

**N02-CO-82402-92**  
**“Computer and Statistical Support Services at the NCI-Frederick”**

**N02-CO-82403-96**  
**“Scientific Library Services at the NCI-Frederick”**

**Pre-Proposal Conference**

**September 25th, 2007**

**Questions & Answers**

- 1. The RFP requires that the NIST SP 800 26 Self Assessment Questionnaire and the Draft Information Security Plan be submitted as part of the proposal. However, the work to be performed under this contract will be performed at the Government’s facility, not the contractor’s facility. In light of this, shouldn’t the requirement for the Self Assessment and Information Security Plan be waived?**

The requirement for a Self Assessment Questionnaire and Information Security Plan will not apply for the base proposal as work to be conducted under the base proposal will be performed at the Government’s facility. However, if an offeror proposes an alternate proposal and the alternate proposal includes work to be conducted at a contractor’s and/or subcontractor’s facility, the Self Assessment Questionnaire and Information Security Plan will be required as part of the alternate proposal.

- 2. Part I. Article B.2 refers to base fee and award fee. Other areas of the solicitation package speak to only an award fee type contract. Please clarify NCI’s intended type of fee structure.**

The fee structure is award fee. The base fee will be \$0. The fee will be 100% award fee.

- 3. Section L. I. h. states “Offerors must indicate their willingness to accept employee service, sick leave and vacation credits already accumulated.” Article H. 18, Continuity of Services, requires the successful contractor under this solicitation to transfer all accrued employee benefits and funds accrued for those benefits to a successor contractor. This provision specifically lists sick leave and vacation. Will funds accrued by the current contractor for sick leave and vacation be similarly transferred?**

Sick leave is paid as it is taken, so there will not be any sick leave costs that are accrued. The funds that will be paid are the vacation leave earned but not taken.

- 4. Attachment 4, SOW, #6 cites “Provision of data entry and operational services for local computer operations” yet there is no further description of this activity on the following pages of the SOW. This phrase by itself does not give bidders any idea of the definition and extent of data entry and what is meant by operational services and/or local computer operations. Is this an omission or is this the only description of this activity that bidders are supposed to respond to?**

Data entry is provided for projects or systems where data verification/validation may be required; for example, the contractor may have to key corrections/amendments to billing data if the end user provides them in writing. Currently, there are no dedicated data entry staff on this contract.

- 5. How many total Programmer/ Analysts (Sr. Programmer/Analysts (I, II, and III) and Programmer/Analysts (I, II, and III)) are involved in Scientific Programming versus Financial Systems versus Facilities?**

There are 6 in Scientific Programming and 9 in Financial/Facilities Support.

- 6. Section M.3, Technical Evaluation Criteria lists “Corporate Experience and Support” as a factor worth 10 points. Yet the instructions list no direction to specifically address either topic (corporate experience and/or corporate support) in the Technical Proposal. Is this an omission or will the information presented in the Business Proposal (Qualifications of the Offeror) be taken into account by evaluators to rate Corporate Experience with 10 points at stake?**

In the technical proposal offerors should document corporate experiences in and resources for the provision and management of scientific and administrative computer and statistical support services for a large, complex, multi-faceted research and research support facility comparable to the NCI-Frederick. Offerors should also address any proposed additional corporate support for addressing the requirements of the Statement of Work in the technical proposal.

- 7. Page 63, Obtaining and Disseminating Biomedical Research Resources. A website is given for guidance. Other than indicating we have read and understood the important information in that website, what else is NCI looking for from bidders in their proposal on this topic?**

This is standard language that is required in all NIH RFPs. Offerors need not specifically address this in their proposal, but should read and familiarize themselves with this information.

- 8. Page 63, Information Security, items a. (information type), b. (security categories and levels) and c. (position sensitivity designations) present important information. Other than acknowledging that bidders have read and understood the information presented, what else is the NCI looking for from bidders in responding to these subsections?**

Subsections a., b., and c. are designated by the Government. Offerors need not specifically reply to these subsections, but should be sure to respond to all requirements listed in the Information Security provision.

