

AMENDMENT OF SOLICITATION/MODIFICATION OF CONTRACT

1. CONTRACT ID CODE _____ PAGE OF PAGES _____

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 _____		

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.

(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.

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

The following amendment is issued for the following reasons:

1. To respond to questions received by potential offerors.
2. To remove the requirement for the submission of a Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan and to remove reference to such plan from all parts of the solicitation including Section L (Instructions, Conditions and Notices to Offerors), and Section M, (Evaluation Factors for Award).
3. To include the salary rate limitations imposed by P.L. 107-116, by adding clause H.12, Salary Rate Limitation Legislation Provisions as attached.
4. To replace Section K (Representations, Certifications and Other Statements of Offerors) with the attached revised Section K.
5. To replace the Past Performance Questionnaire with the attached revised questionnaire (merely corrects page numbering).

The date and time set for the receipt of proposals is not changed and remains 12:00 p.m. (Noon) on Friday, March 1, 2002.

Questions Received from Potential Offerors:

1. Are the existing EPCs (in EPC I program) up for competitive renewal as well - i.e., will bidders to the EPC II program be competing with (up to 12) existing EPCs for the 10-14 awards anticipated in EPC II?

Response: The current EPC contracts are due to expire in June 2002. Therefore, current EPC contractors may also submit offers under this solicitation.

2. Please clarify to whom offerors are required to send past performance questionnaires. The RFP provides seemingly contradictory instructions. On page 71, the RFP states "The attached Past Performance Questionnaire and Contractor Performance Form shall be completed by those contracting organizations listed in (1) above."....where (1) above states "Provide a listing of the offeror's recently completed (within the last 3 years - since January 1, 1998) and ongoing work (contracts and grants) directly related to the requirements of this acquisition." This seems to imply ALL related contracts and grants that are ongoing or that have been completed since January 1, 1998. However, on page 78, the RFP states that the questionnaire "is to be copied and provided to Federal Government agencies, state and local agencies and/or commercial entities for the offeror's last three (3) contracts and/or subcontracts completed during the past three (3) years and those currently in process, or a combination thereof, for work conducted similar to this requirement." This seems to imply ALL related contracts and grants that are ongoing and the last three completed since January 1, 1998.

Related question: Section L.11 Past Performance: offerors are asked for a list of work completed "within the last three years - since January 1, 1998." Since 1998 would make it four years, should offerors list contracts over the past three years or four years? Put another way, should the year be 1998 or 1999? This same section goes on to state the Past Performance Questionnaire and Contractor Performance Form shall be completed by those contracting organizations listed above, but in the Evaluation Criteria section (M) it states that the forms should be sent only to the three most recent contracts completed within the past three years and those currently in progress. Which instructions should offerors follow? From whom should offerors solicit performance reviews? Is there a limit to the number of performance reviews considered by the AHRQ?

Response: Please use the instructions on page 71, which includes recently completed (within the last 3 years) and ongoing work directly related to the requirements of this acquisition. The date referenced is changed to "within the last three years - since January 1, 1999." The questionnaires should be submitted to those individuals in each organization which can best provide a fair evaluation of your performance (such as the Project Officer or Task Order Officer, or some other programmatic person). There is no limit on the number of past performance questionnaires we will consider.

3. The Past Performance Questionnaire spans pages 81 to 86, but there is no page 82. Also,

the page breaks do not seem appropriate. There is a Part One: Instructions on page 81, but no “Part Two.” Please confirm whether there is a page or information missing and/or provide a complete and corrected form.

Response: The questionnaire consists of 5 pages, (page numbers 81-86). The page numbering is incorrect and no page 82 exists. The words “PART ONE” can be deleted from the first page of the questionnaire. If the page breaks appear to be inappropriate, it could have happened during the transferring of the document from WordPerfect to PDF format. A revised questionnaire is attached for your use.

4. Page 95 is blank. Please confirm whether this was intentional.

Response: The RFP ends with Attachment #4, Proposal Intent Response Sheet. In the WordPerfect format, this is page 92; in the PDF Format, this is page 94. Again, when transferring the document from WordPerfect to PDF some of the pages broke at inappropriate places and resulted in slightly more pages.

5. How are task orders assigned to the selected EPCs?

Response: Refer to Section H.1 of the solicitation for procedures for the issuance of task orders.

6. Do the selected EPCs have the opportunity to submit ideas for projects?

Response: We anticipate that there will be opportunities for EPCs to submit ideas for projects. For example, AHRQ may ask the EPCs for research ideas, for identification of topics that may be ripe for an evidence report or technology assessment, ideas for expanding the user base for EPC work, and similar programmatic requests. As a rule, however, topics nominated for EPC evidence reports and technology assessments are received from professional societies, systems of health care providers, payors, Federal and State agencies, etc. AHRQ expects the large organizations/entities whose topics are selected, to translate the reports/assessments into products such as clinical practice guidelines, performance measures, educational curricula, and similar tools to enhance the quality and effectiveness of health care. In addition, the EPC reports and assessments may be used to inform (a) reimbursement or coverage policies; (b) organizational or management policies; (c) legislated programmatic mandates; etc. AHRQ also encourages these organizations to disseminate these derivative products to their members, measure members’ use of the products, and measure the impact of such use on clinical care.

7. We currently are part of AHRQ’s IDSRN - how similar/different is the EPC in terms of task order process, etc?

Response: The process of awarding task orders should be similar to the process utilized under the IDSRN contracts.

8. Are there still opportunities to publish in peer reviewed journals, after completing a technical report?

Response: Section C of the RFP includes the requirement that for each task order, the EPCs

are to prepare and submit a topic-specific manuscript for journal publication.

9. Are there ever situations where a task order is assigned to an EPC without determining if there is appropriate interest/expertise?

Response: In most cases, task orders will be competed among EPCs as specified in Section H.1 of the solicitation. In some instances, there may be a need to assign a task order to a certain EPC (such as when a task order is competed and no EPC submits a proposal, or for one of the other reasons listed in Section H.1.4 of the solicitation). In these cases, a task order may be assigned to any of the EPC contractors. While every effort will be made to appropriately match the task order to the EPC contractor, all EPCs should be ready and available to perform any task order. Refer to "Specific Requirements" in Section C of the solicitation. Under "Core Teams", it is stated that "The EPCs are to be comprised of core staff of seasoned professionals.... In the event that the EPC core staff does not include particular expertise needed to accomplish a task order, the EPC is to obtain such expertise through consultants and/or subcontracts."

10. The original EPC RFP asked us to cost out a hypothetical task order. I couldn't find anything about this in the renewal RFP. If we don't cost out a hypothetical project, how should we create the budget?

Response: This RFP does not require the submission of a budget for a hypothetical project. Refer to Section L.13 (and on the cover memo, page 1) for the information that should be included in your business proposal.

11. We request that AHRQ remove from the RFP the requirement for submission of a Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Participation Plan for the following reasons:

- a. The 5-year umbrella contracts resulting from this solicitation will obligate the Government to issue each EPC a minimum of one task order and a minimum amount of \$75,000. Because this amount falls far below the \$500,000 threshold, these contracts are not covered by FAR Part 15.304(c)4. [We recognize, of course, that individual task orders expected to exceed the threshold would be covered by the FAR's SDB requirements.]
- b. The 5-year umbrella contracts resulting from this solicitation are indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contracts. Because the "quantities" are indefinite, it is not possible to define the dollar amount or percentage of work that will be allocated to SDB subcontractors. This information is required to be provided in SDB Participation Plans. It is not possible to provide this information without knowing the value of the contract.
- c. The selection of specific subcontractors, which must be identified in the SDB Participation Plan, is largely dependent on the scope and subject matter of the individual task orders for which each EPC will compete. Without knowledge of what task orders will be available, and of those, for which ones an EPC will chose to bid, it is impractical to identify specific subcontractors.

Response: We agree. All references to the requirement of a Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan are deleted from this solicitation. However, when task orders are competed, and if they are estimated to be over \$500,000, the requirement for the submission of a Small Disadvantaged Business Plan and a Small Business Subcontracting Plan will be included in the request for task order.

12. According to the evaluation criteria (page 77) it appears that a technical proposal's score can range from 0 to 115, as noted below:

Understanding of EPC Program	10
Personnel & Management Plan	40
Organization Experience	50
Past Performance	10
Small Disadvantaged Business Plan	5

Is this correct?

Response: The technical proposal (consisting of the first 3 elements above) can receive a maximum score of 100. Past performance can receive a maximum score of 10. The Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan was to receive a maximum score of 5 points, but the requirement for submission of the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan has been deleted (See Question #11). Therefore, the maximum score a proposal can receive is 110.

13. Number of Proposal Volumes: RFP Section A (RFP page 1) states that offerors shall submit the following: A. Technical Proposal (original and 15 copies), B. Past Performance Information (original and 10 copies), C. Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan (original and 5 copies), and D. Business Proposal (original and 10 copies). This requirement for four sections (1) Technical Proposal, (2) Past Performance Information, (3) Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan, and (4) Business Proposal is again stated in RFP Section L, paragraphs b and c (RFP page 65). However, in the proposal instructions, RFP Section L.12, paragraph A (RFP page 72), it states that offerors shall submit the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan in one clearly marked section of their Business Proposal. Question: Should the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan be submitted as a separate volume as indicated on RFP pages 1 and 65 or should it be part of the Business Proposal as instructed on RFP page 72?

Response: The requirement for submission of the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan has been deleted (See Question #11).

14. Proposal Delivery: RFP Section A (RFP page 2) states that mailed proposals should be delivered to 2101 E. Jefferson Street, Suite 502, Rockville, MD 20852. The section also stated that hand carried proposals may be dropped off at Room 5E117. For courier delivered proposals (FedEx, UPS, etc.) should the shipping label address be 2101 E. Jefferson Street, Room 5E117, Rockville, MD 20852?

Response: Courier delivered proposals should be delivered to Room 5E117, which is located on

the 5th Floor, East Wing, within Suite 502 at 2101 E. Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD 20852. This is a secure building so please allow sufficient time to locate the correct office and be properly admitted.

15. Past Performance Information: Past Performance Questionnaires, Reference RFP Section L.11, paragraph (4) (RFP page 71) and RFP Section M, paragraph 4 (RFP page 78). We are a semi-independent technical evaluation services department of a firm that provides medical research services to a large national membership organization. Collectively the services that we provide to this membership group make it our largest customer for services similar to this solicitation. This relevant work is performed through a membership agreement rather than a contract or grant. Should we request this membership organization to prepare a Past Performance Questionnaire? If so, should we request Past Performance Questionnaires from the membership's Leadership Committee, or from selected individual members?

Response: It is the offeror's prerogative (and responsibility) to decide to whom their Past Performance Questionnaire will go – whether it was work performed under a contract, a grant, a membership agreement, or any other mechanism.

16. Proposal Format: Do you prefer the proposal to be spiral bound or in a three ring binder?

Response: We have no particular preference. It is the offeror's choice.

17. How should the Representations in Section K be submitted with the proposal? (One or multiple copies?, separate or included with the sections of the proposal, i.e. business proposal, technical proposal, etc.)?

Response: Refer to Section L.13.B.(8) which says that Section K Representations and Certifications shall be made part of the original business proposal. So, only one original needs to be submitted and it should be included within the original business proposal.

