

AGENCY: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

TITLE: “Demonstration of Enhancing Radiological Incident Response and Recovery: Enhancing Capability and Capacity of Environmental Radioanalytical Laboratories Across the Nation”

ACTION: Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP No.: EPA-OAR-NAREL-07-10

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NO: 66.034

SUMMARY: Formal Agency Responses to Questions Regarding the Subject RFP

DATE: October 25, 2007

Q1: On page 3 of the RFP, you note that laboratory equipment will include:

- two high purity germanium detector systems
- two gas-flow proportional counter systems
- one liquid scintillation counter
- one alpha spectrometry counting system (with 16-20 individual alpha spectrometry detectors)

It would be extremely helpful if EPA could provide, for each of the systems listed above, the manufacturer (i.e. Canberra, Protean, Perkin-Elmer, Gamma Products, etc.) and the model number(s). This information will enable us to determine how best to configure the equipment to work with existing laboratory systems.

A1: EPA determined that vendor compatibility of the applicant’s existing equipment with the equipment purchased by EPA would not be considered for this competitive opportunity. To ensure that applicant proposals are not influenced or affected in any way by vendor equipment compatibility issues, EPA will not provide vendor information on the equipment purchased by EPA. In order to avoid and minimize instrument compatibility issues, EPA purchased the instrumentation described in the RFP as complete stand alone systems. In purchasing the equipment, one of the requirements established by EPA in the specifications was that the instruments be capable of importing, exporting and saving data in a format currently supported by the software programs of all major vendors of nuclear counting instrumentation.

Q2: Will EPA provide potential applicants with the specifications that EPA used in ordering the equipment? This would apply to alpha spec, gamma spec, liquid scintillation, gross alpha/beta counters and other equipment.

A2: EPA will not provide the specifications used to purchase the equipment described in the RFP.

Q3: The EPA RFP notes a list of equipment that will be provided to successful applicants. Is the awardee required to accept this equipment?

A3: The awardee is not required to accept the equipment. However, as stated in the Scope of Work, Section I.B. of the RFP, a key component of this competitive opportunity is the applicant's customized and innovative approach to increase their environmental radioanalytical capacity and capability *utilizing the equipment provided by EPA to the grantees*. Each applicant, as described in Section V, will be evaluated on their strategy to enhance their capability and capacity utilizing equipment and training provided by EPA to the grantee laboratories .

Q4: We have not developed the infrastructure for rapid response needed for radiological emergencies even though we have analytical systems in routine use. Is it possible to participate in this program for the purposes of establishing procedures and protocols for dealing with large numbers of samples on a rapid response basis?

A4: The goal of this competitive opportunity is to seek proposals that demonstrate technical approaches (including training) that may enhance the radioanalytical capacity and capability of laboratories thereby improving their ability to fulfill the mission of providing laboratory support in the event of a radiological or nuclear incident resulting from a terrorist attack or other emergency situations. All proposals from eligible entities (See Section III.A.) that meet the threshold eligibility criteria (See Section III.C.) will be evaluated and considered for award of a cooperative agreement.

Q5: Please provide more information about the equipment that is to be supplied by EPA. The floor in our laboratory was designed to support the weight of the shielding currently in use and a determination needs to be made as to whether or not the additional equipment can safely be added. Assuming the provided equipment includes detector shields, please provide the approximate weight of each shield.

The request for proposals also lists two germanium detector systems and an alpha spectroscopy system. Are these independent systems or a single system with two germanium detectors and the alpha spectrometers?

A5: Information on the weight of the shielding and floor space needed for the individual stand-alone instrument systems is contained in the following table:

Instrument System	Floor Space Needed	Weight of Shielding/Instrument
1 gas-flow proportional counter system (single detector, automatic sample changer)	20 square feet	1200 lbs
1 gas-flow proportional counter system (16 separate detectors)	60 square feet	5000 lbs

1 high purity germanium detector system (automatic sample changer)	40 square feet	2700 lbs
1 high purity germanium detector system	10 square feet	2500 lbs
1 alpha spectrometry counting system	5 square feet	150 lbs
1 liquid scintillation counter system	15 square feet	300 lbs

Q6: The RFP, p. 3 states that "EPA will also conduct on-site training for the selected grantees on laboratory incident response operations." Could you clarify if this also includes instrument or method training, or sample preparation techniques with which grantees may not have had experience?

