

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: AHRQ-04-0001
TITLE: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND APPLICATIONS SUPPORT
RFP ISSUE DATE: JULY 17, 2003
NOTICE OF INTENT DUE: AUGUST 19, 2003 (NOT CHANGED)
PROPOSALS DUE: SEPT. 16, 2003 2:00 PM EST (NOT CHANGED)
AMENDMENT NO. 2 TO RFP, DATED AUGUST 8, 2003 (42 PAGES)

ISSUED BY: MARY HAINES, CONTRACTING OFFICER,
AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE AND RESEARCH/ DHHS

The amendment is includes the following four parts: A. CLARIFICATIONS TO RFP, B. QUESTIONS ON RFP AND RESPONSES, C. CORRECTIONS/ REVISIONS TO RFP, and D. REPLACEMENT PAGES. The Amendment has 42 pages.

A. CLARIFICATIONS TO RFP:

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code that best describes this requirement is corrected to read: 541611. The small business size standard of \$6 million remains the same.

Offerors should acknowledge receipt and understanding of all amendments issued to the RFP in their cover letter submitted with their proposal.

B. QUESTIONS ON RFP AND RESPONSES:

1. (Reference Subtask 3.4) Can AHRQ provide an estimation of the expected volume of both webcasts and web conferences? **NO**

2. Is the AHRQ looking for a services solution, whether they would notify the contractor of an upcoming webcast and the contractor sets up the event? Or, is the AHRQ looking for an application that would allow it's own teams to be self sufficient in producing these multi media events?

Both. The contractor will be expected to develop long range strategies on certain assigned topics independently. These strategies would include a number of different types of products or events which the Contractor would propose to carry out. AHRQ will then approve or ask for modifications of the Contractor's proposed strategy.

The contractor may also be tasked to carry out individual projects such as webcasts, workshops, or other products on a specific topic for a specific audience.

3. Does AHRQ anticipate that contractors will bid to serve a single constituent group, multiple groups, or all groups? C 2.6 indicates that contractors will assist in design and implementation of KT across all Centers and stakeholders. C 2.10 on Page 13 refers to 4 contracts, each serving a primary stakeholder audience category, taking into account "offeror's unique expertise with their identified stakeholder audience." Are you seeking 4 contractors with primary expertise in different audience categories, or is each contract expected to serve ALL categories, or do you expect to receive responses proposing to serve some but not all groups? Which of these would

be acceptable?

Each contractor will be expected to have the capability to serve, and may be asked to serve, multiple audiences and topics identified, however each Contractor MUST have a specialty in one of these audience types. (Emphasis added)

4. SDBPP and other SB contacting: Could you clarify the expectations as to the proportion of the total award that will go to small businesses, and whether that proportion is per contract, a proportion of subcontracts, or is AHRQ's target for this program overall? I am particularly concerned because comparing requirement L.8 B2.d (30% max) and L.11.B.2.g (23% goal) leaves little room for collaboration with other sorts of entities.

Section L.8 L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions is revised, it follows this section. The reference to "a ratio of less than seventy percent full time core staff to thirty percent consultants/ subcontractors..." has been deleted. Your attention is directed to page 86 of the RFP, L.11 BUSINESS PROPOSAL, PARAGRAPH b. Small Business Subcontracting Plan, subpart g. for the AHRQ recommended goals for Small Businesses. The goals, (i.e. 23% small business subcontracting) refer to the proportion of subcontracting for each contract for the base period. The subcontracting plan should be submitted for the three year base period.

5. Will there be a bidder's conference/ call? **No**

6. (Reference Section L8.B. Management Plan, Section 2(d), does AHRQ expect that the Prime Contractor on this contract will have to have 70% of the core personnel on its staff? Is the Prime to have 70% of the work and the subcontractors/ consultants 30% or can we have a blended team of committed key personnel chosen for their expertise and experience in specific task assignment areas?

See response to 4 above.

7. (Reference, page 1 Transmittal Letter) It stipulates that Proposal Intent forms are due on August 8, 2003, yet the Proposal Intent form stipulates that it must be submitted by August 16, 2003. Please clarify.

Proposal Intent Forms are to be submitted by August 19, 2003.

8. If a Small Business is proposing for this contract, how does it win the 5 points additional beyond the 100 points if it is not required to provide a SDB plan as part of its response?

Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plans are required for both small and large businesses are both eligible to receive up to five (5) points for their SDBPP, during evaluation.

9. Section L.10 says all offerors must have a SDB plan. Then Section L.11 says small businesses do not need to have such a Plan. Which is it? Please clarify.

See response to 8.

10. No SF 33 forms accompanied the RFP or the Amendment. When will they be provided so that we can make them part of our response?

See Part A, Clarifications, of this amendment.

11. Please clarify some of the inconsistencies regarding format for responses. Technical approach is supposed to be 125 pages, yet within that framework, we are to provide a 10-page single space document for a Knowledge Transfer strategy. In another area you request additional multi-page single space documents. Also, is the response to be limited in type point and specific font and page format, i.e. double spaced? Does usage of 11X17 graphics count as one page or two?

See Revised L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions, in Part D of this amendment. Usage of 11X17 graphics count as one page.

12. The RFP requests “certified documentation” for accounting programs and documentation of current indirect costs. Please clarify.

If a contractor has a current indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, this will indicate that it has an acceptable accounting system that segregates costs. If a contractor does not have a current indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, the contractor must submit a proposal to the cognizant indirect cost officials, within ninety (90) days of contract award, or face suspension of indirect cost reimbursement, until an agreement is made.

13. The RFP requests that respondents list ALL current contracts. Should this be all contracts or relevant contracts?

Relevant contracts.

14. How can a small business with excellent but limited past performance qualifications earn the additional 20 points for past performance when compared to the overwhelming number of contracts held by major prime contractors?

Past performance evaluation is an evaluation on “quality of past performance for previous relevant service” not quantity of performance on previous relevant contracts(number of past performance evaluations received from an offeror’s clients).

15. Can AHRQ provide us with reliable definitions of program, initiative, etc? Otherwise, what should we call these in the proposal? Is there a conceptual relationship that results in groups of programs (i.e., program areas) being as initiatives?

See section 3.2 of the SOW.

16. The initial “element” of the sample task is defining the “Knowledge transfer and application goals.” However, the RFP indicates that in an active contract, the Contractor will define program objectives, specific stakeholder audiences, and intended outcomes through consultation with the Project Officer, relevant stakeholders, and experts in the field. Thus, how are we to address this issue in the sample task (e.g., analyze the literature, define a methodology, etc.)?

The “Knowledge transfer and application goals” element does not refer to the sample plan, but to strategies developed after award. For the sample plan, offerors should use hypothetical goals based on their knowledge and experience.

17. The environmental scan subtask appears to involve search and assessment of both

“content findings” and information on dissemination of these findings. Is this an accurate interpretation?

Yes

18. The RFP states: For the program area chosen, the proposal must address how the strategy will be tailored so that it will effectively address the needs of AHRQ’s priority populations. Does this mean that it is preferred or required to define a best strategy to accommodate both the unique population and standard population, or can separate strategies be developed within each initiative/ stakeholder area?