18. Does a cover sheet go on the front of all sections of the proposal to be submitted (i.e., technical proposal, past performance information, small disadvantaged business participation plan and business proposal)? We are a bit uncertain of when provisions on Section L.3 are to be followed (i.e. our proposal for the EPC RFP or in subsequent proposals for task orders). Are we correct in interpreting L.3 such that the data requested in L.3 is to go on the cover pages for all segments of our EPC proposal?

Response: The data required in L.3 should be included on an overall proposal cover sheet or cover letter, along with the information required by L.9.b.1. Each segment of the proposal should have a cover sheet for ease of identification which includes as a minimum the RFP Title and Number, name of the offering organization, title of the segment (such as Technical Proposal, Business Proposal, Past Performance Information), and whether or not it is the original or a copy.

19. Pages 8-10 of EPC RFP refer to Partners several times. What constitutes a Partner? What is their relationship with AHRQ? How do Partners get selected? How do Partners interface with EPCs? What is the Partner's role in relationship to task orders?

Response: A Partner is an organization or entity whose requested EPC evidence report or

technology assessment on a particular topic has been accepted by AHRQ. By accepting the requested topic and awarding it to an EPC for an evidence report/technology assessment, AHRQ has certain expectations of that particular Partner organization, namely (1) Partners identify one individual who will work with the EPC as the Partner's designated representative, identifying sources of evidence for the report/assessment and provide other input to the EPC as appropriate; (2) Partners are one of the large peer review group that reviews/comments on the draft report/assessment; (3) Partner commits to use of the particular EPC report/assessment, translating the report into clinical guidelines, performance measures, clinical education, and other quality enhancement tools; Partner also may use the report to inform its reimbursement/coverage policies; (3) Partners are expected to track their dissemination efforts of their derivative products (e.g., clinical guidelines, etc.) based on the particular EPC report/assessment, measure their members' use of the products; and measure the impact of such use on clinical practice. In addition to the primary Partner (organization/entity that requested the EPC report/assessment), there may be additional Partners (organizations/entities) who want to participate with the EPCs on particular topics. These Partners have the same responsibilities as the Primary Partner. Most often, Partners are professional societies, large health provider groups, payors, etc.

20. Page 13 of EPC RFP. How is the External Peer Review process bid/funded and managed? Is there specific criteria established to guide this process?

Response: Each EPC task order will include a requirement for the EPC to manage an external peer review of each draft report. Costs of doing so are to be included in the EPCs business proposal for the particular task order. Criteria for selecting to whom or to what organization the EPC will send the draft report for peer review is determined by the EPC in consultation with the AHRQ Task Order Officer. Reviewers may include, as appropriate for the particular topic, professional societies, Federal agencies, provider systems, methodologists, consumers, etc.

21. Sections G3-G6 (pages 20-22) cover "invoice submissions" through "electronic funds transfer." How is a project billing structured? For example, is progress or milestone billing used? Secondly, what is the Government's commitment to transferring payments to Contractors (e.g. 30 day ARO, 60 days)?

Response: Invoices should be submitted on a monthly basis and should reflect costs actually incurred during the month that is being billed. The Government pays invoices in accordance with the Prompt Payment Act which is 30 days after receipt of a proper invoice.

22. Is the offer open to Canadian firms?

Response: Yes.

23. Proposals shall include #3 Certified documentation of indirect cost rate agreement in place with Federal Agency. We have worked with the Canadian Commercial Corporation previously where once the proposal is accepted, the CCC provides certified documentation that what is offered is a fair and good price. Is this sufficient to your requirements?

Response: We are not familiar with the CCC and cannot give you a definitive answer at this

time. Should your organization be awarded an EPC contract, we would negotiate with you on this matter and probably request that you negotiate an indirect cost rate agreement with the National Institutes of Health Indirect Cost Finance Office who handles all negotiations for indirect cost rate agreement for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). We have contracts with other Canadian firms/organizations and they have successfully negotiated indirect cost rates with DHHS.

24. RFP Section K (RFP page 38) lists the Representations, Certifications and Other Statements of Offerors, numbering K.1 through K.18. The last entry for this section appears on RFP Page 57, as K.17 Environmental Tobacco Smoke. The discrepancy in numbering appears to take place on RFP page 48, where K.9 is presented as Prohibition of Segregated Facilities rather than Small Business Disadvantaged Status (Oct 1999). Shall we respond to the body of Section K as written in the RFP or will there be additional adjustments to the RFP?

Response: The Small Disadvantaged Business Status provision was inadvertently omitted from the body of Section K. A revised Section K is attached for your use.

25. Section H.3 RIGHTS IN DATA - SPECIAL WORKS (FAR Clause 52.227-17, June 1987), of the EPC RFP. In Section B.1, the RFP notes that the Government has “The right to limit exercise of claim to copyright in data first produced in the performance of this contract, and to obtain assignment of copyright in such data, in accordance with subparagraph (c)(1) of this clause.” In Section C.1.i, the RFP states that “The contractor agrees not to assert, establish, or authorize others to assert or establish, any claim to copyright subsisting in any data first produced in the performance of this contract without prior written permission of the Contracting Officer.” Later this section states that “The Contractor grants to the Government, and others acting on its behalf, a paid-up, nonexclusive, irrevocable, worldwide license for all such data, to produce, prepare derivative works, distribute copies to the public, and perform publicly and display publicly, by or on behalf of the Government.” In Section C.1.ii: “If the Government desires to obtain copyright in data first produced in the performance of this contract, and permission has not been granted as set forth in subdivision (c)(1)(i) of this clause, the Contracting Officer may direct the Contractor to establish, or authorize the establishment of, claim to copyright in such data and to assign, or obtain the assignment of, such copyright to the Government or its designated assignee.”

1) Section C.1.i. seems to say that the EPC Contractor needs permission in advance to obtain a copyright. In Section C.1.ii, it seems to read that the EPC Contractor will hold the copyright and the Contracting Officer requests the copyright. Can you clarify?

2) Under what conditions are requests for copyright by EPCs granted or denied by the Contracting Officer?

Response: According to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Clause 52.227-17 (H.3 in our RFP), the EPC is required to receive written approval by the Contracting Officer to assert copyright. If the Government desires to hold copyright on work produced under the EPC contract, the Government will instruct the EPC to assert copyright and assign the copyright to the Government. An EPC request to assert copyright is approved in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in H.2 and H.3 of the RFP. To date, AHRQ has not denied an EPC request to assert copyright.

26. We are a current EPC. Should we seek past performance evaluations for each individual EPC task order contract, the entire EPC contract, or none of these?

Response: You should seek past performance evaluations for any work that has been completed within the last 3 years (since January 1, 1999). It is your decision whether to send a questionnaire for each individual task order or for the entire EPC contract.

27. What is the policy regarding Federal Express deliveries? If we send our proposal as an overnight priority package (morning delivery), and it does not arrive before noon on March 1st, is it considered late? Or will it be accepted as on-time once it arrives, if we are able to show Federal Express tracking information?

Response: Refer to Section L.3 of the solicitation. If a Federal Express package does not arrive at the Government office designated by the exact time specified, it is "late" and will not be considered. Please allow sufficient shipping time for your proposal.

28. In the first round of EPC proposals, there was a hypothetical task order description that bidders needed to discuss. Is this information of interest in this round of proposals?

Response: No.

29. Are reviewer comments on the first round of EPC applications available? If so, how would one obtain these?

Response: The reviewer comments on proposals are considered confidential information and are not available to the public.

30. What is the target date for announcing the successful applicants?

Response: Awards are anticipated in June 2002.

31. For the proposed multi-year RFTO's, will EPCs be able to have a role in determining the actual topics that they are assigned?

Response: As noted in the RFP (page 14), multi-year awards will be competed among the EPCs. Descriptive information about topics that are attached to each multi-year task order will be included in each solicitation for the multi-year task orders.

32. How would an "orphan" topic be assigned?

Response: Single topic-specific task orders may be competed or assigned according to programmatic need (see RFP, page 16). In general, AHRQ plans to continue its practice of inviting EPC expressions of interest in single-topic task orders.

33. Is the competition for multi-year RFTO's expected to include enough slots so that each EPC could have a multi-year RFTO, and therefore have a stable staff?

Response: The number of multi-year task orders competed in FY 2002 will depend on several factors, such as available resources, volume of work to be performed, and other programmatic determinations.

34. Is it permissible to modify the Past Performance Evaluation Questionnaire as follows prior to sending it to our previous clients? We have spelled out the acronyms for the various contract types. We have completed the first page of each form (which contains strictly factual information) for the convenience of our clients, and we have added a note that they modify or alter this information prior to submission to AHRQ. We have added a note at the top of the second page that reads, "Zero (0) is the lowest possible rating, and five (5) is the highest possible rating."

Response: These editorial changes are acceptable.

35. To assist in the identification of potential subcontractors, please provide a list of all organizations that submitted a Proposal Intent Form. Please indicate whether each organization does or does not intend to submit a proposal.

Response: This information is considered confidential.

36. Is the maximum \$500/day restriction on consultant fees negotiable?

Response: Section B.4 says consultant fees in excess of \$500 per day are not allowable unless authorized in writing by the Contracting Officer. Therefore, consultant fees above \$500 per day must be negotiated on an as-needed basis.

37. Please verify that AHRQ will be responsible for publication and dissemination of evidence reports developed by the EPCs.

Response: As stated in the Statement of Work, AHRQ will continue its practice of publishing the EPC evidence reports and technology assessments in print and on its website.

38. Is the 300-page limit for technical reports inclusive of the evidence tables?

Response: Please note that the 300-page limit is the "outside limit" for evidence reports and technology assessments under the new EPC program (EPC II). Not all evidence reports and technology assessments will justify a 300-page product. Depending on the complexity of the topic, the number of issues to be examined, volume of studies to be analyzed, and required deliverable date, many reports and assessments will be substantially less than 300 pages. The 300-page limit for technical reports includes text, evidence tables and references.

39. Please clarify the role of Technical Experts under this solicitation. Under the 1997 EPC

Program, EPCs were required to consult with many external stakeholders at the beginning of each task order to refine the key research questions and frame the scope of the report. Is this activity no longer required?

Response: The extent to which an EPC will be asked to establish a technical expert panel (TEP) will depend on the turnaround time for completion and delivery of a report/assessment to AHRQ. For example, if AHRQ requires a report/assessment within a 3-6 month period of performance, the EPC may be expected to consult with 2 or 3 external experts rather than a panel of 8-15.

40. Please clarify the role of the Science Partners under this solicitation. Under the 1997 EPC Program, Science Partners sometimes had considerable influence over the scope and methods of each task order, particularly when the Partner was another Federal agency. Does AHRQ anticipate some Science Partners having this level of oversight and influence on the scope of task orders under this contract?

Response: AHRQ anticipates a continuing role for its Partners in development of EPC evidence reports and technology assessments. Partners submit preliminary questions, provide input into refinement of those questions, suggest additional data sources, and review draft reports/assessments. Partners also play a critical role in AHRQ's efforts to have the reports/assessments translated into healthcare quality improvement tools (e.g., clinical guidelines, performance measures, educational curricula, etc.), dissemination of the Partner-developed derivative products to their members, and measurement of use of the products and the impact of such use on clinical care.

41. Proposal references: For the proposal itself, is the 125-page limit INCLUSIVE or EXCLUSIVE of references?

Response: The 125 page limit does not include references.