A6: After the grantee laboratories have been selected for award, an assessment of training needs will be performed. This, along with any specific training requests from the grantee laboratories, will be used to develop the on-site training modules which will cover, if needed, all aspects of incident response laboratory operations.

Q7: Is the budget figure of \$250,000 for year one, and \$100,000 for succeeding years, inclusive or exclusive of indirect costs?

A7: The dollar amounts are inclusive of indirect costs.

Q8: The following sentence is near the beginning of the RFP: "Final applications will be requested from those eligible entities whose proposal has been successfully evaluated and preliminarily recommended for award." Does this mean that we are writing a "pre-proposal" and that a group of applicants will be selected to write a final proposal?

A8: As set forth in Section IV.C., applicants must submit the SF-424, SF-424A and the Narrative Proposal to be considered for award. If an applicant's proposal is recommended for award, EPA will notify the successful applicant and request submission of a Final Application. This is really just a final "package" which consists of the forms and certifications that are necessary for award of the grant. (See Section V.B. and C., and Section VI. A.)

Q9: Does the cover letter have to be printed on official state letterhead or can I use a plain page with required information (item 1, a - h) in a bullet format?

A9: The cover letter does not have to be on official letterhead. A plain page with the required information is acceptable.

Q10: Is EPA looking for improved capability and capacity resulting from increasing the amount of equipment at the laboratory and providing training that will raise the skill levels of current analysts and prepare additional staff to do analyses? Or, is EPA requesting that laboratories develop innovative approaches such as improvements in existing analytical methods, and development of new analytical methods, screening processes and prioritization schemes, or some combination of these?

A10: EPA seeks proposals that accomplish all of these things. The third paragraph of the Scope of Work (Section I.B.) is a good summary of EPA's goal: "An applicant's proposal (as described in Section IV) should contain a specific customized and innovative approach to increase their environmental radioanalytical analysis capacity and capability utilizing the equipment to be provided by EPA to the grantees, as described above, and the training on laboratory incident response operation conducted by EPA at the grantee's laboratory."

Q11: Will there be funding available in the future to help laboratories that do not participate in the demonstration to implement the recommendations that come out of the project?

A11: EPA anticipates that funding will be available for similar competitive opportunities in the future.

Q12: Is there a provision by which our laboratory could participate on a limited basis? We have already identified a need for alpha spectroscopy capability at our laboratory, but are reasonably well stocked with liquid scintillation, alpha/beta and high purity germanium counting equipment.

A12: Please see response to Q3/A3.

A13: Will EPA award partial grants?

A13: No.

A14: Could we apply to be a contractor for a laboratory that receives a grant?

A14: Yes. However, grant recipients are responsible for selecting their subrecipients and EPA personnel may not direct recipients to make subawards to particular organizations.

Q15: What is funding requested? Is that the \$250K earmarked for the first year?

A15: As set forth in the instructions for the Narrative Proposal on page 12, for the Summary Page, c. Funding Requested, specify the amount you are requesting from EPA. This is not the approximately \$250,000.00 for the first year of the cooperative agreement, it's the amount you are requesting from EPA for the project period of 5 years.

Q16: The total project cost - Is that the \$650K for the 5 year total allocation for the length of the project?

A16: As set forth in the instructions for the Narrative Proposal on page 12, for the Summary Page, d. Total Project Cost, specify the total cost of the project. This includes funding from other sources, including cost share or in-kind resources and should cover the 5 year project period.

Q17: Will EPA provide guidance on whether our cost estimate for the service contract on the major instrumentation as required in Section 1B - Scope of Work is in line with their expectations? Will EPA provide applicants with a realistic estimate?

A17: EPA cannot provide specific guidance to the applicant's budget proposal beyond what is provided in the RFP. Further, labs could choose to maintain the equipment themselves.

Q18: For the project, EPA is providing some new equipment. Do submitting labs need to ask for funds for the maintenance on these instruments or did EPA pay for this when buying the instruments?

A18: As set forth in Section I, B. Scope of Work, the grantee laboratories will be expected to maintain and operate the equipment provided by EPA. EPA did not pay for this when the instruments were purchased.