Offerors can develop a single strategy if it can be shown that it does in fact work well for all populations, or if a single strategy can't meet the goals for all populations, then they would need to develop special approaches that work for specific special populations.

19. Tasks 3 and 4 are interrelated with task 1. That is, the design of applications and infrastructure such as networks, and assessments of need and resources are integral to the development of strategy. Moreover, as stated in the RFP, “Together, the needs and resource assessments shall guide the development of long-term knowledge transfer strategies, the types of programs offered, and the methods and aides employed to carry them out. Therefore, should the sample strategy task include completing Task 3 and 4 as required by the sample problem?

Yes

20. Reference Subtask 1.2 on page 18). It will be hard to estimate resources required to complete the material review without some “scope” from AHRQ. Can AHRQ quantify the amount of materials to be reviewed or provide some estimate of person-hours?

No

21. The Contractor will be working with national expert presenters. Will the contractor generally identify presenters for approval by AHRQ? Will the Contractor be able to screen and accept or reject presenters based on strategic criteria, such as willingness and ability to present information within a specific program structure?

The Contractor will screen potential presenters based on appropriateness for the task at hand for AHRQ approval.

22. Are other stakeholders, such as technology developers, being considered for inclusion in the knowledge transfer activity?

No

23. What are AHRQ specifications regarding the development of infrastructures as part of the knowledge transfer strategy? Currently most RFP discussion focuses on programs and activities, but network development may require new databases, etc.

Offerors will have to develop their own specifications based on the strategies and programs they propose to develop.

24. Should the proposal address a comprehensive set for a category of stakeholders or can the boundary of the stakeholder definition be limited, so as to better test and improve new concepts?

Boundaries of stakeholder groups can be limited to test and improve new concepts.

25. Please clarify the stakeholder audiences to be considered. Are there three or four? Please describe each.

The three groups are identified and described in section 2.10 of the SOW.

Are bidders required to select only one?

Offerors can select more than one stakeholder group if they can document equally substantial long term experience and expertise serving them.

If so, are they only eligible for an award for that group? **No**

26. Does the statement on page 26 that, “the evaluation component is not expected to exceed 7% of the total contract budget,” apply to the sample strategy budget, as well? **Yes.** Is the evaluation budget for the sample strategy limited to 7% of the \$350,000? **No. Please also note AHRQ has revised the value of the sample strategy from \$350,000 to \$500,000. See Part C, of this amendment for complete revision.**

27. Does the \$6 million standard for small businesses also apply for small businesses subcontractors to large business contractors? IT subcontractors are often defined at the \$21 million level.

The \$6 million standard applies to small businesses. The NAICS code of 541611 with the small business standard of \$6 million is designated because AHRQ does not consider the IT component of this requirement to be of the greatest emphasis in the overall performance of the requirement.

28. On page 77, the proposal instructions call for no more than 125 pages, with the majority of the text double spaced. Should the detailed narrative, sample strategy and evaluation plan also be presented as double-spaced pages? If so, do the length parameters still stand, i.e., if the contractor were to present the text in single-spaced pages it would be no longer than 45 pages. **See Part C. Replacement Pages (of this amendment) for the revised Section L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions, immediately following these responses to questions.**

29. Page 82, sub bullet “b”, and again on page 83, the proposal references “contracts and subcontracts identified in (1) above.” Should the (1) be replaced with “a” above? (This refers to the Past Performance Information L.9 paragraph “b.” There is a reference to “(1) above. Please clarify that this should be “a.” above.

Yes, you are correct. The statement is meant to state, “The attached Past Performance Questionnaire and Contractor Performance Form shall be completed by those contracting organizations listed in (1) above. The evaluation forms shall be completed and forwarded directly to the following: Mary Haines ...”

30. (Reference section B.2, page 4), it states that the total amount per year will be \$1 million, including estimated costs and fees. It then explains that both the fixed fee and award fee are “TO be negotiated.” In developing our budget proposal, what estimated rates should we use for these two fees in order to determine how much to allocate for covering the estimated costs of producing the required deliverables/ activities?

The Government anticipates a Base Fee of about 2 to 3%. The determination of the proposed award fee is an issue for the contractor to determine. The Government is bound by the parameters of the Federal Acquisition Regulations for negotiation of the fees. It should be noted that AHRQ’s history supports fixed fees that are equal to

approximately 5 to 8% of the estimated costs.

31. We would appreciate some clarification about your use of the term “strategy.” The list of tasks uses the singular, implying that we would develop a single, encompassing strategy for assisting our primary audience. However, if we are working on multiple topical initiatives simultaneously, each could presumably require its own separate strategy, therefore requiring use to develop multiple strategies. How do you envision this?

There will be multiple initiatives for which separate strategies will be developed.

32. What mix of initiatives/ activities/ deliverables should we use in developing our work plans and budget proposals?

-Given that a single major initiative should consume no more than \$350,000 per year, should we assume two major initiatives and the remaining \$300,000 for ad hoc task orders?

The Statement of Work has been modified to state that the sample knowledge transfer strategy should be limited in scope to not more than \$500,000. This limitation is for the sample strategy only and does not refer to any strategies that might be assigned to a contractor after award.

AHRQ does not yet know exactly how many initiatives or which of the identified stakeholders will be the focus for topics under this procurement. Therefore it is not possible to specify a number of specific deliverables that will be required. Offerors shall, therefore, prepare a budget for each of five years that is based on a hypothetical mix of programs including, but not limited to, the following types:

- **Conventional and electronic network building functions;**
- **Conventional workshops or conferences;**
- **Web conferences or Webcasts;**
- **Audio Conferences;**
- **Research synopses or policy briefs;**
- **Marketing methods;**
- **Technical assistance (including meetings and other methods).**

The program mix should include the programs proposed in the sample strategy but other methods selected by the Offeror not specified in the Statement of Work may also be used. The budget shall include all costs associated with producing these services including project management, evaluation, other direct, and indirect costs, as well as fee. The cost of the evaluation task can be prorated evenly across five years.

Offerors should include logistics costs to cover staff and presenter travel, meals, and lodging and registration fees. However, offerors should not include travel, meals, lodging, or registration fees for participants for any proposed programs.

Offerors should assume that the maximum amount of funds available for the first year shall total no more than \$1 million including indirect costs and fee. Offerors should assume a cost escalation of 4% each year with no change in indirect cost rates.

-Related to our early questions about term “strategy,” should we include the costs of strategy development” in the \$350,000 or is that separate?

Include it.

-Would we be allowed to provide travel scholarships for workshop participants?

Yes, but the COST for scholarships should NOT be included in the cost proposal.

33. Provide clarification regarding how the \$350,000 set aside for Task Two fits into the overall project budget, which, on page 4 of the RFP is estimated at \$1,000,000? That is, is the \$350,000 inclusive of the overall project budget, or is it a yearly budget line item?

The \$350,000 (revised to \$500,000 by this amendment) figure is used only for the purpose of limiting the scope of the sample strategy and is not to be counted as part of the cost proposal.

Does AHRQ anticipate that a successful contractor may be required to implement more than one knowledge transfer strategy during the life of the contract? **Yes**

34. (Reference Section C. Background, page 11) AHRQ lists three stakeholder audiences; however, AHRQ notes on page 10 of the RFP that four contract awards will be made. Will two contractors be dedicated to one stakeholder audience? And, if so, which stakeholder audience?