42. Multi-year Task Orders: Might AHRQ be able to provide more details concerning the circumstances under which an EPC may have more than one multi-year task order, including the nature of the "topic(s)" of specific multi-year EPCs to which AHRQ might give high priority?

Response: The decision to award more than one multi-year task order to an EPC will depend on several factors, such as available resources, volume of work to be performed, and other programmatic determinations. As stated in the RFP (Section D of the Statement of Work), AHRQ will have a competition to identify 3 or 4 EPCs to provide technical support for the AHRQ Technology Assessment Program. AHRQ will also have a competition to identify 1 or 2 additional EPCs to provide technical support for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Depending on available resources and work demand, AHRQ will have a third competition to identify 5 or 6 EPCs to carry out a variety of tasks, such as develop single-topic evidence reports that are requested by AHRQ, private-sector entities, and by other Federal agencies, undertake technical assistance to Partners, perform methods research, etc. If a Federal Agency wants a designated EPC to provide multi-year technical support for that agency's programmatic needs, the Request for Task Order will be competed among all interested EPCs including those that already have a multi-year task order.

43. Management/administrative task: Will the ensuing EPC-II TO contracts (overall) have a

management/administrative task?

Response: AHRQ does not plan to award management/administrative task orders.

44. Portions of the Scope of Work concerning conducting systematic reviews and deliverables. Could AHRQ clarify the following components of deliverables as specified in Section C, pages 11-14?

A. Summary: Are the 20-25 pages specified inclusive or exclusive of tables and references?

Response: The Summary (20-25 double spaced pages) includes text, selected evidence tables and selected references.

B. Technical Report:

(1) The SOW presently describes the technical report as (a) description of the topic, (b) description of methods, (c) bibliography of all studies abstracted, (d) documentation of reason studies were rejected, (e) complete reference list, and (f) estimate of time horizon for re-review. Is that the full extent of the report? Asked another way, is the technical report NOT to include elements typically now found in full evidence reports, including:

- Results/findings
- Special/supplemental analyses
- Conclusions/discussion
- Evidence tables
- Section or chapter on future research needs

Response: The Technical Reports will include the following elements:

- (A) Title Page
- (B) Table of Contents
- (C) Structured Abstract, with headings of Context; Objective; Data Sources; Study Section; Data Extraction; Data Synthesis; and Conclusions
- (D) Chapters (i.e., Introduction; Burden of Suffering; Epidemiology; Analytic Framework and Key Questions)
- (E) Methods (i.e., Literature Search Strategy; inclusion/exclusion criteria; size of literature reviewed, including costs/CEA, if any; System used to grade quality and strength of the evidence; and Literature Synthesis)
- (F) Results (i.e., Key Questions #1 through #n; special populations)

- (G) Discussion (i.e., Implication of major findings; benefits and harms balance sheet; future research needs)
- (H) References
- (I) Evidence Tables

Note that brief Technical Reports may not include all of the elements listed above. While AHRQ intends to have format consistency across all EPC reports and assessments, to facilitate updating, etc., specific report formats for work developed for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, the Technology Assessment Program, and other clients may differ, in some respects, from the elements listed. Task Orders for these programs will specify report contents.

- (2) Does AHRQ have any particular method in mind by which EPCs should provide “an estimate of time horizon” (see pages 12-13 of RFP), or should bidders propose such a method?

Response: Offerors should propose the method to estimate a time horizon for need to update evidence reports or technology assessments.

- (3) Concerning documentation of reasons that studies were rejected as part of the bibliography: Does AHRQ have a preference as to the stage at which this requirement should be activated (i.e., at the title/abstract stage, at the point of full article review but not data abstraction, or at the stage at which data from articles have been abstracted but then not used in the report)? Or should the bidder propose a method and stage?

Response: Bibliography will be comprised of all full articles retrieved and reviewed, following abstract review. Rejected articles and the reasons for their rejection must be identified in the Bibliography.

- C. Bibliography: Does AHRQ mean for EPCs to include a bibliography of all titles and abstracts from every topic-specific search, or of all articles retrieved once titles and abstracts have been reviewed against inclusion and exclusion criteria?

Response: All articles retrieved once titles and abstracts have been reviewed against inclusion and exclusion criteria.

- D. Data Base:

- (1) Does CD-ROM-based mean that AHRQ wishes the files to be submitted on a CD-ROM rather than some other electronic media such as diskette? Or, is there another interpretation to CD-ROM-based, and if so, could the Agency describe this requirement a little more fully?

Response: AHRQ wishes the files to be submitted on CD-ROM.

- (2) Could AHRQ clarify what “implement the database” means in the sense of what AHRQ proposes to do with it (the CD-ROM)? Is this something beyond storing, printing, or making available to later groups that might wish to update the report in question?

Response: AHRQ wishes to make the files available to researchers and interested parties who would like to update the review, or who have an interest in the topic area and would like to perform additional analyses.

45. Plans for dates deliverables are due. We note that the SOW indicates that peer review comments and disposition report, summary, technical report, and the peer-reviewed journal manuscript are all due at the same time. (The implication is that the CD-ROM database is similarly due on the same date.) That is not the usual schedule of deliverables at present, as we understand it. Will AHRQ consider staggering these dates so that, for instance, the journal manuscript and/or the CD-ROM database are due on dates different from those of, for example, the summary and technical report?

Response: AHRQ is agreeable to staggering due dates whereby the CD-ROM database is due 30 days following submission of the Summary and Technical Report, and the draft manuscript is due no later than 90 days following submission of the Summary and Technical Report. This can be negotiated during award of task orders.

46. Can AHRQ clarify whether the journal manuscript is the “draft” for approval by AHRQ (and possible revision) before submission to a journal, or the “final” that has gone through those steps and has actually been submitted?

Response: AHRQ wishes to have a copy of the draft manuscript for review and comment as well as a copy of the “final” manuscript that is submitted to a journal. Both copies are to be submitted electronically.

47. Determine method by which final evidence reports will be produced. Can AHRQ clarify what “in publishable condition” means with respect to evidence reports (or related documents)? Does this mean complete, accurate, well written, and other such attributes of a publishable document, or does it mean completely camera ready? If so, will AHRQ clarify what camera ready might entail or require?

Response: “Publishable condition” and “Camera ready” are interchangeable concepts for purposes of work to be performed by the EPCs. Final evidence reports and technology assessments should be accurate, complete, and suitable for preparation of negatives. Camera-ready copy is printed on one side of the page only; pages are numbered according to AHRQ’s convention (e.g., lower case roman numerals for front matter; Arabic numbers for body of the report, beginning with the summary (page 1); pages have a 1-inch margin all around; margin for side that will be bound must be 1 inch to avoid losing text. Endnote or other reference manager software should be used to compile reference lists and bibliography. Citations should be “grabbed” electronically by the software from PubMed or another source to render them as accurate as possible. In addition to hard copy, the EPCs are to submit the reports/assessments on disks (WordPerfect or Microsoft Word) for use in Web preparation. AHRQ also will need electronic files for charts, etc., prepared in another program (e.g., Excel). Tables and charts must be delinked from underlying databases.

48. Evidence Reports: Will there be a “future research needs” section in the evidence reports, as there has been in the past?

Response: Yes.

49. TEAG: Will EPCs be permitted to include technical expert groups for each task order, as there have been in the past?

Response: EPCs will continue to include technical expert in the development of evidence reports and technology assessments. However, depending on the time requirements for completion of a particular report/assessment (e.g., some task orders may have a period of performance of 3 to 6 months), it may be more practical for the EPC to identify 2-3 technical experts rather than establish a panel of 8-15 as has been done in the past when periods of performance were routinely 12 months or more.

50. Manuscript Development: The RFP mentions that manuscripts are to be created and submitted to a “national general interest medical journal.” Sometimes this is not the appropriate venue for a report. Can AHRQ clarify whether the intention is to submit these manuscripts to a “national” (vs. “general interest”) medical journal (or a respected national journal in a field allied to “medicine”) as sometimes the material is more appropriate for a specialty journal?

Response: Manuscripts may be submitted to national general interest medical journals or respected specialty journals (if more appropriate for the subject matter). The intent is to maximize exposure of EPC work through publication in “recognized” journals.

51. Coordinating Center: Even if a newly awarded EPC cannot be the EPC II Program Coordinating Center, can an entity (organization, university, etc.) holding an EPC II Task Order contract be a Coordinating Center (in the manner of the AHRQ CERTs Program, for example)?

Response: The contract for the EPC Coordinating Center will not be awarded to an entity (e.g., organization, university, etc.) to which an EPC contract has been awarded, nor to an EPC subcontractor.

52. Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan. Please clarify an apparent inconsistency in Section L of the RFP. Under Paragraph L.9.c. (Page 65) it is stated that the proposal shall consist of four separate parts. We assume that means a separate volume for each of the Technical Proposal, Past Performance Information, Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan, and Business Proposal. However, that seems inconsistent with the instructions provided under Paragraph L.12.A (Page 71), which states that “All offerors, regardless of size, shall submit the following information **in one clearly marked section** of their business proposal” - an SDB Participation Plan. Please clarify whether the SDB Plan is to be a separate section of the Business Proposal volume, or a separate volume in and of itself.

Response: The requirement for the submission of a Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan has been deleted.

53. Does the Government anticipate awarding a cost-reimbursement fixed fee contract to those who propose fee? Fee is referenced in paragraph G.5, page 22, “Fee will be negotiated per

individual task order.” See Section L.4 on page 63 and L.9 on page 64. Please advise.

Response: No fixed fee will be paid at award of the basic contract. All funds are awarded on a task order basis. It is anticipated that most of the task orders will be negotiated and awarded on a cost-reimbursement fixed fee basis to those organizations who normally receive fee.

54. (A) Are the labor rates ceiling rates? See Section H-1, paragraph 6, page 24 which says “The cost and fee for each TO will be negotiated based on the fixed maximum labor rates set forth in Section B - Supplies or Services and on other cost/fee issues.” We anticipate bidding actual labor rates and not a blended rate using the hourly labor rates as a not to exceed amount for the core personnel proposed on the contract. If core personnel change during the life of the contract, will the Government consider modifying the labor rates or are these rates fixed once the contract is awarded?

Response: If you bid actual labor rates by individual, they will become the ceiling rate for the contract. If proposed personnel change during the life of the contract, the contract will have to be modified to reflect new personnel. You could also propose a range of rates within each Class which would reflect the hourly rate from the lowest actual hourly rate to the highest actual hourly rate within the class. This may eliminate the need to modify the contract if additional staff are added but are within the hourly rate range. You should also note the recent salary rate limitations imposed by Public Law 107-116, and attached to this amendment.

- (B) Are the subcontractors included with the prime’s bid required to supply their own loaded rates since institutions vary regarding cost accounting standards and rates?

Response: Subcontractors are not required to submit their rates at this time, but would be required to do so when you are submitting a proposal for a particular task order.

- (C) Are the subcontractors allowed to bid with other master contract awardees or are they only allowed to bid with the prime who they signed up with initially?

Response: Subcontractors may be allowed under more than one master contract as long as they have sufficient staff to enable them to be available to either master contract awardee as needed.

55. We would like clarification on E under Section C, Scope of Work (p. 15). Specifically, in Tasks in Addition to Evidence Reports; what distinguishes special cost effectiveness analyses, (item 2) from special cost effectiveness studies (item 5)?

