the text and graphic are already approved. Review for the other CLINs in the base period and in optional work will likely take longer as all text and graphic need to be reviewed in addition to designs.

43. How many people are involved in the review/approval process on your end? Will there be one main point of contact, making all the decisions and communications?

Response: There will be one main point of contact for general project management—the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). The text and graphics for CLINs 0001 and 0002 will be approved prior to the contractor receiving them. In general though, 3-4 persons will be involved in the review/approval process.

44. We do not see a travel to VA, or any cemetery. Is there no travel associated with this project? Is it worthwhile to consider a kick-off trip to meet leaders of the team, review content/resources available, and possibly visit a cemetery?

Response: Travel may be required for research purposes to the Washington, DC-area, to review collections of the NCA History Program and the National Archives and Records Administration. Travel to national cemeteries is not anticipated.

45. By our count, we will be shipping to 103 different addresses. Is that correct?

Response: Please see Amendment Attachment 2, which provides the numbers of interpretive signs to be sent and addresses of the receiving cemetery per CLIN.

46. We understand that CLIN 0003-0010 depend upon available funds, but is there an expected time frame for those items to be issued?

Response: No; however, it is hoped that the remaining CLINS will be funded prior to 2015, the end of the Civil War Sesquicentennial (2011-15).

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47. For all research and graphic materials located in Washington DC, will a site visit be necessary to review the materials? If copies are needed of the photos and artwork, who will be responsible for making those copies?

Response: Yes, a site visit of 1-2 days to the Washington, DC-area should be built into the project for research purposes to Washington, DC. The History Program office and NARA facilities in Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland should be visited.

48. Are questions regarding this proposal due five or ten days prior to the deadline?

Response: Questions are due no later than 10 calendar days before proposals are due.

49. On page 55, VOLUME 1-Technical Ability, it states that "[t]his section shall have 2 copies...." Is copy one Volume 1A and copy 2 Volume 1B? Or do we need to make two copies of each volume?

Response: You are required to have two (2) copies and volume I.B shall not have any identifying names or logos as requested.

50. Will you be responsible for identifying Volume 1B, since we are not to include any identification markings within?

Response: Yes

51. Also on page 55, Technical Qualifications (B), we are not aware of any "licenses, permits, insurance information or other certifications necessary" to complete this project. Do you have information of any that will be required for this project?

Response: SOW states "if applicable."

52. Given some uncertainty with the wording, we just wanted to verify if, for this contract, the prime contractor was required to carry the aforementioned code. Based on the proposed scope of work, CRA, a small business (and registered under NAICS codes 541360, 541380, 541620, 541690, 541720, 541990, 712120) for historic preservation and cultural resource studies, was intending to prime and fulfill all tasks except sign manufacture, which would be fulfilled by our chosen subcontractor, which does have the applicable NAICS code. Can you please comment on whether this arrangement would meet the requirements of the contract?

Response: The Federal government sets aside procurement opportunities for small business concerns. To qualify for a "small business set-aside" you must first be a for-profit business concern and meet the small business size standard for the NAICS code that the contracting officer assigns to the procurement. That may or may not be the same as your principal business activity. However, if it is not, it does not stop you from bidding, if you meet the size standard and can fulfill the contract requirements. Please contact the Small Business Administration directly if needed.

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53. Your RFP specifies embedded fiberglass as the fabrication material, which I'm happy to bid. However, I am wondering if you would also be open to an optional bid fabricating these signs in digital high pressure laminate, which is considered to be a superior product in the interpretive signage field.

Response: Please bid the specifications as written.

54. Should our proposals for RFP #VA786A-13-R-004 for Civil War Cemetery signage include fabrication, delivery and installation of the signs, or just design and oversight of the fabrication and delivery? Also, should the Contractor include the cost of procuring high-quality source images and use rights, or will the Dept. of Veteran Affairs cover these costs?

Response: Please refer to Section C, Scope of Work. Work includes the design and layout of the interpretive panels and the acquisition and delivery of the panels and base; installation is not part of the contract as this will be accomplished by the supervising cemetery.

In general, we anticipate that the majority of images needed to produce these signs can be obtained from NCA History Program archives or Federal repositories that do not charge a fee for reproduction or use, and we encourage the incumbent to seek these out as a preferred option.

55. At the bottom of page 1, are all four underlined questions linked (i.e., are they to be filled in only if the contract was not completed), or are the task list and the description of supply/services separate questions to be completed for all projects?

Response: The Offeror/Contractor must complete the required signature and date blocks in order to be considered responsive along with other required submissions.

56. Are you requesting my banking information on the Business Management Questionnaire, or the bank information for the contract administrator or company for the project described on the questionnaire?

Response: The Offeror that is submitting a proposal as outlined in the questionnaire must complete the form.

57. If I am reading the scope correctly you are requesting that a sign company does the research for each sign text and that as a sign company be responsible for its historical accuracy? Is this something that you should be provided to us and as a manufacturer we then scale the size and do the final design to be part of the signage? I see a huge probable error in accuracy if this is left up to individual research interpretations

Response: The successful contractor must be able to provide the necessary expertise to complete the research and writing necessary for interpretive signs in CLINs 0003-0010, and coordinate the design and production of the interpretive signs.