Contractors may or may not be tasked to address only one stakeholder group. Depending on the nature of the offers, it is possible that awards could be made to organizations with expertise with more than one stakeholder group. AHRQ has not identified a particular stakeholder group for which more than one contractor would be required.

35. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Could AHRQ provide specific information on the program areas listed? For example, does AHRQ have findings specific to patient safety that they want disseminated? The program choices listed are very broad.

AHRQ has not made decisions yet about which of its many areas of expertise will be the subject of a strategy. Information on AHRQ program areas can be found on the Agency website, www.AHRQ.gov .

36. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Is a bidder limited to the program area it chooses to develop a sample knowledge transfer and application strategy? That is, should an organization choose to develop a sample strategy around bioterrorism, and is subsequently awarded a contract, would that contractor be limited to bioterrorism, or would AHRQ also consider that contractor for other program areas?

AHRQ will also consider the offeror for program areas other than that chosen for the sample strategy. Additionally, the offeror should not assume that they would be assigned to develop a strategy around a specific topic just because they chose to develop their sample strategy around that specific topic.

37.(Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Can or should a bidder discuss its expertise/ knowledge of additional program areas other than the one chosen to develop a sample strategy?

Yes

38. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Eight potential program areas are listed; however, AHRQ states they will be awarding four contracts. Does AHRQ intend on equally dividing the program areas amongst the four contractors, or will some program areas not be addressed during the contract term?

AHRQ will divide program areas among the four contractors, as it determines necessary.

39. (Reference Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Three, Pg. 16-18) Is AHRQ anticipating that a successful contractor would use all of the electronic media listed, or a sampling as deemed appropriate?

Only those appropriate for the task.

40. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Three) For budgeting purposes, can AHRQ provide clarification as to what types and volume of computer and/or audio equipment will the contractor be required to provide?

No. That will be dependent on contractor proposed strategies and AHRQ assignment of tasks and topics.

41. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Four) Can AHRQ provide clarification as to what programs would require a pilot test? A pilot test or "talk-through" may not be feasible for all mediums listed in Task Area Three.

It is most likely that pilot tests or talk-throughs will be required for those program types which are new, experimental, complex, or which use presenters of whom and methods of which we are unsure or require rehearsal to perfect.

42. (Part I, The Schedule, Section A- Solicitation Form) The proposal states that "Multiple awards (approximately four [4] are anticipated." On page 4, under Estimated Cost and Fee: "NOTE: The Government estimated that the total amount per year (including estimated costs and fees) will be \$1,000,000.00. This estimate is for one contract." For clarification, are we then to understand that the Government will award up to four [4] contracts, totaling \$1,000,000.00 per year for three years, with 2, 1-year options.

As stated in the response to 3 above, each contractor will be expected to have the capability to serve, and may be asked to serve, multiple audiences. However, each Contractor should have a specialty in one of these audience types. Contractors who specialize in serving multiple stakeholders should discuss their capabilities in the proposal. However, the Agency anticipates awarding up to 4 contracts..

43. Can a contractor bid on more than one stakeholder audience as defined on page 11 of the RFP?

Contractors may or may not be tasked to address only one stakeholder group. Depending on the nature of the offers, it is possible that awards could be made to organizations with expertise with more than one stakeholder group. AHRQ has not identified a particular stakeholder group for which more than one contractor would be required. This response also includes the response to question 3 above. Each contractor will be expected to have the capability to serve multiple audiences, however each Contractor should have a speciality in one of these audience types

44. Can a contractor include plans to disseminate knowledge to consumers, or was this

stakeholder group left out intentionally?

Consumers were not included as a stakeholder group in the Statement of Work.

45. As per page 7, Consultant fees in excess of \$500 per day are not allowed. Yet on page 23, Subtask 4.10 Speaker fees are allowable up to \$1,000.00 per day. Is this a discrepancy? If so, what is the correct fee ceiling?

\$1,000.00 per day is the correct figure.

46. The instructions for responding to this RFP direct bidders to describe their overall approach to carrying out the project's requirements, and identify creative approaches and strategies to be incorporated into this approach. The RFP also calls for the development of a sample knowledge transfer and application strategy in a given topic area and for a specific target audience. However, on page 15 of the RFP, it notes that: "A cost proposal is not to be submitted with the sample strategy."

Given that reasonably accurate cost estimates for the overall project cannot be developed from the appropriately general nature of the SOW, would you please provide clarification with respect to the following:

a. What should be the mix of activities and tasks that form the basis for developing the cost/ price proposal to be included in the business proposal?

B. Similarly, what should be used as the basis for developing person-loading estimates called for as part of the management plan section of the proposal?

C. The RFP calls for the inclusion of a PERT chart in the management plan. Would a GANNT chart be equally acceptable? An again, what set of tasks and activities should be reflected in these charts?

See response to 32. Further, this amendment deletes the requirement for a PERT chart, and makes other changes to L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions. See replacement L.8 in Section D. of this amendment.

47. (Reference Subtask 3.4 of the Scope of Work) Can AHRQ provide an estimation of the expected volume of both webcasts and webconferences?

No

48. (Reference Subtask 3.4 of the Scope of Work) Is AHRQ looking for a services solution, where they would notify the contractor of an upcoming webcast and the contractor sets up the event? Or is AHRQ looking for an application that would allow its own teams to be self sufficient in producing these multi media events?

See Response to 2 above.

49. (Reference Section L.6) Would the agency consider proposals that focus exclusively or predominantly on specific priority populations, such as women and children, including those with special health care needs?

No, it is anticipated that such a proposal would not be responsive to the requirements of this RFP. See FAR subpart 15.6 Unsolicited Proposals

50. (Reference Section L.6)Would the agency consider proposals that focus exclusively or predominantly on stakeholder audiences that are subsets of or groups that cross-cut AHRQ's three identified audiences, such as executive branch officials who are responsible for developing policy, as well as for developing supporting or overseeing systems for purchasing or providing care (e.g., public health, Medicaid, SCHIP, behavioral health, etc)?

No, See response to 49.

51. (Reference Section L.6) Would the agency consider proposals that focus exclusively or predominantly on specific methods within the fields of diffusion of innovations and knowledge transfer, such as network building, electronic conferences, email serves and newsletters, research synopses, policy briefs and other written documents (but excluding, for example, workshops)?

No, see response to 49.

52. Is there an incumbent for the proposed work or for similar kinds of work previous to this?

As part of AHRQ's recent reorganization, the User Liaison Program is housed in the newly named Office of Communications and Knowledge Transfer. The current contractors under the current ULP Dissemination Support program are: Health Systems Research, Inc., Academy Health and National Academy for State Health Policy. This procurement is substantially different than the existing contracts and is not viewed as a recompetition of the current contracts.

53. Can the offeror, if a large business, also be part of a small business team eligible for the set-aside without impacting opportunity for award as other than a small business?

Yes

54. (Reference Exhibit I - Performance Requirements Summary–Pages 116-124 is cut off. Would you please provide completely readable text and boxes to ensure that critical information is not overlooked?

Exhibit 1 - Performance Requirements Summary is duplicated in Part C. of this amendment.