Response: AHRQ meant to distinguish cost effectiveness analyses that may be performed as part of a topic-specific task order, from a broader form of economic studies. These economic studies would be “stand alone” task orders that might focus, for example, on cost comparisons of alternate clinical strategies.

56. In the same section (Scope of Work, Section C), we would like to know the status of the EPC Coordinating Center (mentioned on page 10). Does AHRQ intend to publish an RFP for the Coordinating Center? Will applicants for the coordinating center be limited to small

business?

Response: It is our intent to issue an RFP for the Coordinating Center. Based upon the completion of a market survey, AHRQ intends to solicit on a full and open competitive basis. The announcement of the Coordinating Center RFP should appear in the Federal Business Opportunities (www.fedbizopps.gov) in the next few weeks.

57. Re “Past Performance” list: On page 74, offerors are told that this list may include contracts or grants entered into by the Federal government. For current EPCs, will AHRQ be an evaluator for one of more of the previous or current EPC task order projects? If yes, to whom should the questionnaires be mailed?

Response: AHRQ can be an evaluator. The questionnaires can be sent to your AHRQ Project Officer or Task Order Officer.

58. Re “First Page” (described on Page 59) and “Cover” (described on page 65). The descriptions are different, so it is assumed (correctly?) that both are required? Page 65 indicates that the “Cover Page” is to be placed as the first page of the Technical Proposal. Is the “First Page” a stand-alone document or is it to be placed at the beginning of the Business Proposal?

Response: Refer to Question #18.

59. On page 65, lines 3-4, there is a reference to information in a “cover letter of this solicitation.” No “letter” is posted on the AHRQ website. Is there an additional document or is all information included in the solicitation?

Response: All information is included in the solicitation. The “cover letter” refers to pages 1 and 2 of the solicitation.

60. Page 1 indicates that resumes are to be placed in the appendixes and are not part of the 125 page limit. Page 68 says, “The Offeror shall provide the qualifications and resumes of all proposed project personnel.” Is there a limit either on the number of resumes or the type of personnel for whom resumes are required? (The number of qualified potential investigators across various specialty areas within a university medical center can be in the dozens).

Response: There is no limit on the number of resumes or the type of personnel for whom resumes are required.

61. What type of information, other than resumes, is permissible or required for appendixes? Relevant publications? Letters of support (e.g., from department chairs or previous collaborators)?

Response: These items would be permissible for appendixes. However, please be reminded that unnecessary elaborate proposals are not desired.

62. On page 72, offerors are specifically instructed to include the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan as a “clearly marked section of their business proposal,” while pages 1 and 65 also indicate that this is a separate major component of the proposal. Is it correct to assume that the Plan as inserted into the Business Proposal is to be exactly duplicated as a separate document?

Response: Refer to Question #11.

63. In order to courier the application, we need to specify the name of an individual and their full telephone number, in addition to the address information. Would you please supply that information?

Response: The individual is Sharon Williams, at 301-594-7192.

64. What is meant by “loaded rate,” a term used in Section B.3 with reference to the proposal labor rates for task orders?

Response: A loaded salary rate would include not only the individual’s hourly pay rate, but would also include fringe benefits, overhead, general and administrative costs, or other indirect costs. Section B rates should only reflect hourly pay rates and not the loaded rate with associated indirect costs. Your business office should be able to help you with this question.

65. Is there a required or recommended format for the CV’s?

Response: No.

66. What do the following abbreviations refer to and what is meant by the following items as they appear on the past performance appraisal under 7) type of contract/grant:

Response: These are various types of contracts. The abbreviations (where used) are spelled out below. Your business office should be able to provide you with further assistance and you can find additional information in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) at the following website: www.arnet.gov/far

- a. FP = Fixed Price*
- b. Award Fee*
- c. CPFF - Completion = Cost Plus Fixed Fee - Completion*
- d. CPFF - Term = Cost Plus Fixed Fee - Term*
- e. CPIF - Cost Plus Incentive Fee*
- f. CPAF - Cost Plus Award Fee*
- g. IO/IQ - Indefinite Order/Indefinite Quantity*
- h. BOA - Basic Ordering Agreement*
- i. Requirements*

- j. Labor-hour*
- k. T&M = Time and Materials*
- l. SBSA = Small Business Set-Aside*
- m. SBIR = Small Business Innovative Research*
- n. Sealed Bid*
- o. Negotiated*
- p. Competitive*
- q. Non-competitive*

67. Can documents (i.e., the technical proposal) be printed onto both sides of the page, and submitted as such?

Response: Yes.

68. What is the process that AHRQ has in place to confirm with the applicants, the timely receipt of the proposal?

Response: Offerors may call the Contracting Officer at 301-594-7192 or send an e-mail to swilliam@ahrq.gov to confirm that their proposal was received on time.

69. How does the “Small Disadvantaged Business Plan” apply outside of the US? Do businesses register to become designated as a “Small Disadvantaged Business”?

Response: Refer to Question #11 - This is not required at this time.

70. Where can we find out more information about “Small Disadvantaged Business” and the relevant Government Act?

Response: You can check with the Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov) and the FAR (Federal Acquisition Regulation) (www.arnet.gov/far).

71. Is there a particular font and font size requested for the application and CVs?

Response: No, but it should be large enough to be easily read.

72. Are cost quotes to be expressed in US dollars only?

Response: Yes.

73. For certifications on financial viability, overheads and accounting systems, etc., do we require institutionally (i.e. University) verified policies (signed) or are references to existing policies sufficient (perhaps extracted from the website or other internally published text sources)?

Response: Please contact your business office to determine what they usually send for such certifications. We request that the labor rates be certified as current. A copy of your indirect rate agreement should be provided. You could also provide evidence from your outside accounting firm who conducts your audits.

74. We would like to use Veterans Affairs investigators and staff on our task orders. We have a nonprofit research corporation that is affiliated with a VAMC and has a mechanism that allows the VA to bill the corporation for the time of the VA staff. Can we use it as a subcontractor in this manner?

Response: All proposed subcontract arrangements will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Until we see your proposed subcontract agreement we cannot make a definitive decision.

75. Given that offerors must demonstrate in their initial proposal their ability to handle multiple projects, if a prospective EPC demonstrates that it has sufficient senior clinical and methodological staff to carry out more than one multi-year task order, would the EPC be eligible for more than one multi-task order initially?

Response: Refer to Question #42.

76. The RFP appears to skip a page number (around page 81) in the section on the Past Performance Questionnaire (Attachment 2). Is there any information missing from the RFP or is it just an error in numbering of the pages (and all information is included)?

Response: Refer to Question #3.

77. In Part IV, Representations and Instructions, Section K, the list of representations goes from K.1 to K.18. On the following pages as each representation/certification is listed separately, the numbers run from K.1. to K.17. The Small Disadvantaged Business Status, which is listed as K.9 on the list, is not included with the certification forms and that throws off the numbering on the forms themselves. Should we go by the numbers (K.1 * K.17) on the forms themselves and not worry about the Small Disadvantaged Business Status (so there would be only 17 certifications)? Is that form covered by the Small Disadvantaged Participation Plan we are doing as a separate part of the proposal?

Response: Refer to Question #24.

78. Regarding the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan (L.12), since there is no funding tied to the initial award of these contracts, how should we answer question 1.6: targets expressed as dollars and percentage of total contract value for each participating SDB? How do we quantify this? Also, can we provide information about our institution's overall commitment and past performance to use SDB concerns, not just for EPC work?

Response: Refer to Question #11.

79. Under K.16, Certificate of Current Cost or Pricing Data, how should we answer the question of a date of current cost or pricing data since there have not been any prior price negotiations? K.16 says to insert the day, month, and year when price negotiations were concluded and price agreement was reached, but this has not occurred. Why is this information being requested now?

Response: The only cost/price data you would be certifying is the salary rates in Section B. Since we may award without negotiation, it is requested that you certify these costs with your submission. Use the date of submission of your offer. If negotiations are conducted, you will be

asked to complete another certification upon completion of negotiations.

80. If the EPC will have a subcontract, in the Business Proposal do you want 1) certified documentation that the subcontract has a cost accounting system in place and 2) certified documentation that the subcontract has a current indirect cost rate agreement? Is there other required documentation from the subcontract to be included in the Business Proposal?

Response: This information is not requested at this time. However, we may require such certification during negotiation and award of task orders.

81. Under Performance Capability in the Business Proposal (section B.7), would you elaborate on what is considered acceptable evidence of the ability to obtain equipment, facilities and personnel necessary to perform the requirements of the project? What are you looking for as an answer to that question?

Response: You should provide a statement that you either have on hand the necessary equipment, facilities, and personnel to enable you to perform the requirements of this solicitation; or that you are capable of obtaining such and how you will obtain them and provide assurance that they will be provided promptly at contract award.

82. On page 2 of the RFP it says that “the EPCs may be tasked to provide a range of related services” in addition to systematic literature reviews and analyses. Also the objectives of the renewed EPC program include expansion of EPC technical assistance to other organizations, and expanded support for EPC methods research. Has AHRQ made any plans to allocate some percentage of the task orders or some percentage of the overall EPC program budget to such tasks? Does AHRQ expect such work to be done under separate task orders or as part of the task orders for selected systematic reviews?

Response: AHRQ does not plan to allocate a percentage of program funds to tasks other than systematic reviews and analyses. These tasks will be done as parts of the multi-year task orders (e.g., as assignments) or by separate task orders, according to need and available resources.

83. In some institutions, an EPC could perform its work more efficiently and effectively if it had some consistent core support year to year. This would allow the EPC to recruit and maintain the high quality core staff needed. Would it be possible for AHRQ to provide an EPC a small amount of core support each year? The EPC would then not include the costs for these core staff on the individual task order contracts. This could enhance the efficiency and quality of work done by an EPC without increasing the total costs for the AHRQ.

Response: Task orders that have multi-years periods of performance may provide the EPCs with a consistent level of support to establish and maintain a Core Team. It should be noted, however, that under these cost reimbursement type task orders, any staff employed by the EPC may only be reimbursed based upon actual effort expended, not anticipated effort. In other words, “core staff” of an EPC may only be reimbursed for actual effort spent on EPC related effort. Funds may not be used to pay for staff to be available or maintained in the event their services are required for potential future effort.

84. If the budget for AHRQ next year is reduced by as much as indicated in the President's proposed budget, how would that affect the funds available for the EPC Program? Would you expect to decrease the number of EPCs, the number of task orders, or the amount per task order?

Response: AHRQ's programmatic strategy for responding to a potential decrease in its FY 2003 budget is under review. AHRQ will keep the EPCs informed as decisions are made and will welcome discussion about the impact of these decisions on work envisioned under the EPC RFP. It should also be noted that many of the task orders are funded by our Federal Partners and not directly from the AHRQ budget. This should help lessen the impact on the EPCs as a result of AHRQ's potential budget decrease.

85. Page 12, under description of elements of Technical Report: Please clarify what is to be included in the "bibliography" and how this differs from the "complete reference list" referred to on page 13. The text describes the bibliography as including "all studies abstracted, whether used to abstracted." Generally, studies are excluded at two stages or levels, both occurring prior to a study being abstracted: abstract review and article review. The stage being referred to is very important as it has implications on procedures and amount of work. For instance, in one of our current projects we reviewed more than 4,800 citations at abstract level and more than 500 at article review level. Also, for our current projects, in which bibliographies and reference lists are required, we have individually negotiated with Task Order Officers the definitions for each. It would be useful to have an agreed upon definition. The bibliography is to include studies excluded at what stage or level?

