

**Amendment #2 (Questions and Answers)
to RFP-NIH-NIAID-DMID 04-34
"Bioinformatics Resource Centers for Biodefense and Emerging/Re-emerging
Infectious Diseases"**

Amendment to Solicitation No.: NIH-NIAID-DMID-04-34

Amendment No.: Two (2nd posting)

Amendment Date: April 21, 2003 (Questions 1-27)
May 15, 2003 (Questions 28-35)

RFP Issue Date: February 11, 2003

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Name and Address of Offeror: To All Offerors

THE ABOVE REFERENCED SOLICITATION IS HEREBY AMENDED AS FOLLOWS TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY OFFERORS. THE RESPONSES BY THE NIAID PROJECT OFFICER ARE OFFERED FOR INFORMATION ONLY AND DO NOT MODIFY OR BECOME PART OF THIS SOLICITATION. THIS AMENDMENT WILL BE UPDATED TO ADD ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS AND THEIR RELATED RESPONSES. ALL POTENTIAL OFFERORS ARE ADVISED TO REFER BACK TO THIS AMENDMENT #2 FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Question 1. The respondent is given wide latitude with respect to selection of pathogens to include in their proposals. Other than Category A, B, and C, does NIH have any other existing segments which will be used to categorize vendor proposals?

Answer 1. NIH is not providing this type of information. The SOW states that organisms of particular interest are the NIAID Category A-C priority pathogens and those causing emerging and re-emerging diseases.

Question 2. Are there any GFE or GFI resources?

Answer 2. No, there are no specific Government Furnished Equipment or Government Furnished Information resources that will be provided.

Question 3. Does the NIH have a current established standard Database Management System (DBMS, such as Oracle Sybase, etc.) or one that is in predominant use by other NIH systems ?

Answer 3. No, the SOW states that the contractor shall utilize a system that is commercially available and supported relational database management system that incorporates Structured Query Language (SQL) and can be searched using Query by Example.

Question 4. Does the NIH have a preference in terms of location of the pathogen database(s) (outsourced or in-house)? If the NIH prefers to have systems located in an existing NIH IT facility, what site facilities will be available (i.e. power, UPS, data communications LAN and WAN, floor space)

Answer 4. The NIH has no preference.

Question 5. Is the government estimate of 29,120 hours annually for each award, or total estimated hours for all awards combined? Is there any estimate of time hours per pathogen?

Answer 5. The Level of Effort is approximately 29,120 labor hours annually for each award. No.

Question 6. Are foreign entities (such as Universities) eligible to act as the prime contractor or subcontractor?

Answer 6. Yes

Question 7. Can a subcontractor be a subcontractor on multiple proposals in response to this RFP from multiple prime contractors?

Answer 7. Yes

Question 8. Can a subcontractor also be a prime contractor submitting their own response to this RFP?

Answer 8. Yes

Question 9. Is the curation by experts (SOW section D.1) considered a funded (subcontracted) part of the proposal or will that be considered separately? Are expert curators to be considered as co-PI's, for example, on the proposal?

Answer 9. The contractor is responsible for providing and supporting all of the personnel required to conduct the project (SOW section A.13). The contractor is responsible for developing ties with the scientific community that best serves the goals of the contract and the scientific community.

Question 10. The database must contain at least 5 pathogen genomes. How will these be counted? For example, are two strains of the same species counted as one or two? How about two species of the same genus?

Answer 10. Strains within a species = 1 genome; species within a genus = individual genomes

Question 11. Quality values (Page 6. B.1a). What happens if for a particular genome that is completed and in the public domain the sequencing center does not make available or no longer has available either the quality scores or the trace files from which to compete them? Does that mean such a genome should not be proposed?

Answer: 11. Every effort should be made to include quality scores. Most publicly available genome databases include quality scores in ancillary files. If quality scores are not immediately available, a place holder should be included.

Question 12. Do you anticipate that the databases may be required to contain classified information?

Answer: 12. No

Question 13. The RFP states that eight to ten awards will be made. Do you anticipate awarding and constructing multiple, disparate databases, or will you choose one architecture/design and require all awardees to conform to one database design?

Answer 13. It is anticipated that the government will award and construct multiple disparate databases.

Question 14. Does NIH intend to request an exemption from Section 508 requirements based on its national defense applicability?

Answer 14. Not at this time.

Question 15. Is it preferable for offerors to select all pathogens from one category (e.g., re-emerging disease pathogens) or one pathogenic type (e.g., viruses), or would it be preferable to select pathogens that cover each of the major categories and microorganism types.

Answer 15. There is no preference.

Question 16. Are there any plans to provide incentives to DMID-funded investigators to encourage submission of data to this central database?

Answer 16. It is assumed that the data used in the database will be publicly available for use. It can be assumed that genome sequencing projects funded by NIAID will have a data release policy for rapid release of genome data to a publicly accessible site.

Question 17. a. Are resumes included in the 110-page limit? (Page 25 of RFP)
b. If the offeror develops an RFP compliance matrix, is that included in the 110-page count or is it considered "front matter" like the Table of Contents.
c. Are the NIAID-required forms from Section J included in the 110 pages?

Answer 17. No, these documents are not included in the page limitation.

Question 18. a. Does the government want to receive general and organizational experience, performance history, and pertinent contacts from the prime contractor only or may it include information on subcontractors?
b. Is there a minimum or maximum number of pertinent contracts that the government requires?
c. May the pertinent contracts be from the team (prime and subcontractors) or from the prime only?