55. Is the intent to award four contracts each at \$1M per year or four contracts totaling \$1 million per year?

It is AHRQ's intent to award up to four contracts for approximately \$1 M per year for three years, as set forth in the RFP. There are also two one-year options included in this negotiated procurement.

56. Is there a minimum award for each of the four successful offerors in each year?

No, see response to 55.

57. As a successful offeror, is it possible that an offeror could get \$1M in effort or \$0 effort in any one year?

No response, at this time, AHRQ was not able to clarify intent of question in order to respond in this amendment.

58. The RFP indicates that a successful offeror might be involved with budgeting information. Does this kind of budget information expose the successful offeror to organizational conflicts of interest for other work that may be ongoing or available for bid in the future?

The successful offeror(s) would not be exposed to any “AHRQ budget information” during the successful completion of this requirement. Since specific reference was not provided, AHRQ cannot provide more definitive answer.

59. (Section C) Can the offeror propose to more than the one stakeholder audience referenced in Section C.2.10?

See response to 34.

60. (Section H) Would you please provide further insight to the performance measures of success that constitute the criteria for award at each level (i.e. what is the measure of success for 90-100% awarded, 80-89% awarded and so on...) In Section H.1?

A. Are the performance measures of success used to evaluate performance for awarded fee for those referenced in Section C.2.10?

B. When will the specific performance measures of success be provided?

See Section H.1, in conjunction with Attachment 1, Performance Evaluation and Award Fee. Note, Attachment 1, Performance Evaluation and Award Fee is duplicated in this amendment.

61. Can the award fee be rolled over to the next period if the maximum amount available for award is not earned?

No.

62. Section L and section M do not align with each other (e.g. technical requirements do not align with evaluation criteria for each section) Will there be any changes to Sections L and M to bring them into alignment?

See Part C. of this amendment for revisions to Sections L and M

63. (Section M) The focus of past performance seems to be on work that involved providing research services (p. 113) and delivery. Is this a major consideration? Or is the goal to appreciate the ability to deliver what you say will be delivered on time, within cost, and to customer requirements (p. 114)

Please use Attachment 2, Past Performance Questionnaire to obtain evaluations from your clients. See L.9 Past Performance Information and M, both revised by this amendment..

64. What is the dollar value of current contract?

The current contracts awarded June 1998 for a five year period were: Health Systems Research, Inc.-\$3,960,721, AcademyHealth - \$4,881,281, National Academy for State

Health Policy - \$3,747,654.

65. Will a source list be available?

No. For assistance in identifying potential subcontractors, go to PRONET on the Small Business Administration website, www.sba.gov/PRONET

66. Is there an incumbent? Is the incumbent eligible to re-compete?

See response to 52, above. Yes, incumbents are eligible to re-compete.

67. What is the anticipated award date?

December 15, 2003.

68. Have you determined acceptable levels for Base fees and Award fees, if so, what are they?

See response to 30, above.

69. Would GSA approved labor and other direct cost rates and fees be sufficient justification for the business proposal?

Only if the proposed rates were developed and are to be used for the type of effort being responded to. However, these rates are usually loaded rates for use on T&M/ labor hour type contracts(fixed price). These rates would not be appropriate for a cost reimbursement contract.

70. For costing purposes, would you please clarify what costs besides those for each labor category should be included in the business proposal? For example, in Section L.11, Item C, a proposed amount for travel should be included. For costing, how many out of town trips do you anticipate? Does this include staff travel and presenter/ speaker travel for meetings and workshops?

See response to 32.

71. How many meetings do you anticipate per year?

See response to 32.

72. How many speakers/ presenters do you anticipate per year?

See response to 32.

73. Does the sample knowledge transfer need to include all of the elements stated on page 13, and if so what level of detail?

Yes, all except for the budget. The total cost for this sample strategy is \$500,000. Level of detail depends on offeror's assessment of importance of each item and sample strategy length limits.

74. How many programs is the contractor expected to design/ supply in one year?

See response to 32.

75. Under Task 2, "Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy for Program Areas," does the \$350,000 ceiling for the development and implementation of the sample strategy include the planning of the logistics, travel, per diem and honoraria?

Yes, however please note that the \$350,000 ceiling has been changed to \$500,000. Also see responses to 32 and 33.

76. Is the 90 day marketing/ mailing of information definite for each program for ongoing programs and/ new initiatives and those programs and initiatives developed as a result of the needs assessment?

Offerors should propose marketing/ mailing time lines that will ensure that stakeholders are made aware of programs so they can comfortably decide to attend and make financial and travel arrangements. A wide variety of programs will be offered under this procurement, and a standardized marketing time line cannot be applied to all of them.

77. Is there any information available regarding the make-up of AHRQ stakeholders?

Information on AHRQ stakeholders can be found on the Budget and Mission page of the AHRQ web site

78. Subtask 3.4, Electronic Dissemination Programs, how many of these programs/ activities do you anticipate per year? How many Distance Learning, Simulation and Decision Support Programs do you anticipate per year?

See response to 32.

79. Is the contractor expected to pay for meeting room rental and other onsite facility fees (audiovisual, set up) associated with conducting meetings and workshops?

Yes

80. For costing purposes, on average what has been the speakers fee provided to the presenters?

Not available. Use maximum \$1000 consultant fee per day for budgeting purposes, including preparation days.

81. Section B.3, Provisions Applicable to Direct Costs, items unallowable, item #10, "consultant fees in excess of \$500/day, does this mean the speakers honoraria fees or the consultant/ experts the contractor may retain to conduct analysis and needs assessments?

Both, however, please note that the correct maximum rate for consultant fees is \$1,000 per day, corrected by this amendment.

82. In Subtask 3.3, what is AHRQ's anticipated cost for the Seminars and Conferences mentioned?

Offeror must determine this based on their proposed strategies and service designs.

83. For subtask 3.4, what is the anticipated cost for the Electronics Dissemination Programs required number of developed hours of distance learning programs, computer-base and online simulation and decisions support tools does the Agency have in mind?

See response to 32.

84. Subtask 4.2: What is AHRQ's anticipated cost for offsite meetings where "the contractor shall arrange for travel, lodging and per diem for approximately 15 non-federal participants." And how many of these meetings are anticipated a year?

Offeror must determine this based on their proposed strategies and service designs.

85. In subtask 4.4, what is AHRQ's anticipated cost for Subject Matter Experts (SME) in the field of Program Design, noting that AHRQ works with presenters, researchers, stakeholders, and other experts who are preeminent in their fields.

Offeror must determine this based on their proposed strategies, service designs, and knowledge of the field.

86. For subtask 4.6, what is AHRQ's anticipated cost for the Conduct Program Pilot Tests, in the case of the contractor's arranging "for travel, lodging, and per diem for each non-Federal person representing the stakeholder audience and presenters....The representatives of the target stakeholder audience may be offered a 1-day honorarium for each day of the meeting."

See response to 32.

87. In subtask 4.9 and 4.10: What is Agency's anticipated number of speaker fees?

See response to 32.

88. What is AHRQ's anticipated number of programs per year?

See response to 32.

89. What is AHRQ's recommended frequency of electronic newsletter and communication publication, or is the current number of productions a fair recommended number of publications?