Response: The bibliography is comprised of all articles that have been retrieved for review, for potential inclusion in an evidence report or technology assessment - whether or not they are used in the report or assessment. This step (retrieval of articles) follows initial search, titles identified, abstracts reviewed.

86. Page 13, under description of elements of Technical report: Related to above question, does the documentation requested for excluded studies apply to those rejected at abstract or article review level?

Response: Documentation will be required for studies that are rejected at the article review level (refer to the question above).

87. Page 13, under Database: The current description of items to provide as "electronic copy" does not differ from previous requirement to submit Technical Report as electronic files. For instance, the current requirement is to provide the evidence report, which is to include items (a) through (e) via WordPerfect or Word. We might conclude that you are referring to providing something like a ProCite file with items (a) and/or (b) but more specifics are required. Also, neither in our citations databases (in ProCite) nor in our article review databases (in Excel, Access, Oracle) do we maintain our various search strategies (item c) or, typically, items (d) or (e). Please clarify what is being requested.

Response: AHRQ wishes to make electronic files available to researchers and interested parties who would like to update the review, or has an interest in the evidence review topic area and would like to perform additional analyses. Therefore, electronic files that are easily searched and manipulated will facilitate this goal. Microsoft Word and WordPerfect files are not adequate for storing citations in an easily retrievable format. In addition, separately detailing

items (c) through (e) will aid the use of this information for users and researchers. The EPC Coordinating Center will maintain the report files for distribution upon request.

88. Page 14, third paragraph: Text states that EPCs will be required to include “a science writer and an editor as part of their core staff.” Are two additional core staff members required? (This also impacts question 2., i.e., AHRQ is requesting a greater number of an greater expertise for core staff but no funds are provided to allow for recruitment or maintenance of these core staff positions.)

Response: If an EPC has skilled science writers to prepare the reports and assessments, then a copy editor is the only additional staff that should be available on an as-needed basis. Recall, that AHRQ will no longer undertake detailed review, editing, and correction of EPC reports and assessments. They are to come to AHRQ in camera ready publishable form. Therefore, it is imperative that the EPCs factor in the need for at least a portion of time on each task order for an experienced copy editor, in order to ensure technical acceptability of their reports and assessments.

89. Page 71, evaluation forms: Is it expected that current EPCs request evaluation forms from: (i) partners (even though partners do not contract directly with EPCs) and/or (ii) Task Order Officers?

Response: It is the offeror’s prerogative and responsibility to decide to whom their Past Performance Questionnaires should be sent.

90. Who in the AHRQ will be allowed to prepare contractor performance questionnaires for Task Orders completed by the EPCs during the first five years. If they are not permitted to do the questionnaires, who do you recommend instead?

Response: Questionnaires should be sent to the Task Order Officer or the Project Officer.

91. Please clarify the distinction between Bidding Partners, Content Experts, consultants and subcontractors.

Response: We are not familiar with the term “Bidding Partners.” “Partners” as used in the RFP refers to those professional societies and other entities whose nominated topics are accepted by AHRQ for an EPC evidence report or technology assessment. “Content Expert” denotes an individual with appropriate and relevant clinical or research expertise in the topic for which an EPC evidence report or technology assessment will be developed. Consultants and subcontractors are individuals or organizations with whom you may enter into agreements with to help you accomplish the requirements of the RFP.

92. Can new subcontractors be instituted as per the needs of the task order or must all potential subcontractors be declared now?

Response: Yes, new subcontractors can be added based on the needs of a particular task order.

93. Could Canadian bidders be exempted from the Small Disadvantaged Business Plan requirement, since Canadian operations are not likely to subcontract to Small Disadvantaged Businesses in the US? If so, how can they be evaluated on a level playing field if US bidders do utilize SDB's?

Response: Refer to Question #11.

94. Define "loaded," as in labor rates.

Response: Refer to Question #64.

95. Does 12:00 p.m. mean 12:00 noon or midnight? Express in 24-hour clock.

Response: In the United States, 12:00 p.m. means noon, or 1200 hours.

96. A. Does the agency frown on having multiple institutional partners (3-4) in an effort to prospectively cover a diverse spectrum of issues and potential topics?

B. Would the agency prefer a single partnership with a large institution, say a school of public health, or partnerships with multiple smaller organizations/departments that are handpicked for their focused areas of expertise and demonstrated excellence (e.g. a department of health care economics and a department of epidemiology and a division of behavioral health and a division of geriatric medicine).

C. If there are multiple partners does the agency see a value to having one of them act primarily as a coordinator, or would this duplicate the role of the coordinating centers mentioned in the RFP?

D. Is there a preference for academic institutions over private sector?

Response: A contract is awarded to one prime contractor. The prime contractor may have subcontracts as needed to carry out the work envisioned in the RFP. It is the offeror's responsibility to develop the proposal that will demonstrate the offeror's capability to perform the range of tasks set forth in the SOW. AHRQ cannot offer any advice as how offerors develop their proposals and with whom they enter into subcontract arrangements.

97. What is the salary range the Government is accustomed to paying for personnel in each of the Classes I-IV?

Response: This information is not available.

98. Does AHRQ anticipate a minimum level of funding for a core team, with additional funding for each TO, or is all funding associated with a specific TO?

Response: All funding is associated with a specific task order.

99. If baseline funding to maintain a core team is the procedure, are we correct in our understanding that such a core team is expected to be roughly to 4 FTE's?

Response: The number of FTEs is dependent on the requirements of the particular task order.

100. Does the government expect to receive estimates of OTSP costs (in any category) in this proposal?

Response: We expect to see hourly rates (or range of hourly rates) for all individuals under the specific categories identified.

101. What is the exact mechanism for purchase of items such as computers and software under this proposal, if it is awarded?

Response: It is expected that organizations submitting offers for this requirement will have the capability to provide their own office equipment such as computers and software.

102. Financial capacity - is this University's Year 2000 Financial Report (the current one available) adequate for documenting financial capacity?

Response: That cannot be determined until we have received and reviewed your proposal. If it is not sufficient, you would be asked to provide additional information.

103. Are there any specific formats or forms, other than those provided in the RFP, that the government expects to be used in preparing this proposal (such as forms that document financial capacity, small business certifications, etc.)?

Response: No specific forms or formats are required for these types of documentation.

104. For the existing EPCs which are preparing a response to the solicitation, do we need to ask the Task Order Officer(s) and the EPC Project Officer to complete the Contractor's Performance Rating or will AHRQ request that their staff complete the required performance evaluation?

Response: It is the offeror's responsibility to secure past performance appraisals.

105. In past discussions with the EPC Project Officer and others, EPC's were encouraged by indications that budgetary support for EPC infrastructure would be a feature of the new EPC RFA. Will there be any further consideration of this established need? And if not, why was this stated need not addressed in the current RFA?

Response: Refer to Question #83.

106. Will there be "cost of living adjustments" built into the task order budgets for years 2, 3, 4, and 5? During the 5 years of the EPC budget cycle, the average cost of the task order remained approximately \$250,000 while the salary cost of staff and costs of non-personnel budget items rose each year, effectively decreasing the task order budget each year. How will AHRQ address this phenomenon?

Response: The Government's estimated cost of a task order is determined on an individual task order basis depending on the estimated effort required to complete the task order. Offerors will have the opportunity to submit proposed budget costs, including personnel costs and cost of living adjustments, for each task order on which they submit a proposal. It should be noted, however, that some EPC reports will be due within a 6 month or less period; some may require up to 12 months. There will probably be fewer evidence reports that require 12 months for completion.

Add the following provision to Section H of the solicitation:

H.12 SALARY RATE LIMITATION LEGISLATION PROVISIONS

Pursuant to P.L. 107-116, no Fiscal Year 2002 (October 1, 2001 - September 30, 2002) funds may be used to pay the direct salary of an individual through this contract at a rate in excess of the direct salary rate for Executive Level I of the Federal Executive Pay Scale. That rate is \$166,700 per year (calculated on a base of 2080 hours per year with an applicable hourly rate of \$80.14) for the period January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2002. Direct salary is exclusive of overhead, fringe benefits, and general and administrative expenses. The salary limit also applies to individuals proposed under subcontracts. If this is a multi-year contract, it may be subject to unilateral modifications by the Government if any salary rate ceilings are established in future DHHS appropriations acts. P.L. 107-116 states in pertinent part:

None of the funds appropriated in this Act for the National Institutes of Health, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Substance Abuse and Mental

Health Services Administration shall be used to pay the salary of an individual, through a grant or other extramural mechanism, at a rate in excess of Executive Level I.

Note that since this would be a limit on the rate, it is possible to pay someone much less than \$166,700 and still be in violation of this statutory provision. Contractors may absorb that portion of an employee's salary (plus the dollar amount for fringe benefits and indirect costs associated with the excess) that exceeds a rate of \$166,700 a year.

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**PART IV. REPRESENTATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS
SECTION K**

REPRESENTATIONS, CERTIFICATIONS AND OTHER STATEMENTS OF OFFERORS

K.1	HHSAR 315.406-5	Representations and Certifications
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| K.14 | FAR 52.225-2 | Buy American Act-Balance of Payments Program Certificate (FEB 2000) |
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K.I REPRESENTATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE OFFEROR: (The Representations and Certifications must be executed by an individual authorized to bind the Offeror.)

The Offeror makes the following Representations and Certifications as part of its proposal. (Check or complete all appropriate boxes or blanks on the following pages.)

(Name of Offeror)

(RFP No.)

(Signature of Authorized Individual)

(Date)

(Typed Name of Authorized Individual)

NOTE: The penalty for making false statements in offers is prescribed in 18 U.S.C. 1001.

K.2 CERTIFICATE OF INDEPENDENT PRICE DETERMINATION (APR 1985)

(FAR 52.203-2)

(a) The offeror certifies that--

- (1) The prices in this offer have been arrived at independently, without, for the purpose of restricting competition, any consultation, communication, or agreement with any other offeror or competitor relating to (i) those prices, (ii) the intention to submit an offer, or (iii) the methods or factors used to calculate the prices offered;
- (2) The prices in this offer have not been and will not be knowingly disclosed by the offeror, directly or indirectly, to any other offeror or competitor before bid opening (in the case of a sealed bid solicitation) or contract award (in the case of a negotiated solicitation) unless otherwise required by law; and
- (3) No attempt has been made or will be made by the offeror to induce any other concern to submit or not to submit an offer for the purpose of restricting competition.

(b) Each signature on the offer is considered to be a certification by the signatory that the signatory--

- (1) Is the person in the offeror's organization responsible for determining the prices being offered in this bid or proposal, and that the signatory has not participated and will not participate in any action contrary to subparagraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3) above; or
- (2) (i) Has been authorized, in writing, to act as an agent for the following principals in certifying that those principals have not participated, and will not participate in any action contrary to subparagraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3) above.

[Insert full name of person(s) in the offeror's organization responsible for determining the prices offered in the bid or proposal, and the title of his or her position in the offeror's organization];

- (ii) As an authorized agent, does certify that the principals named in subdivision (b)(2)(i) above have not participated, and will not participate, in any action contrary to subparagraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3) above; and
- (iii) As an agent, has not personally participated, and will not

participate, in any action contrary to subparagraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3) above.