Answer 18. a. Pertinent information for subcontractors may be included.
b. No
c. Pertinent information may be from the team, the prime or the subcontractor

Question 19. Please explain how a temporary website as discussed under Section L, Part 1, Item n (page 34) can be set up and how exactly must it differ from a permanent website?

Answer: 19. Reviewers will not access fully active sites. One way to provide reviewers with additional information is to provide screen shots or a CD, though critical information should be included with the text of the proposal.

Question 20. What type of contract will be awarded? Clause 52.216-11, Cost Contract No Fee is included in the RFP, Section I, page 18.

Answer: 20. Cost Reimbursement, Completion type contracts are contemplated. This includes Cost Plus Fixed Fee contracts for commercial contractors.

Question 21. a. What qualifications and expertise should the Principal Investigator have?
b. Do you have any indication of the number of hours for the P.I.?

Answer: 21. Please refer to the technical evaluation criteria described in Section M, on Page 59 of the RFP.
a. The reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the proposed personnel (including the P.I.).
b. No, there is no set number of hours. The reviewers will evaluate the adequacy of the time commitment proposed for the PI.

Question 22. Will the contractor be attached to one bioinformatics resource center or multiple resource centers or be involved in setting up a resource center?

Answer: 22. The contractor shall develop one center. Please see Section A-H of RFP for the specific tasks that the contractor is required to perform.

Question 23. Please explain the role of contractor in section A 11 of the SOW.

Answer 23. The contractor is to develop and implement, after Project Officer approval, a Transfer Agreement to be used for investigator-initiated transfer of data to the contractor-developed database. These submissions are likely to come from researchers within a specific area of study that are not directly associated with the contractor. In addition, the contractor shall keep a record of all transfer agreements entered into with the research community or private sector.

Question 24. Who is responsible for finding sources of data?

Answer 24. The contractor.

Question 25. What does the term "maintain" imply? especially in sections A-4, A-6, A-14 and A-15. For what period is maintenance envisaged?

Answer 25. The contractor is responsible for sustaining the database and website, as well as all database related resources, information, security systems etc. (as outlined in the SOW) required to keep the website/database operational and useful to the Government and the research community.

Question 26. What is the contract duration?

Answer 26. See Page 1 of the RFP.

Question 27. Please explain the responsibility of the contractor for establishing the Scientific Advisory Committee in D-6?

Answer 27. The responsibilities of the Contractor for establishing the SAC are defined in section D.6 a-c of the RFP.

Question 28. Can the Contractor propose a higher level of estimate than that specified in the RFP?

Answer 28. The 21,120 hours stated in the RFP are the government's best estimate of what the work should require. This estimate is not restrictive for proposal purposes and the contractor may propose more (or fewer) hours. However, it is the contractor's responsibility to demonstrate that the personnel proposed are essential to the successful performance of the effort.

Question 29. How many hours does the Government equate with an FTE year?

Answer 28. For the purposes of this effort an FTE year is 2080 hours

Question 30. Please clarify, and if possible provide example of, QBE.

Answer 30. In the context of a database management system, Query By Example (QBE) can be thought of as a "fill-in-the blanks" method of query creation. To conduct a search for field data matching particular conditions, the user enters criteria into the form, creating search conditions for as many fields as desired. A query is automatically generated to search the database for matching data. The Microsoft Access Query Design Grid is an example.

Question 31. "Develop and maintain a database schema that organizes the tables into distinct modular components with tightly defined dependencies" could include either or both:

- a highly normalized database
- an object-relational model

Please confirm.

Answer 31. Yes.

Question 32. Why does the RFP specify an "unencumbered Internet access to the database"? Is the word "unencumbered" being used in the legal sense (i.e., without a claim?)

Answer 32. All data must be made freely available. Therefore there should be no fees, licenses or subscriptions involved with gaining access to the data.

Question 33. "Develop an integration platform for importing heterogeneous info into the Database". Please be more specific as to what heterogeneous information is meant. For example, does this refer to other bioinformatics databases not explicitly developed under this RFP?

Answer 33. Yes. Heterogeneous data could come from other sources such as researchers working under other NIAID funded mechanisms or external databanks, such as Genbank.

Question 34. Please clarify that purchase of certain computer servers is expected for the performance of this RFP. The RFP is unclear in differentiating general equipment from exceptionally expensive hardware like database servers (although this is implied).

Answer 34. Yes. Computer servers may be purchased for this RFP.

Question 35. Section C, paragraph 1 of the RFP (page 7) states: "All tools and technologies developed and/or enhanced by the Contractor (ie documentation, software source codes, analysis tools and algorithms) shall be made FREELY available to the scientific community via the central web site." Please clarify whether proprietary software e.g. Oracle Database Software or source code (e.g. Sun Microsystems Solaris OS) would need to be included.

Answer 35. "All tools and technologies developed or enhanced *for this effort* shall be made freely available on the website. Commercial Off the Shelf products (COTS) requiring licensing or redistribution agreements are not considered as being developed specifically for this RFP."

- Except as provided herein, all terms and conditions of this RFP remain unchanged and in full force and effect.

- The hour and date specified for receipt of offers REMAINS: **June 2, 2003, 4:00 EST**
- Offerors must acknowledge receipt of this Amendment #2, on each copy of the offer submitted.

Failure to acknowledge receipt of this amendment may result in the rejection of your offer.

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