See response to 32.

90. What is AHRQ's estimate for distances to be traveled by meeting and conference attendees and the estimated number of attendees?

See response to 32.

91. The RFP mentions that up to 4 awards will be made. Should the contractor assume that each award would be to serve one of the 4 stakeholder groups identified by AHRQ?

Please note that there are only three stakeholder groups. The intent is that each award would be made to serve one stakeholder group but it is possible that some or all resulting contracts will serve more than one.

92. Will AHRQ consider awarding more than one award to a single contractor? For example, one contractor being chosen to serve 2 critical stakeholder groups.

No.

93. If a contract is awarded as a small business set-aside, will that same contractor be excluded from another award where they are sub-contracting to another party?

No, but the small business (or any type of business) must be able demonstrate capacity for holding more than one contract or subcontract.

94. Does the Agency anticipate that this procurement will supplant the role currently being held by the ULP and TRIP programs? If so please describe the roles expected for the collecting and aggregating of data and AHRQ's vision for the transition. If this is not the case please describe the interactions expected between the contractors under this procurement and the ULP and TRIP programs.

This procurement will serve as the User Liaison Program's primary program

dissemination support contract mechanism. It will not serve as the TRIP program's primary contract mechanism. The TRIP program will continue to operate as it has in the past. This procurement may, however, will enhance TRIP program outcomes.

95. Will the requirement of this procurement only cover information related to the ULP or will it encompass all AHRQ knowledge dissemination activities?

It is anticipated that the four contracts will provide dissemination services across all of AHRQ's content/ audiences rather than just policy oriented dissemination. This does not limit AHRQ's ability to disseminate information through other programs or mechanisms.

96. Can AHRQ elaborate about the role of the contractor with respect to continuing knowledge dissemination practices already in place at the agency versus commencing new dissemination practices?

It is anticipated that Contractors under this procurement will work collaboratively with on-going agency projects as appropriate when the goals and strategies are related. This procurement is not intended to replace or duplicate existing programs and projects.

97. Will the role of the contractor be involved in the gathering and aggregation of knowledge or will the appropriate knowledge be gathered by other factors within the Agency and presented to the contractor for dissemination to critical stakeholder groups? For example, will the contractor be expected to determine what information is critical for dissemination or will those roles reside within other parties within the Agency?

The contractor will be responsible for gathering and aggregating a large portion of the knowledge to be transferred.

98. The business plan requires assumptions about deliverables and activities beyond the sample strategy. The deliverables are not specified in the RFP as a basis for constructing a budget. How should the budget and business plan be constructed?

See response to 32.

99. The RFP requires a PERT chart for all tasks. Is this limited to the tasks outlined in the sample strategy? Or does it include all tasks that are expected to be assigned and which tasks should we assume will be assigned? The question also applies for presentation of person hours?

Section L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions have been revised to more accurately reflect our needs, the requirement for the PERT chart was deleted. See Part D. of this amendment for Replaced Pages.

100. Section L.11.B describes a small business subcontracting plan and indicates that there is a copy of the AHRQ model subcontracting plan attached. It was missing from the package. How can we obtain a copy?

The model subcontracting plan is currently being revised by the DHHS, so please contact Mary Haines (after August 25, 2003 to obtain an electronic copy of the Model Subcontracting Plan.)

101. On page 14 the RFP says that the sample strategy should cover 1 year but the overall strategy is expected to extend over 3 years. On page 79 A3 says that the sample strategy should be described for 3 years. Many significant activities will occur in the second and third

years while planning and development will occur during much of the first year. Which period should be used?

The scope of the sample strategy should cover 3 years. A broad description of the methods to be employed should be provided for the 3 year period. The broad description should include a discussion of the rationale for the entire plan. There should be a much more detailed description and rationale for the programs to be implemented in year 1; such as would be required to prepare budgets, assign staff, hire consultants, prepare evaluation plans, prepare marketing materials, and ensure reaching strategic goals and impacts if such a strategy were to actually be implemented.

102. The small business set aside seems very high considering the responsibilities of the contractor and the activities which are likely to be handled by a small business. Is this threshold required?

This requirement is partially set-aside for small businesses. Small businesses are not required to submit a Small Business Subcontracting Plan. The AHRQ recommended Subcontracting Goals (reference L.11. Business Proposal, para. B., subpart 'g.' on page 86 of the RFP) for this procurement are the overall GOALS for all of DHHS. AHRQ fully supports the small business subcontracting goals. The Small Business Subcontracting Plan for each offeror, being considered for award is evaluated on the basis of their efforts in meeting or obtaining the goals.

103. The solicitation says that resumes are required for key personnel. Are resumes and letters of support from potential speakers expected to be included?

Yes

104. Should all the tasks in the statement of work (pages 14-29) be included in the sample strategy?

It should include the elements listed in Task 2, page 13.

105. The solicitation uses the term fixed fee and base fee in different places. Are they the same? Should the offeror propose and budget an amount for a fixed fee and the performance based award fee?

Yes, the fixed fee and the base fee are the same. Yes the offeror should propose an amount for the base fee and the performance award fee?

106. One section of the RFP indicates that the narrative should be double spaced yet another section says the narrative, sample strategy and sample evaluation plan may be single spaced. May these specified sections be single spaced or should the entire document be double spaced?

107. Can salary costs be shown as a percentage of each person's time rather in hours?

Yes, however an offeror may be requested to provide further detail during negotiations, if they are in the competitive range.

108. Should the budget be presented for the base three year period or for five years?

See L.9 Business Proposal Instructions and Attachment 4 Estimated Cost Proposal Format.

109. The cover of the RFP lists the solicitation as AHRQ-04-0001, "Knowledge Transfer and Applications Support." Attachment 2 lists the solicitation as AHRQ-03-0002, Publications Clearinghouse. We assume it is alright to change the reference
Yes, for your convenience a corrected Attachment 2 is included in Part D of this amendment.

C. CORRECTIONS/REVISION TO RFP.

1. Section B.3 Provisions Applicable to Direct Costs, paragraph a. (10) is revised to state: Consultant fees in excess of \$1000/ day (in place of \$500/day)

2. Section C Statement of Work, Task 2-Knowledge transfer and Application Strategy for program areas, last paragraph before Subtask 2.1 is revised to state: "For the program area chosen the proposal must address how the strategy will be tailored so that it will effectively address the needs of AHRQ's priority populations. It is expected that the sample strategy included in the proposal would address most of the elements listed above, but in less detail than the strategy developed after contract award. The scope of the sample strategy should not exceed \$500,000 per year for development and implementation of its associated programs. A cost proposal is not to be submitted with the sample strategy. The sample strategy shall be presented in a maximum of 10 single-spaced pages. Please note that the sample strategy may not actually be assigned for implementation following contract award."