- (c) If the offeror deletes or modifies subparagraph (a)(2) above, the offeror must furnish with its offer a signed statement setting forth in detail the circumstances of the disclosure.

(End of provision)

K.3 CERTIFICATION AND DISCLOSURE REGARDING PAYMENTS TO INFLUENCE CERTAIN FEDERAL TRANSACTIONS (APR 1991) (FAR 52.203-11)

- (a) The definitions and prohibitions contained in the clause at FAR 52.203-12, Limitation on Payments to Influence Certain Federal Transactions, included in this solicitation, are hereby incorporated by reference in paragraph (b) of this certification.
- (b) The offeror, by signing its offer, hereby certifies to the best of his or her knowledge and belief that on or after December 23, 1989,--
 - (1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress on his or her behalf in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement;
 - (2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds (including profit or fee received under a covered Federal transaction) have been paid, or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress on his or her behalf in connection with this solicitation, the offeror shall complete and submit, with its offer, OMB Standard Form-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, to the Contracting Officer; and
 - (3) He or she will include the language of this certification in all subcontract awards at any tier and require that all recipients of subcontract awards in excess of \$100,000 shall certify and disclose accordingly.
- (c) Submission of this certification and disclosure is a prerequisite for making or entering into this contract imposed by section 1352, title 31, United States Code. Any person who makes an expenditure prohibited under this provision or who

fails to file or amend the disclosure form to be filed or amended by this provision, shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

(End of provision)

K.4 TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION (FAR 52.204-3) (OCT 1998)

(a) Definitions:

"Common parent," as used in this provision, means that corporate entity that owns or controls an affiliated group of corporations that files its Federal income tax returns on a consolidated basis, and of which the offeror is a member.

"Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)," as used in this provision, means the number required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to be used by the offeror in reporting income tax and other returns. The TIN may either be a Social Security Number or an Employer Identification Number.

(b) All offerors are required to submit the information required in paragraph (d) through (f) of this provision to comply with debt collection requirements of 31 U.S.C. 7701(c) and 3325(d), reporting requirements of 26 U.S.C. 6041, 6041A, and 6050M and implementing regulations issued by the IRS. If the resulting contract is subject to the payment reporting requirements described in FAR 4.904, the failure or refusal by the offeror to furnish the information may result in a 31 percent reduction of payments otherwise due under the contract.

(c) The TIN may be used by the Government to collect and report on any delinquent amounts arising out of the offeror's relationship with the Government (31 U.S.C. 7701(c)(3)). If the resulting contract is subject to the payment reporting requirements described in FAR 4.904, the TIN provided hereunder may be matched with IRS records to verify the accuracy of the offeror's TIN.

(d) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN).

TIN: _____

TIN has been applied for.

TIN is not required because:

Offeror is a nonresident alien, foreign corporation, or foreign partnership that does not have an income effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business in the United States (U.S.) and does not have an office or place of business or a fiscal paying agent in the U.S.;

Offeror is an agency or instrumentality of a foreign government;

Offeror is an agency or instrumentality of a Federal, state, or local government.

- (e) Type of organization.
- () Sole proprietorship;
 - () Partnership;
 - () Corporate entity (not tax-exempt);
 - () Corporate entity (tax-exempt);
 - () Government entity (Federal, State, or local);
 - () Foreign government;
 - () International organization per 26 CFR 1.6049-4;
 - () Other_____.

- (f) Common Parent.

- () Offeror is not owned or controlled by a common parent as defined in paragraph (a) of this clause.
- () Name and TIN of common parent:

Name_____

TIN_____

**K.5 WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS (OTHER THAN SMALL BUSINESS) (MAY 1999)
(FAR 52.204-5)**

- (a) Definition. "Women-owned business concern," as used in this provision, means a concern that is at least 51 percent owned by one or more women; or in the case of any publicly owned business, at least 51 percent of its stock is owned by one or more women; and whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more women.
- (b) Representation.[*Complete only if the offeror is a women-owned business concern and has not represented itself as a small business concern in paragraph (b)(1) of FAR 52.219-1, Small Business Program Representations, of this solicitation.*] The offeror represents that it is [] is not [] a women-owned business concern.

(End of Provision)

K.6 CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, PROPOSED DEBARMENT, AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS (APR 2001) (FAR 52.209-5)

- (a)(1) The Offeror certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief, that—
- (i) The Offeror and/or any of its Principals—
 - (A) Are [] are not [] presently debarred, suspended, proposed for

debarment, or declared ineligible for the award of contracts by any Federal agency;

- (B) Have have not , within a three-year period preceding this offer, been convicted of or had a civil judgement rendered against them for: commission of fraud of a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, state, or local) contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or state antitrust statutes relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion or receiving stolen property; and
- (C) Are are not presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated in subdivision (a)(1)(i)(B) of this provision.
- (D) Have haven not , within a three-year period preceding this offer, been convicted of or had a civil judgement rendered against them for: commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, state or local contract or subcontract); violation of Federal or state antitrust statues relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making fals statements, tax evasion, or receiving stolen property; and
- (E) Are are not presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated in subdivision (a)(1)(i)(D) of this provision.
- (ii) (A) The Offeror, aside from the offenses enumerated in paragraphs (a)(1)(i)(A), (B), and (C) of this provision, has has not , within the past three-years, relative to tax, labor and employment, environmental, antitrust, or consumer protection laws --
 - (1) Been convicted of a Federal or State felony (or has any Federal or State felony indictments currently pending against them) or
 - (2) Had a Federal court judgment in a civil case brought by the United States rendered against them; or
 - (3) Had an adverse decision by a Federal administrative law judge, board, or commission indicating a willful violation of law.
- (B) If the Offeror has responded affirmatively, the Offeror shall provide

additional information if requested by the Contracting Officer; and

- (iii) Offeror has [] has not [], within a three-year period preceding this offer, had one or more contracts terminated for default by any Federal agency.
- (2) "Principals," for the purposes of this certification, means officers; directors; owners; partners; and, persons having primary management or supervisory responsibilities within a business entity (e.g., general manager; plant manager; head of a subsidiary, division, or business segment, and similar positions).

THIS CERTIFICATION CONCERNS A MATTER WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF AN AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE MAKING OF A FALSE, FICTITIOUS, OR FRAUDULENT CERTIFICATION MAY RENDER THE MAKER SUBJECT TO PROSECUTION UNDER SECTION 1001, TITLE 18, UNITED STATES CODE.

- (b) The Offeror shall provide immediate written notice to the Contracting Officer if, at any time prior to contract award, the Offeror learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.
- (c) A certification that any of the items in paragraph (a) of this provision exists will not necessarily result in withholding of an award under this solicitation. However, the certification will be considered in connection with a determination of the Offeror's responsibility. Failure of the Offeror to furnish a certification or provide such additional information as requested by the Contracting Officer may render the Offeror nonresponsible.
- (d) Nothing contained in the foregoing shall be construed to require establishment of a system of records in order to render, in good faith, the certification required by paragraph (a) of this provision. The knowledge and information of an Offeror is not required to exceed that which is normally possessed by a prudent person in the ordinary course of business dealings.
- (e) The certification in paragraph (a) of this provision is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when making award. If it is later determined that the Offeror knowingly rendered an erroneous certification, in addition to other remedies available to the Government, the Contracting Officer may terminate the contract resulting from this solicitation for default.

(End of provision)

K.7 PLACE OF PERFORMANCE (OCT 1997) (FAR 52.215-6)

- (a) The offeror or respondent, in the performance of any contract resulting from this

solicitation, [] intends, [] does not intend (check applicable box) to use one or more plants or facilities located at a different address from the address of the offeror or respondent as indicated in this proposal or response to request for information.

- (b) If the offeror or respondent checks "intends" in paragraph (a) of this provision, it shall insert in the following spaces required information:

Place of Performance (Street
Address, City, County State,
Zip Code)

Name and Address of Owner
and Operator of the Plant
or Facility if Other than Offeror or
respondent

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(End of provision)

K.8 SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM REPRESENTATIONS (MAY 2001) (FAR 52.219-1)

- (a)
- (1) The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for this acquisition is **541611**.
 - (2) The small business size standard is **\$5 million**.
 - (3) The small business size standard for a concern which submits an offer in its own name, other than on a construction or service contract, but which proposes to furnish a product which it did not itself manufacture, is 500 employees.
- (b) Representations.
- (1) The offeror represents as part of its offer that it [] is, [] is not a small business concern.
 - (2) *[Complete only if offeror represented itself as a small business concern in block (b)(1) of this provision.]* The offeror represents, for general statistical purposes that it [] is [] is not a small disadvantaged business concern as defined in 13 CFR 124.1002.
 - (3) *[Complete only if offeror represented itself as a small business concern in block (b)(1) of this provision.]* The offeror represents as part of its offer that it [] is [] is not a women-owned small business concern.
 - (4) *[Complete only if offeror represented itself as a small business concern in block (b)(1) of this provision.]* The offeror represents as part of its offer that it [] is, [] is not a veteran-owned small business concern.

(2) *[Complete only if offeror represented itself as a veteran-owned small business concern in block (b)(4) of this provision.]* The offeror represents as part of its offer that it [] is, [] is not a service-disabled veteran-owned small business concern.

(c) *Definitions.* As used in this provision –

“Service-disabled veteran-owned small business concern” –

(1) Means a small business concern –

- (i) Not less than 51 percent of which is owned by one or more service-disabled veterans or, in the case of any publicly owned business, not less than 51 percent of the stock of which is owned by one or more service-disabled veterans; and

- (ii) The management and daily business operations of which are controlled by one or more service-disabled veterans, or in the case of a veteran with a permanent and severe disability, the spouse or permanent caregiver of such veteran.

(2) Service-disabled veteran means a veteran, as defined in 38 U.S.C. 101(2), with a disability that is service-connected, as defined in 38 U.S.C. 101(16).

“Small business concern” means a concern, including its affiliates, that is independently owned and operated, not dominant in the field of operation in which it is bidding on Government contracts, and qualified as a small business under the criteria in 13 CFR Part 121 and the size standard in paragraph (a) of this provision.

“Veteran-owned small business concern” means a small business concern –

- (1) Not less than 51 percent of which is owned by one or more veterans (as defined at 38 U.S.C. 101(2)) or, in the case of any publicly owned business, not less than 51 percent of the stock of which is owned by one or more veterans; and

- (2) The management and daily business operations of which are controlled by one or more veterans.

“Women-owned small business concern” means a small business concern --

- (1) That is at least 51 percent owned by one or more women or, in the case of any publicly owned business, at least 51 percent of the stock of which is owned by one or more women; and

- (2) Whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more women.
- (d) *Notice.*
- (1) If this solicitation is for supplies and has been set aside, in whole or in part, for small business concerns, then the clause in this solicitation providing notice of the set-aside contains restrictions on the source of the end items to be furnished.
 - (2) Under 15 U.S.C. 645(d), any person who misrepresents a firm's status as a small, HUBZone small, small disadvantaged, or women-owned small business concern in order to obtain a contract to be awarded under the preference programs established pursuant to sections 8(a), 8(d), 9, or 15 of the Small Business Act or any other provision of Federal law that specifically references section 8(d) for a definition of program eligibility, shall
 - (i) Be punished by imposition of a fine, imprisonment, or both;
 - (ii) Be subject to administrative remedies, including suspension and debarment; and
 - (iii) Be ineligible for participation in programs conducted under the authority of the Act.