- 9. Is there an NCI standard configuration (hardware and software) for servers, desktops and laptops? If there is, what are the configurations?**

No. There is no standard configuration for servers, desktops and laptops. However, NIH IT policies, guidelines, and procedures must be followed.

- 10. Is there a page limit? If so, are attachments, past performance, resumes, etc. included in the limit?**

There is no page limit.

- 11. The RFP specifically excludes Overhead costs as a costing element yet the type of contract is expected to be a Cost Plus Award Fee type. The rationale for the exclusion is that the personnel to work under the contract will be working on-site and no office space will be required. Overhead costs include more than office space costs for direct labor personnel and are an integral part of many organizations indirect cost structures. Can Overhead costs be added as an allowable costing element?**

NCI-Frederick on-site contracts have historically never had overhead costs. Our Operations and Technical Support (OTS) contractor handles purchasing of all equipment and supplies, building maintenance and other overhead pool type costs that would typically be incurred by a contractor who was not working on site and provided Government facilities. Should an offeror feel strongly that such overhead costs are truly necessary, the offeror may propose those costs and whether the costs are allowable and

allocable to the contract can be reviewed during the discussion stage.

- 12. Due to the extensive requirements for submitting a proposal, such as signed acceptance letters by proposed personnel, with the pre-proposal conference being scheduled for September 25<sup>th</sup>, we are requesting an extension on the due date of the proposal. A short response date for an effort of this magnitude can be construed as indicative of the incumbent firm being provided an unfair advantage. Can a 30 day extension on the due date be issued?**

FAR 5.203 Publicizing and Response Time requires that agencies allow at least a 30-day response time for receipt of bids or proposals from the date of issuance of the solicitation. The RFPs were issued on September 13, 2007 and are due October 15, 2007, which complies with the regulations. Additionally, extensive information regarding the scope of the requirement has been provided in the form of the pricing sheets in the RFP. This type of information is not typically provided, but due to the unique nature of these contracts being performed in Government facilities at a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) this very detailed information is made available to assist all potential offerors in proposal preparation. An electronic reading room has also been made available with significant information for all potential offerors. Based on the above, NCI-Frederick does not anticipate extending the due date for the proposals at this time; however, if necessary we are open to extending the due date.

- 13. The requirement of having signed acceptance letters for personnel not on staff and expected to start work not until approximately one year from proposal due date is quite formidable for a number of reasons. These requirements seem to heavily favor the incumbent. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?**

The question is difficult to address because the number of reasons the requirement is "formidable" are not elaborated upon. However, the RFP requires, under Section L. 1. h. Special Conditions for Award that the offeror must agree to include in its phase-in plan provision for the employment of all current Contractor personnel for a period of 90 days, effective midnight September 25, 2008. Secondly, item 7. Total Compensation Plan, clearly states that "The Government is concerned with the quality and stability of the work force to be employed on this contract." The Government anticipates that offerors would retain all, or at the least a significant percentage of the incumbent's staff should the incumbent not secure a follow-on award. In instances where the proposer

anticipates bringing on new staff the Government has requested that for proposed staff who are not currently members of the incumbent contractor's staff provide a letter of commitment or other evidence of availability. The key personnel (Principal Manager) must have a letter of commitment or other evidence of availability (included in the response to the RFP) because this position is so important to the operation and management of the contract, and the Government must be able to evaluate the proposed personnel for this position. Please note that a letter of commitment is not a letter of acceptance; it is not necessary for prospective offerors to have signed contracts with prospective employees for purposes of the proposal.

**14. With an anticipated start date of late September 2008, why is such a short turnaround time given to respond to the RFP?**

Please see the answer to Question 12 above.