3. Exhibit 1 - PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY is duplicated below:

Exhibit 1- Performance Requirements Summary

Performance Factor	Key Performance Standards	Surveillance Methods
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<p>1. Develop and Update Detailed Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy for Program Areas Specified by AHRQ</p>	<p>a. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is detailed and complete and includes the following elements: (1) knowledge transfer goals; (2) intended audiences; (3) analysis of stakeholder resources; (4) mix and sequence of interventions and associated activities; (5) general technical approaches for each intervention; (6) supporting references; (7) organizational responsibilities; (8) schedules; (9) budget; (10) staffing plan; and (11) approach for promoting AHRQ as a science partner and resource.</p> <p>b. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is effective and supported by knowledge transfer and diffusion literature and practice with respect to the program area specified by AHRQ. Interventions and other elements of the strategy are appropriate given the nature of the program area and policy issues specified by AHRQ.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff, and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>1. Develop and Update Detailed Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy for Program Areas Specified by AHRQ (cont'd)</p>	<p>c. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is innovative and reflects comprehensive understanding of the principles of knowledge transfer, diffusion of innovations, training and learning transfer, and related disciplines.</p> <p>d. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is submitted on a timely basis, in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>e. Final Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is responsive to comments by PO and other AHRQ staff on draft.</p> <p>f. Contractor's updated Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy appropriately reflects results of evaluations and program implementation experience. Updated strategy is submitted on a timely basis in accordance with Schedule of Deliverables.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs</p> <p>(Programs may include Knowledge Transfer Networks; Workshops, Conferences and Other Meetings; Technical Assistance; Distance Learning, Simulation and Decision Support Programs; Email List Servers and Newsletters; Research Synopses, Policy Briefs and other Documents; and other knowledge transfer vehicles.)</p>	<p>a. Program <u>planning meetings</u> (e.g., needs assessment and resource assessment, meetings) are effective in eliciting specific, comprehensive and relevant information on the needs, interests, and expectations of the target audience, as well as the available research, tools and other resources in the field. Contractor effectively facilitates such meetings such that: (1) relevant issues are discussed and inputs provided; (2) all participants have an opportunity to express their views; and (3) a consensus or other type of direction is obtained to support the design of the program.</p> <p>b. Agendas for planning sessions and workshops, conferences and other meetings are clear and complete and reflect the following: (1) objectives and desired outcomes are clearly spelled out; (2) time periods are provided for each agenda item; (3) presenters are listed for each agenda item; and (4) agenda items reflect the inputs from the planning meeting(s). Final meeting agenda are responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>c. Program design documents are clear, complete and methodically sound with respect to the nature of the program, and contain the following: (1) statement of AHRQ's strategy/program intent;(2) (2) key needs and resource assessment findings; (3) statement of the problem the strategy/program will address; (4) strategy/program goals and outcomes; (5) participant learning objectives; (6) outline of sessions, modules, and other activities; (7) methods and aides to be employed; (8) working agenda(s), as appropriate; (9) evaluation design; and (10) marketing plan. Final design documents are responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft.</p> <p>d. Contractor conducts program meetings efficiently and effectively. This includes facilitating selected sessions; giving selected presentations, as appropriate; and providing or coordinating all technical services. Facilitation is conducted such that: (1) relevant issues are discussed and inputs provided; (2) all participants have</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>an opportunity to express their views and provide input; and (3) a consensus or other type of common understanding is obtained regarding the nature of the issues for application on the job.</p> <p>e. Program summary report is complete, well-written, suitable for publication on the AHRQ Web site; and effective in summarizing the program process and contents, audience, significant issues, suggested program improvements, and (for selected national programs), key take home issues. Final summary report is responsive to PO comments on draft.</p> <p>f. Program audiotape or other electronic recording is clear and complete.</p> <p>g. Network building activities conducted by Contractor through meetings or electronic media are useful in creating opportunities for participants to establish networks or support pre-existing networks. New networks are established or pre-existing networks are enhanced, as indicated by mission statements, member lists, meetings, formation and use of list serves and other electronic</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>communication vehicles, and other activities of networks.</p> <p>h. Technical assistance (TA) activities and products provided by Contractor (e.g., on site meetings, conference calls, training, publications, etc.) are clear, complete, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p> <p>i. Distance learning programs, simulations, decision support systems and other performance support tools provided by the Contractor are clear, complete, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p> <p>j. List Serves, Electronic Newsletters and Other Electronic Communication products provided by Contractor are clear, complete, technologically sound and current, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Surveys/feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>k. Research Synopses, Policy Briefs and Other Written Documents provided by Contractor are clear, complete, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p> <p>l. Contractor effectively utilizes content and functional experts in designing and developing knowledge transfer programs.</p> <p>m. All deliverables are submitted on timely basis, in accordance with Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>n. Participants actually use the information disseminated through the knowledge transfer programs on the job. Policies or other actions are developed, changed or otherwise impacted as a result of the use of information disseminated via the workshop.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p> <p>Peer review of selection of experts by PO and other AHRQ staff.</p> <p>Monitoring by PO.</p> <p>Surveys/feedback from participants.</p> <p>Peer review by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>3. Provide Logistics for Knowledge Transfer Programs</p>	<p>a. Logistics for planning meetings (needs and resource assessments) for knowledge transfer programs are conducted efficiently.</p> <p>b. Contractor logistical services and products for conduct of knowledge transfer programs (e.g., invitation letters; electronic marketing tools; pilot tests/rehearsals/talk throughs; speaker presentation materials; site selection; arrangement of travel, lodging and meals; registration data base and collection of registration fees; assembly and distribution of materials; logistics during program; coordination of recording of program, etc.) are developed and conducted efficiently and effectively support program objectives.</p> <p>c.. Contractor special logistical services and products for teleconferences (e.g., hiring a moderator; preparing a script; selecting and providing the appropriate technology, computer and audio equipment; provision of full streaming archive with open or close captioning, etc.) are developed and conducted efficiently and effectively support program objectives.</p>	<p>Peer review by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>4. Design and Implement Evaluation Plan for Assessing the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy</p>	<p>a. Evaluation Plan is detailed and complete and includes the following elements: (1) program area(s) to be evaluated; (2) questions to be addressed by the evaluation; (3) measures (process and impact) for addressing questions; (4) information to be gathered to address questions; (5) sources of information; (6) approach for obtaining information; (7) types of analyses to be performed; (8) general outline of report(s) to be produced; (9) potential evaluation problems and methods to resolve them; and (10) timeline for major evaluation tasks.</p> <p>b. Evaluation Plan is appropriate with respect to the program area and related policy issues specified by AHRQ.</p> <p>c. Evaluation Plan provides a sound, thorough and feasible method for assessing the extent to which the goals of AHRQ and the Contractor's knowledge transfer and application strategy are achieved. Evaluation Plan includes an effective approach for assessing the following knowledge transfer components and stages : (1) extent to which participants acquired the knowledge and skills</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>4. Design and Implement Evaluation Plan for Assessing the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy (cont'd)</p>	<p>the knowledge transfer initiative intended to support; (2) extent to which knowledge transfer initiative was appropriately targeted to the needs and interests and met the expectations of the participants; (3) effectiveness of the presenters, materials and logistics of the knowledge transfer initiative judged by the participants; (4) extent to which the participants actually used the information disseminated by the knowledge transfer initiative and (5) impact of the information disseminated and used on changes in policies or other actions.</p> <p>d. Evaluation Plan is submitted on a timely basis, in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables. Final Evaluation Plan is responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft.</p> <p>e. Evaluation Plan is implemented in a efficient and effective manner, consistent with the Plan. Contractor conducts an appropriate pilot test and incorporates the results of the pilot test into the Evaluation Plan.</p> <p>f. Evaluation report(s) provide detailed,</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>4. Design and Implement Evaluation Plan for Assessing the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy (cont'd)</p>	<p>useful and methodologically sound information on the extent to which the goals of AHRQ and the Contractor's knowledge transfer and Application strategy were achieved. (See above for types of information to be provided.)</p> <p>g. Final evaluation report(s) are responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft(s).</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>5. Prepare Plans (Budgets, Schedules), Reports and Briefings of Project Activities</p>	<p>a. Schedules and budgets for each project task assignment are detailed and complete, and include the following: (1) list, schedule and sequence of activities; (2) labor hours by staff category; (3) labor costs; (4) indirect costs; (5) breakdown of ODCs; and (6) fee.</p> <p>b. Schedules and budgets for each project task assignment are reasonable given the nature of the program.</p> <p>c. Schedules and budgets for each project task assignment are submitted in a timely manner in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>d. Progress reports are informative and complete and contain the items listed in the SOW. Progress reports are submitted in a timely manner in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>e. Briefings of deliverables are well organized and appropriate in content, format and length according to the nature of the subject and audience. Briefings are effective in conveying the key elements of the deliverable to the audience.</p>	<p>Monitoring of deliverables by PO and other AHRQ staff.</p>
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- D. **REPLACEMENT PAGES (76 - 83) for L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions, L.9 Past Performance Information and L.10 Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan are set forth below to incorporate changes/ revisions of this amendment.**