(End of Provision)

Alternate I (OCT 2000) As prescribed in 19.307(a)(2), add the following paragraph (b)(6) to the basic provision:

- (6) *[Complete only if offeror represented itself as a small business concern in paragraph (b)(1) of this provision.]* The offeror represents, as part of its offer, that -
 - (i) It [] is, [] is not a HUBZone small business concern listed, on the date of this representation, on the List of Qualified HUBZone Small Business Concerns maintained by the Small Business Administration and no material change in ownership and control, principal office of ownership, or HUBZone employee percentage has occurred since it was certified by the Small Business Administration in accordance with 13 CFR part 126; and
 - (ii) It [] is, [] is not a joint venture that complies with the requirements of 13 CFR Part 126, and the representation in paragraph (b)(6)(i) of this provision is accurate for the HUBZone small business concern or concerns that are participating in the joint venture. *(The offeror shall enter the name and names of the HUBZone small business concern or concerns that are participating in the joint venture:*

Each HUBZone small business concern participating in the joint venture shall submit a separate signed copy of the HUBZone representation.

K.9 SMALL DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS STATUS (OCT 1999) ALTERNATE I (OCT 1998) (FAR 52.219-22)

(a) *General.*

This provision is used to assess an offeror's small disadvantaged business status for the purpose of obtaining a benefit on this solicitation. Status as a small business and status as a small disadvantaged business for general statistical purposes is covered by the provision at FAR 52.219-1, Small Business Program Representation.

(b) *Representations.*

(1) General. The offeror represents, as part of its offer, that it is a small business under the size standard applicable to this acquisition; and either -

[] (i) It has received certification by the Small Business Administration as a small disadvantaged business concern consistent with 13 CFR 124, Subpart B; and

(A) No material change in disadvantaged ownership and control has occurred since certification.

(B) Where the concern is owned by one or more disadvantaged individuals, the net worth of each individual upon whom the certification is based does not exceed \$750,000 after taking into account the applicable exclusions set forth at 13 CFR 124.104(c)(2); and

(C) It is listed, on the date of this representation, on the register of small disadvantaged business concerns maintained by the Small Business Administration; or

[] (ii) It has submitted a completed application to the Small Business Administration or a Private Certifier to be certified as a small disadvantaged business concern in accordance with 13 CFR 124, Subpart B, and a decision on that application is pending,

and that no material change in disadvantaged ownership and control has occurred since its application was submitted.

- b. [] For Joint Ventures. The offeror represents, as part of its offer, that it is a joint venture that complies with the requirements at 13 CFR 124.1002(f) and that the representation in paragraph (b)(1) of this provision is accurate for the small disadvantaged business concern that is participating in the joint venture. (The offeror shall enter the name of the small disadvantaged business concern that is participating in the joint venture: _____)

(c) *Penalties and Remedies.* Anyone how misrepresents any aspect of the disadvantaged status of a concern for the purposes of securing a contract or subcontract shall -

- (1) Be punished by imposition of a fine, imprisonment, or both;
- (2) Be subject to administrative remedies, including suspension and debarment; and
- (3) Be ineligible for participation in programs conducted under the authority of the Small Business Act.

Alternate I (Oct 1998)

(3) Address. The offeror represents that its address [] is, [] is not in a region for which a small disadvantaged business procurement mechanism is authorized and its address has not changed since its certification as a small disadvantaged business concern or submission of its application for certification. The list of authorized small disadvantaged business procurement mechanisms and regions is posed at <http://www.arnet.gov/References/sdbadjustments.htm>. The offeror shall use the list in effect on the date of this solicitation. "Address," as used in this provision, means the address of the offeror as listed on the Small Business Administrations or a Private Certifier in accordance with 13 CFR part 124, subpart B. For joint ventures, "address" refers to the address of the small disadvantaged business concern that is participating in the joint venture.

(End of Provision)

K.10 PROHIBITION OF SEGREGATED FACILITIES (FEB 1999) (FAR 52.222-21)

- (a) "Segregated facilities," as used in this clause, means any waiting rooms, work areas, rest rooms and wash rooms, restaurants and other eating areas, time clocks, locker rooms and other storage or dressing areas, parking lots, drinking fountains, recreation or entertainment areas, transportation, and housing facilities provided for employees, that are segregated by explicit directive or are in fact segregated on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin because of written or oral policies or employee custom. The term does not include separate or single-user rest rooms or necessary dressing or sleeping areas provided to assure privacy between the sexes.

- (b) The Contractor agrees that it does not and will not maintain or provide for its employees any segregated facilities at any of its establishments, and that it does not and will not permit its employees to perform their services at any location under its control where segregated facilities are maintained. The Contractor agrees that a breach of this clause is a violation of the Equal Opportunity clause in this contract.
- (c) The Contractor shall include this clause in every subcontract and purchase order that is subject to the Equal Opportunity clause of this contract.

(End of Clause)

**K.11 PREVIOUS CONTRACTS AND COMPLIANCE REPORTS (FEB 1999)
(FAR 52.222-22)**

The offeror represents that--

- (a) It [] has, [] has not participated in a previous contract or subcontract subject either to the Equal Opportunity clause of this solicitation;
- (b) It [] has, [] has not filed all required compliance reports; and
- (c) Representations indicating submission of required compliance reports, signed by proposed subcontractors, will be obtained before subcontract awards.

(End of provision)

K.12 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMPLIANCE (APR 1984) (FAR 52.222-25)

The offeror represents that--

- (a) It [] has developed and has on file, [] has not developed and does not have on file, at each establishment, affirmative action programs required by the rules and regulations of the Secretary of Labor (4) CFR 60-1 and 60-2,

or

- (b) It [] has not previously had contracts subject to the written affirmative action programs requirements of the rules and regulations of the Secretary of Labor.

(End of provision)

**K.13 CERTIFICATION OF TOXIC CHEMICAL RELEASE REPORTING (OCT 2000)
(FAR 52.223-13)**

- (a) Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this contract imposed by Executive Order 12969, August 8, 1995.

- (b) By signing this offer, the offeror certifies that -
- (1) As the owner or operator of facilities that will be used in the performance of this contract that are subject to the filing and reporting requirements described in section 313 of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA) (42 U.S.C. 11023) and section 6607 of the Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 (PPA) (42 U.S.C. 13106), the offeror will file and continue to file for such facilities for the life of the contract the Toxic Chemical Release Inventory Form (Form R) as described in sections 313(a) and (g) of EPCRA and section 6607 of PPA; or
 - (2) None of its owned or operated facilities to be used in the performance of this contract is subject to the Form R filing and reporting requirements because each such facility is exempt for at least one of the following reasons: *(Check each block that is applicable.)*
 - (i) The facility does not manufacture, process, or otherwise use any toxic chemicals listed under section 313(c) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. 11023(c);
 - (ii) The facility does not have 10 or more full-time employees as specified in section 313(b)(1)(A) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. 11023(b)(1)(A).
 - (iii) The facility does not meet the reporting thresholds of toxic chemicals established under section 313(f) of EPCRA, 42 U.S.C. 11023(f) (including the alternate thresholds at 40 CFR 372.27, provided an appropriate certification form has been filed with EPA).
 - (iv) The facility does not fall within Standard Industrial Classification Code (SIC) designations 20 through 39 or their corresponding North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sectors 31 through 33; or
 - (v) The facility is not located within any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, or any other territory or possession over which the United States has jurisdiction.

K.14 BUY AMERICAN ACT-BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROGRAM CERTIFICATE (FEB 2000) (FAR 52.225-2)

- (a) The offeror certifies that each end product, except those listed in paragraph (b) of this provision, is a domestic end product as defined in the clause of this solicitation entitled "Buy American Act--Balance of Payments Program - Supplies", and that the offeror has considered components of unknown origin to have been mined, produced, or manufactured outside the United States. The offeror shall list as foreign end products those end products manufactured in the United States that do not qualify as domestic end products.

(b) Foreign End Products

Line Item No.	Country of Origin
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(List as necessary)

(c) The Government will evaluate offers in accordance with the policies and procedures of Part 25 of the Federal Acquisition

(End of provision)

K.15 HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY AND MINORITY INSTITUTION REPRESENTATION (MAY 2001)(FAR 52.226-2)

(a) *Definitions.* As used in this provision-

“Historically Black College or University” means an institution determined by the Secretary of Education to meet the requirements of 34 CFR 608.2. For the Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration , and the Coast Guard, the term also includes any nonprofit research institution that was an integral part of such a college or university before November 14, 1986.

“Minority Institution” means an institution of higher education meeting the requirements of Section 1046(3) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067k, including a Hispanic-serving institution of higher education as defined in Section 316(b)(1) of the Act (20 U.S.C. 1101(a)).

(b) *Representation.* The offeror represents that it-
___ is ___ is not a Historically Black College or University;
___ is ___ is not a Minority Institution

(End of Provision)

K.16 COST ACCOUNTING STANDARDS NOTICES AND CERTIFICATION (JUNE 2000) (FAR 52.230-1)

NOTE: This notice does not apply to small businesses or foreign governments. This notice is in three parts, identified by Roman numerals I through III.

Offerors shall examine each part and provide the requested information in order to determine Cost Accounting Standards (CAS) requirements applicable to any resultant contract.

If the offeror is an educational institution, Part II does not apply unless the

contemplated contract will be subject to full or modified CAS-coverage pursuant to 48CFR 9903.201-2(c)(5) or 9903.201-2(c)(6), respectively.

I. Disclosure Statement - Cost Accounting Practices and Certification

(a) Any contract in excess of \$500,000 resulting from this solicitation, will be subject to the requirements of the Cost Accounting Standards Board (48 CFR, Chapter 99), except for those contracts which are exempt as specified in 48 CFR 9903.201-1.

(b) Any offeror submitting a proposal which, if accepted, will result in a contract subject to the requirements of 48 CFR Chapter 99 must, as a condition of contracting, submit a Disclosure Statement as required by 48 CFR 9903.202. When required, the Disclosure Statement must be submitted as a part of the offeror's proposal under this solicitation unless the offeror has already submitted a Disclosure Statement disclosing the practices used in connection with the pricing of this proposal. If an applicable Disclosure Statement has already been submitted, the offeror may satisfy the requirement for submission by providing the information requested in paragraph (c) of Part I of this provision. Caution: In the absence of specific regulations or agreement, a practice disclosed in a Disclosure Statement shall not, by virtue of such disclosure, be deemed to be a proper, approved, or agreed-to practice for pricing proposals or accumulating and reporting contract performance cost data.

(c) Check the appropriate box below:

- (1) Certificate of Concurrent Submission of Disclosure Statement.
The offeror hereby certifies that, as a part of the offer, copies of the Disclosure Statement have been submitted as follows: (i) original and one copy to the cognizant Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) or cognizant Federal agency official authorized to act in that capacity, as applicable, and (ii) one copy to the cognizant Federal auditor.

(Disclosure must be on Form No. CASB DS-1 or CASB DS-2, as applicable. Forms may be obtained from the cognizant ACO or Federal official and/or from the loose-leaf version of the Federal Acquisition Regulation.)

Date of Disclosure Statement: _____
Name and Address of Cognizant
ACO or Federal official where filed: _____

The offeror further certifies that practices used in estimating costs in pricing this proposal are consistent with the cost accounting practices disclosed in the Disclosure Statement.