**15. The evaluation factors for award specify that 40 of the 100 evaluation points will be given in the key personnel category. One position, the Principal Investigator/Project Director, is indicated as key personnel. This also seems to be the only resume allowed as part of the submission. Does this mean that 40% of the evaluation criteria is based on the qualifications of one individual? Can others be added as key personnel? If so, will quantity of key personnel be a factor in the evaluation criteria?**

Yes, for the base proposal, 40% of the evaluation criteria is based on the qualifications of one individual. Under Item g. Pricing Sheets it is clearly stated that any deviation from the level of effort specified will be considered an alternate proposal. An alternate proposal can be submitted so long as a base proposal is submitted as well. If an offeror chooses to utilize a team of key personnel as opposed to a single individual, that approach and the other key personnel may be proposed in an alternate proposal. Under the alternate the key personnel will not be evaluated in terms of quantity but in terms of how the documented experience stipulated in the evaluation factor is met by the key personnel proposed. Please keep in mind that all key personnel proposed will be listed in the subsequent contract with the stipulation that the Contractor shall not divert or otherwise replace any key personnel without the written consent of the Contracting Officer.

**16. If other resumes exclusive of Principal Investigator/Project Director are allowed to be submitted, are there a minimum and maximum number of resumes allowed for submission?**

There is no minimum or maximum number of resumes allowed for submission. Please keep in mind that in instances where the proposer anticipates bringing on new staff the Government has requested that for proposed staff who are not currently members of the incumbent contractor's staff provide a letter of commitment or other evidence of availability.

**17. Please elaborate on your business cost model. There are figures specified in the business proposal pricing sheet for Professional Labor, Admin Labor, Materials and Supplies, Other Direct Costs, and Equipment. How were these figures developed? Are they reflective of estimated cost?**

The figures are reflective of the Government's estimated cost to fulfill the requirements outlined in the Statement of Work.

**18. In the business cost model, figures are specified for Materials and Supplies, Other Direct Costs, and Equipment. The Statement of Work does not indicate the need for the contractor to make purchases of this nature. Please clarify.**

The computer support contractor will not make these purchases as the Operations and Technical Support (OTS) contractor will be making these purchases for the Contractor. The Contractor will still need to budget for these purchases though as these funds are reimbursed through the Special Bank Account. The Special Bank Account consists of funds dedicated to the OTS contractor, but expenses for our other FFRDC contractors are credited to that account.

**19. Page 4 of the SOW mentions training. Training is not mentioned on the first page of the SOW in the 10 items the contractor is responsible for. Is that an omission?**

Training is a requirement of the SOW and the Contractor is responsible for training.

**20. Page 4, Training, of the SOW lists some training to be coordinated "through outsourcing". Is that outsourced training to be charged to the contract and therefore treated as an ODC and, if so, will NCI give bidders the ODC value to use since from the description one cannot tell the extent (numbers of people, classes, schedule, level, etc.)?**

Outsourced training is not charged to the contract and it therefore is not treated as an ODC.

**21. Does the Government own the software licenses? If it is GOTS then do they have all the required documentation and software patches?**

The Government owns the software licenses and has all the required documentation and software patches.

**22. Regarding Microcomputer and Communications Support Services, where are the 5,000 microcomputer systems located? What platforms are these systems on? Does the Government have a map of the network and how the systems interoperate that can be made available?**

Primarily at the NCI-Frederick Ft. Detrick with some at remote locations (all within/near the City of Frederick). The government permits a wide variety of platforms and broad purchasing discretion; most systems are Windows (Vista, XP, 2000), MacOS (9.x), Mac OSX, or various forms of Linux. Proprietary software may be employed on microcomputers which interface with scientific equipment. Windows XP and Max OSX comprise the majority at this time. The network is the responsibility of the OTS contractor and is not in the purview of the Computer and Statistical Support contract.

**23. In regard to Statistical Services is the government looking for a bio statistician with expertise in Public Health or will a statistician with experience in healthcare be sufficient?**

The biostatistician should have education and/or experience in biostatistics as applied to medical/biological basic and translational research.

**24. What percentage of the existing incumbent personnel does the government wish the contractor to retain?**

In the past when the incumbent contractor has not been successful, the incoming contract has typically retained all of the incumbent contractor's staff and the only change has been the Principal Manager. Please also see the answer to Question 13 for additional guidance in this regard.