REPLACEMENT PAGES (91 - 96) for all OF Section M— EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD ARE PROVIDED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE Section L replacement pages.

REPLACEMENT PAGE (113) ATTACHMENT 2, Past Performance Evaluation Questionnaire, cover sheet follows the replaced Section M

L.8 TECHNICAL PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

The technical proposal shall contain an original and nine (9) copies. The technical proposal described below shall be limited to **125 pages** not including resumes or bibliographies, with no less than a 11 point pitch, with the majority of the text double-spaced (lists of deliverables, person loading charts, and similar materials need not be double-spaced, so long as they are legible). Resumes or CVs are only required for key personnel. Brief biographic sketches of other personnel may be provided. Lengthy proposals and voluminous appendices are neither needed nor desired as they are difficult to read and evaluate and may indicate the offeror's inability to concisely state their proposal

a. Recommended Technical Proposal Format

The Offeror's proposal should present sufficient information to reflect a thorough understanding of the work requirements and a detailed plan for achieving the objectives of the scope of work. Technical proposal shall not merely paraphrase the requirements of the Agency's scope of work or parts thereof, or use of phrases such as "will comply" or "standard techniques will be employed." The technical proposal must include a detailed description of the techniques and procedures to be used in achieving the proposed end results in compliance with the requirements of the Agency's scope of work.

To assist in the expeditious and comprehensive evaluation of your proposal, the Government desires that you follow the guidelines and format listed below:

- (1) Cover Page: The name of the proposing organization, author(s) of the technical proposal, the RFP number and the title of the RFP should appear on the cover. One (1) manually signed original copy of the proposal and the number of copies specified in the RFP are required.
- (2) Table of Contents: Provide sufficient detail so that all important elements of the proposal can be located readily.
- (3) Introduction: This should be a one or two page summary outlining the proposed work, your interest in submitting a proposal, and the importance of this effort in relation to your overall operation.

(4) Technical Discussion: For ease of evaluation, the technical proposal shall be divided into four parts as follows, corresponding to the evaluation criteria in Section M:

- A. Technical Approach
- B. Management Plan
- C. Key Personnel
- D. Corporate Experience and Facilities

Technical proposals submitted in response to this RFP shall address each of the items described below, and shall be organized in the same manner and within the page limitations specified. Proposals shall be prepared in double-spaced format, with numbered pages, unless stated otherwise.

A. Technical Approach

The Offeror shall submit:

1. General Technical Approach- Detailed narrative which presents the offeror's methodology for performing the various tasks and subtasks and producing the deliverables listed in the Statement of Work. This should clearly show how the offeror plans to design, develop and implement the knowledge transfer and application strategies, programs, and methods required to produce program impacts. Offerors shall include in this section their approach to electronic dissemination programs, including their use of in-house resources or agreements and/or subcontracts with technology vendors. Issues and problems in performing the various tasks and subtasks and ways of addressing them should be discussed. Any proposed deviations to the requirements in the SOW should be discussed.
2. Sample knowledge transfer and application strategy as described in Task 2 of the SOW. In presenting their sample strategy, offerors shall identify a primary stakeholder audience from the three AHRQ audiences listed in Section 2.10 of the SOW. The primary stakeholder audience should be the one the offeror has the most experience with on related projects. The sample strategy shall focus on the Offeror's identified primary stakeholder and one of the AHRQ program areas listed in Task 2 of the SOW. The sample strategy should cover most of the elements listed in Task 2 of the SOW, but in less detail than the strategy developed after contract award. The sample strategy shall cover a 3 year period, and shall be described in no more than 20 double-spaced pages.
3. Sample evaluation plan aligned with the sample knowledge transfer and application strategy. The sample evaluation plan should address most of the elements listed in the Task 5 of the SOW, but in less detail than the plan developed after contract award. The sample evaluation plan should include examples of how different types of knowledge transfer programs would be evaluated. and shall be described in no more than 10 double-spaced pages. (As guidance to offerors, AHRQ expects that the evaluation program would be more thorough than the paper and pencil post-event evaluations conducted in the past; however the evaluation component is not expected to exceed 7% of the total

contract budget.)

B. Management Plan

The Offeror shall demonstrate the ability to achieve the delivery of performance requirements through appropriate project management techniques. In doing so, the offeror shall:

1. Describe corporate experience in managing projects of a similar size and nature.
2. Provide a narrative showing offeror's understanding of the requirements in the Statement of Work from a managerial perspective. The narrative should at a minimum address the following topics:
 - a) How the project will be organized, including the roles and responsibilities and plans for management of the various project staff, expert consultants and subcontractors.
 - b) Staff selection and assignment, including labor mix, and explanation for these choices.
 - c) Approach to monitoring and control of services provided, technical quality, responsiveness, cost control, effective and efficient resource utilization, and compliance with technical requirements and contract provisions. Clearly present proposed approach for quality control of work performed.
 - d) Managerial problems offeror expects to encounter and methods proposed to solve these problems.
 - e) Flexibility to respond rapidly to changes in budget, priorities, and schedule.
3. Indicate clear lines of authority and delineation of staff responsibilities.
4. Describe coordination with proposed subcontractors, including monitoring of their performance.
5. Provide a signed letter of commitment between the offeror and any personnel other than current employees, that includes dates of proposed employment and tasks to be performed.