- (2) Certificate of Previously Submitted Disclosure Statement.

The offeror hereby certifies that the required Disclosure Statement was filed as follows:

Date of Disclosure Statement: _____

Name and Address of Cognizant
ACO or Federal official where filed: _____

The offeror further certifies that the practices used in estimating costs in pricing this proposal are consistent with the cost accounting practices disclosed in the applicable Disclosure Statement.

(3) Certificate of Monetary Exemption.

The offeror hereby certifies that the offeror together with all divisions, subsidiaries, and affiliates under common control, did not receive net awards of negotiated prime contracts and subcontracts subject to CAS totaling more than \$25 million in the cost accounting period immediately preceding the period in which this proposal was submitted. The offeror further certifies that if such status changes before an award resulting from this proposal, the offeror will advise the Contracting Officer immediately.

(4) Certificate of Interim Exemption.

The offeror hereby certifies that (i) the offeror first exceeded the monetary exemption for disclosure, as defined in (3) of this subsection, in the cost accounting period immediately preceding the period in which this offer was submitted and (ii) in accordance with 48 CFR, Subpart 9903.202-1, the offeror is not yet required to submit a Disclosure Statement. The offeror further certifies that if an award resulting from this proposal has not been made within 90 days after the end of that period, the offeror will immediately submit a review certificate to the Contracting Officer, in the form specified under subparagraph (c)(1) or (c)(2) of Part I of this provision, as appropriate, to verify submission of a completed Disclosure Statement.

Caution: Offerors currently required to disclose because they were awarded a CAS-covered prime contract or subcontract of \$25 million or more in the current cost accounting period may not claim this exemption (4). Further, the exemption applies only in connection with proposals submitted before expiration of the 90-day period following the cost accounting period in which the monetary exemption was exceeded.

II. Cost Accounting Standards - Eligibility for Modified Contract Coverage

If the offeror is eligible to use the modified provisions of 48 CFR, Subpart 9903.201-2(b) and elects to do so, the offeror shall indicate by checking the box below. Checking the box below shall mean that the resultant contract is subject to the Disclosure and Consistency of Cost Accounting Practices clause in lieu of the Cost Accounting Standards clause.

The offeror hereby claims an exemption from the Cost Accounting Standards clause under the provisions of 48 CFR, Subpart 9903.201-2(b) and certifies that the offeror is eligible for use of the Disclosure and Consistency of Cost Accounting Practices clause because during the cost accounting period immediately preceding the period in which this proposal was submitted, the

offeror received less than \$25 million in awards of CAS-covered prime contracts and subcontracts or the offeror did not receive a single CAS-covered award exceeding \$1 million. The offeror further certifies that if such status changes before an award resulting from this proposal, the offeror will advise the Contracting Officer immediately.

Caution: An offeror may not claim the above eligibility for modified contract coverage if this proposal is expected to result in the award of a CAS-covered contract of \$25 million or more or if, during its current cost accounting period, the offeror has been awarded a single CAS-covered prime contract or subcontract of \$25 million or more.

III. Additional Cost Accounting Standards Applicable to Existing Contracts

The offeror shall indicate below whether award of the contemplated contract would, in accordance with subparagraph (a)(3) of the Cost Accounting Standards clause, require a change in established cost accounting practices affecting existing contracts and subcontracts.

Yes No

(End of Provision)

ALTERNATE I (APR 1996)

(5) Certificate of Disclosure Statement Due Date by Educational Institution.

If the offeror is an educational institution that, under the transition provisions of 48 CFR 9903.202-1(f), is or will be required to submit a Disclosure Statement after receipt of this award, the offeror hereby certifies that (check one and complete):

(a) A Disclosure Statement filing Due Date of _____ has been established with the cognizant Federal agency.

(b) The Disclosure Statement will be submitted within the six month period ending _____ months after receipt of this award.

Name and Address of cognizant ACO or Federal Official where Disclosure Statement is to be filed: _____

(END OF ALTERNATE I)

K.17 CERTIFICATE OF CURRENT COST OR PRICING DATA (FAR 15.406-2)

CERTIFICATE OF CURRENT COST OR PRICING DATA

When cost or pricing data are required, the contracting officer shall require the contractor to execute a Certificate of Current Cost or Pricing Data using the format in this paragraph, and shall include the executed certificate in the contract file.

This is to certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the cost or pricing data (as defined in Section 15.401 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation(FAR) and required under FAR subsection 15.403-4) submitted, either actually or by specific identification, in writing, to the contracting officer or the contracting officer's representative in support of __

_____ * are accurate, complete, and current as of _____
_____ ** .

This certification includes the cost or pricing data supporting any advance agreements and forward pricing rate agreements between the offeror and the Government that are part of the proposal.

FIRM _____

NAME _____ Signature _____

TITLE _____

DATE OF EXECUTION*** _____

* Identify the proposal, request for price adjustment, or other submission involved, giving the appropriate identifying number (e.g., Request for Proposal number).

** Insert the day, month, and year when price negotiations were concluded and price agreement was reached or, if applicable, an earlier date agreed upon between the parties that is as close as practicable to the date of agreement on price.

*** Insert the day, month, and year of signing, which should be as close as practicable to the date when the price negotiations were concluded and the contract price agreed to.

End of Certificate

K.18 ENVIRONMENTAL TOBACCO SMOKE

The Public Health Service strongly encourages all grant and contract recipients to provide a smoke-free workplace and to promote the nonuse of all tobacco products. In addition, Public Law 103-227, the Pro-Children Act of 1994, prohibits smoking in certain facilities (or in some cases, any portion of a facility) in which regular or routine education, library, day care, health care or early childhood development services are provided to children.

CERTIFICATION REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL TOBACCO SMOKE

Public Law 103-227, also known as the Pro-Children Act of 1994 (Act), requires that smoking not be permitted in any portion of any indoor facility owned or leased or contracted for by an entity and used routinely or regularly for the provision of health, day care, early childhood development services, education or library services to children under the age of 18, if the services are funded by Federal programs either directly or through State or local governments, by Federal grant, contract, loan, or loan guarantee. The law also applies to children's services that are provided in indoor facilities that are constructed, operated, or maintained with such federal funds. The law does not apply to children's services provided in private residences; portions of facilities used for inpatient drug or alcohol treatment; service providers whose sole source of applicable Federal funds is Medicare or Medicaid; or facilities where WIC coupons are redeemed. Failure to comply with the provisions of the law may result in the imposition of a civil monetary penalty of up to \$1000 for each violation and/or the imposition of an administrative compliance order on the responsible entity.

By signing this certification, the offeror/contractor certifies that the submitted organization will comply with the requirements of the Act and will not allow smoking within any portion of any indoor facility used for the provision of services for children as defined by the Act.

The submitting organization agrees that it will require that the language of this certification be included in any subawards which contain provisions for children's services and that all subrecipients shall certify accordingly.

Organization: _____

Signature _____ Title _____

Date _____

PAST PERFORMANCE QUESTIONNAIRE

PART ONE: INSTRUCTIONS

The offeror listed below has submitted a proposal in response to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Solicitation No. AHRQ-02-0003, entitled "Evidence-based Practice Centers." Past performance is an important part of the evaluation criteria for this acquisition, so input from previous customers of the offeror is important. This office would greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete this form. **This information is to be provided to Mrs. Sharon Williams, the AHRQ Contracting Officer and is NOT to be disclosed to the offeror either verbally or in writing.** Please provide an honest assessment and return to AHRQ to the address shown below, no later than **March 1, 2002**. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Sharon Williams at (301) 594-7192.

Mrs. Sharon Williams
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Division of Contracts Management
2101 East Jefferson Street, Suite 502
Rockville, Maryland 20852

FAX: (301) 443-7523

NAME OF OFFEROR: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Contractor Performance Form

1. Name of Contractor: _____
2. Address: _____

3. Contract/Grant Number: _____
4. Contract/Grant Value (Base Plus Options): _____
5. Contract/Grant Award Date: _____
6. Contract/Grant Completion Date: _____
7. Type of Contract/Grant: (Check all that apply) ()FP () Award Fee () CPFF-Completion
() CPFF-Term () CPIF () CPAF
() IO/IQ () BOA () Requirements () Labor-Hour ()T&M () SBSA
()8(a) ()SBIR () Sealed Bid()Negotiated()Competitive ()Non-Competitive
8. Description of Requirement:

CONTRACTOR'S PERFORMANCE RATING

Ratings: Summarize contractor performance and circle in the column on the right the number which corresponds to the performance rating for each rating category. Please see reverse page for explanation of rating scale.

Quality of Product or Service	Comments	0 1 2 3 4 5
Cost Control	Comments	0 1 2 3 4 5
Timeliness of Performance	Comments	0 1 2 3 4 5
Business Relations	Comments	0 1 2 3 4 5

Customer Satisfaction - Is/was the Contractor committed to customer satisfaction? __Yes__ No ;
 Would you use this Contractor again? __Yes__ No
 Reason:

NAME OF EVALUATOR: _____

TITLE OF EVALUATOR: _____

SIGNATURE OF EVALUATOR: _____

DATE: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____

Rating Guidelines: Summarize contractor performance in each of the rating areas. Assign each area a rating 0(Unsatisfactory), 1(Poor), 2(Fair), 3(Good), 4(Excellent) 5(Outstanding). Use the following instructions as guidance in making these evaluations.

	Quality	Cost Control	Timeliness of Performance	Business Relation
	-Compliance with contract requirements -Accuracy of reports -Technical excellence	-Within budget(over/under target costs) -Current, accurate, and complete billings -Relationship of negotiated costs to actual -Cost efficiencies -Change orders issue	-Met interim milestones -Reliable -Responsive to technical direction -Completed on time, including wrap-up and contract adm -No liquidated damages assessed	-Effective management -Businesslike correspondence -Responsive to contract requirements -Prompt notification of problems -Reasonable/cooperative -Flexible -Pro-active -Effective small/small disadvantaged business sub-contracting program
0-unsatisfactory	Nonconformances are jeopardizing the achievement of contract requirements, despite use of Agency resources	Ability to manage cost issues is jeopardizing performance of contract requirements, despite use of Agency resources	Delays are jeopardizing the achievement of contract requirements, despite use of Agency's resources	Response to inquiries, technical/service/administrative issues is not effective
1-Poor	Overall compliance requires major Agency resources to ensure achievement of contract requirements	Ability to manage cost issues requires major Agency resources to ensure achievement of contract requirements	Delays require major Agency resources to ensure achievement of contract requirements	Response to inquiries, technical/service/administrative issues is marginally effective
2-Fair	Overall compliance requires minor Agency resources to ensure achievement of contract requirements	Ability to manage cost issues requires minor Agency resources to ensure achievement of contract requirements	Delays require minor Agency resources to ensure achievement of contract requirements	Response to inquiries, technical/service/administrative issues is somewhat effective
3-Good	Overall compliance does not impact achievement of contract requirements	Management of cost issues does not impact achievement of contract requirements	Delays do not impact achievement of contract requirements	Response to inquiries, technical/service/administrative issues is usually effective
4-Excellent	There are no quality problems	There are no cost management issues	There are no delays	Response to inquiries, technical/service/administrative issues is effective

5-Outstanding. The Contractor has demonstrated an outstanding performance level that justifies adding a point to the score. It is expected that this rating will be used in those rare circumstances where Contractor performance clearly exceeds the performance levels described as "Excellent."