**25. Will the contractor be responsible for providing the training, managing an existing training contract or outsourcing and managing the training requirements?**

The contractor is responsible for management and oversight of IT training. Most of this training is outsourced. Some of it may be provided by in-house staff though.

**26. The acquisition schedule seems inconsistent with Government common acquisition practices given the RFP release date of 14 Sep 07, RFP response due date of 15 Oct 07, and an award date in mid 2008. Pricing to the government is normally honored for 120 days following submission. Would the government reconsider the RFP due date and provide a more realistic timeframe or explain why this differs from what we perceive as Government common practices? We would like to request a minimum of a 30-60 day extension of the RFP Due Date.**

Please see the answer to Question 12. In regards to the 120 days, the Government anticipates that once negotiations occur with offerors in the competitive range and final proposal revisions are submitted that award will be made within 120 days of submission of final proposal revisions.

**27. Is the pricing information on the base business proposal pricing sheet an example or actual placeholder values to be used in the cost proposal submission?**

The pricing sheets include actual placeholder values to be used in the cost proposal submission. Offerors need to provide costs for Key Personnel, Total Labor (which includes the Key Personnel cost), Fringe Costs, G&A costs, Fee, and Total Overall Cost.

**28. Who is the current incumbent?**

The current incumbents are Wilson Information Services Corporation (Library) and Data Management Services, Inc. (Computer).

**29. The RFP states that the proposal must be signed by an agent and that proposal should be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority. What evidence is acceptable and can that evidence be furnished to the issuing office prior to submission, as stated in the line "unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office".**

The RFP states that the name, title, and signature of the person authorized to sign the proposal must be on the first page of the proposal; it does not state that the proposal must be signed by an agent. If the proposal is signed by an agent (i.e. an interested party who is not the employee of the offeror) it must be accompanied by evidence that the offeror has designated said authority to the agent.

**30. The RFP states that offerors shall provide fringe benefits which are essentially comparable to those currently in effect. Offerors must indicate their willingness to accept employee service, sick leave and vacation credits already accumulated. What are these benefits so we know what to include in the proposal?**

These benefits are listed in the RFP under Section L., 1. General Information paragraph m. Reference Materials. An on-line reading room has been established at <http://web.ncifcrf.gov/mosb.asp>.

**31. Regarding operational support for microcomputer hardware repairs and software, what are the estimated amount of systems? What is the estimated age of current hardware / infrastructure (EOL, etc...)?**

There are 5,000 systems. The age of the systems varies.

**32. Could you provide specific examples of previous statistical services requested?**

Peer collaboration with leading cancer and HIV/AIDS researchers in the areas of biostatistics, bioinformatics, chemoinformatics, and mathematical modeling.

**33. Regarding provision of scientific programming support for microcomputers, laboratory instrumentation, and statistical analyses, does this include computerized medical equipment? What special skills will be required? Are any special certifications required to work on equipment?**

This requirement does include computerized scientific equipment. No special certifications are required.

**34. Regarding the provision of support for development and maintenance of web sites for administrative and scientific communities, how many sites are there? What special skills are required for maintaining sites (DBA, JAVA, Flash, etc)?**

There are several sites maintained under this contract for a total of approximately 10,000 pages. Technologies employed include ASP.NET, ASP, Java, Flash, J2EE, JBoss, Websphere, NetDynamics, ActiveX, Livecycle, Javascript, Sybase Enterprise Server, MS SQL, MySQL.

**35. Regarding the provision of data entry and operational services for local computer operations in support of computer processing, what software**

**is used (anything proprietary or is it all COTS)? How many systems are there?**

There are approximately 30 systems in place. Most software is COTS or GOTS.

**36. In terms of monitoring and evaluation of new technologies which may provide cost effective solutions to NCI-Frederick's programs are there any specific new technologies NCI is interested in? Is this an interest in technology as a whole or specific lines of operation such as data visualization, statistical analysis, fusion analysis, etc?**

Potential offerors should be able to provide recommendations to NCI on new technologies in all areas defined in the SOW.