C. Staff Experience

- a. Offerors shall describe the experience and qualifications of personnel proposed to perform the contract. Resumes for all persons proposed are to be restricted to experience pertinent to this acquisition. Offerors shall indicate the roles for proposed staff.
- b. For the proposed Project Director (the individual with day-to-day responsibility for the management of the project, as opposed to the corporate monitor),

offerors shall provide a resume and three professional references (name, organization and phone number) as evidence of experience and qualifications in the following areas:

- i. Designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions.
 - b) Working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policy makers, health and hospital senior decision makers, health purchasers, and health systems, including hospitals, clinics ,group practices and managed care organizations) on issues relevant to these groups.
 - c) Making substantive written and verbal presentations to AHRQ stakeholder groups.
 - d) Providing helpful consultation to clients in designing strategic initiatives.
 - e) Working with AHRQ's priority populations.
 - f) Managing contracts of a similar size and nature.
3. For other substantive in-house staff proposed to perform under this contract, offerors shall provide resumes as evidence of the experience and qualifications in the following areas:
- a) Designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions.
 - b) Working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policy makers, health and hospital senior decision makers, health purchasers, and health systems, including hospitals, clinics ,group practices and managed care organizations) on issues relevant to these groups.
 - c) Providing helpful consultation to clients in designing strategic initiatives.
 - d) Working with AHRQ's priority populations.
4. Offerors shall provide resumes for consultants proposed under this procurement. Descriptions of the consultants' experience and qualifications for the specific work proposed shall also be provided as well as a statement of their availability.

D. Corporate Experience and Facilities

Offerors shall describe their corporate experience and facilities in designing and implementing knowledge transfer and application strategies. The factors of particular importance include:

- Use of knowledge transfer and application theory, diffusion of innovations theory, learning theory, instructional design, and organizational development tools in developing knowledge transfer and application strategies and programs.

- Level of knowledge and experience with Offeror's identified primary stakeholder audience, AHRQ's priority populations, and other AHRQ audiences.
- Consistently attracting and utilizing nationally recognized experts, stakeholders and researchers to plan and implement similar projects.
- Producing impact (effective changes in processes and outcomes of health care or health policy) within and for AHRQ target audience organizations.
- Providing Information Technology support for development and management of the electronic media required by this Statement of Work. Offerors should describe their in-house capability to produce high quality electronic dissemination programs, or agreements and/or subcontracts with appropriate technology vendors to produce such programs.

L.9 Past Performance Information

Offerors shall submit the following information as part of their proposal for both the Offeror and proposed major subcontractors. For the purpose of this solicitation, a "major subcontract" is defined as exceeding \$500,000 in total value.

1. A list of the last five (5) contracts and subcontracts completed during the past three years and all contracts and subcontracts currently in process. Contracts listed may include those entered into by the Federal Government, agencies of State and local governments, and commercial customers. Offerors that are newly formed entities without prior contracts should list contracts and subcontracts as required for all key personnel. Include the following information for each contract and subcontract:
 - a: Name of contracting activity
 - b: Contract number
 - c: Contract type
 - d: Total contract value
 - e: Contract work
 - f: Contracting Officer and telephone number
 - g: Program Manager and telephone number
 - h: Administrative Contracting Officer, if different from item f, and telephone number
 - i: List of major subcontracts
2. The Offeror may provide information on problems encountered on the contracts and subcontracts identified in (1) above and corrective actions taken to resolve those problems. **Offerors should not provide general information on their performance on the identified contracts. General performance information will be obtained from the Offeror's references.**
3. The Offeror may describe any quality awards or certifications that may indicate the Offeror possesses a high-quality process for developing and producing the product or service required. Identify what segment of the organization (one division or the entire organization) that received the award or certification.

Describe when the award or certification was bestowed. If the award or certification is over three years old, present evidence that the qualifications still apply.

4. Each Offeror will be evaluated on its performance under existing and prior contracts for similar products or services. Performance information will be used for both responsibility determinations and as an evaluation factor against which Offeror's relative rankings will be compared to assure best value to the Government. The Government will focus on information that demonstrates quality of performance relative to the size and complexity of the procurement under consideration. References other than those identified by the Offeror may be contacted by the Government with the information received used in the evaluation of the Offeror's past performance.

The attached Past Performance Questionnaire and Contractor Performance Form shall be completed by those contracting organizations listed in (a) above. The evaluation forms shall be completed and forwarded directly to the following:

Mary Haines
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Contracts Management Staff
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850

FAX: 301-427-1740

Evaluation questionnaires must be received by **September 16, 2003** in order to be included in the review process. Questionnaires received after September 16, 2003, will not be considered in the past performance rating. It is the responsibility of the offeror to ensure that these documents are forwarded to the Contracting Officer.

L.10 Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan

NOTE: Small Disadvantage Business Participation Plans are required for both small and large businesses, so these businesses are all eligible to receive up to five (5) points for their SDBPP, during evaluation of proposals.

In accordance with FAR Part 15.304(c)4, the extent of participation of Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) concerns in performance of the contract shall be evaluated in unrestricted acquisitions expected to exceed a total estimated cost of \$500,000 (\$1,000,000 for construction) subject to certain limitations (see FAR 19.201 and 19.1202).

- A. All offerors, regardless of size, shall submit the following information in an original and one copy:

A plan on the extent of participation of Small Disadvantaged Business concerns in performance of the contract. Participation in performance of the contract includes the work expected to be performed by SDB concern(s). This can include SDB (as prime contractor), joint ventures, teaming arrangements, and subcontracts. Include the following information in SDB participation plans:

1. The extent of an offeror's commitment to use SDB concerns. Commitment should be as specific as possible, i.e., are subcontract arrangements already in place, letters of commitment, etc. Enforceable commitments will be weighted more heavily than non-enforceable ones.
 2. Specifically identify the SDB concerns with point of contact and phone number.
 3. The complexity and variety of the work SDB concerns are to perform.
 4. Realism for the use of SDB in the proposal.
 5. Past performance of the Offeror in complying with subcontracting plans for SDB concerns.
 6. Targets expressed as dollars and percentage of total contract value for each participating SDB; which will be incorporated into and become part of any resulting contract.
 7. The extent of participation of SDB concerns in terms of the total acquisition.
- B. SDB participation information will be used for both responsibility determinations and as an evaluation factor against which offeror's relative rankings will be compared to assure the best value to the Government. The Government will focus on information that demonstrates realistic commitments to use SDB concerns relative to the size and complexity of the acquisition under consideration. The Government is not required to contact all references provided by the offeror. Also, references other than those identified by the offeror may be contacted by the Government to obtain additional information that will be used in the evaluation of the offeror's commitment to SDB participation.

***** End of Replacement Section L.8, L.9 and L.10*****

SECTION M - EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

- M.1** Selection of an offeror for contract award will be based on an evaluation of proposals against four factors, and award will be made to that responsible offeror whose proposal is most advantageous to the Government. The four factors are: technical, cost, past performance, and the Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Participation Plan. Although technical factors are of paramount consideration in the selection of the Contractor(s) for this acquisition, past performance, cost/price and SDB Participation Plan are also important to the overall contract award decision. Offerors that submit technically acceptable proposals will then be evaluated for past performance, SDB Participation Plan and cost/price. Following this evaluation, a competitive range will be determined.
- M.2** All evaluation factors, other than cost or price, when combined are significantly more important than cost or price. However, cost/price may become a critical factor in source selection in the event that two or more offerors are determined to be essentially equal

following the evaluation of all factors other than cost or price. In any event, the Government reserves the right to make an award to that offeror whose proposal provides the best overall value to the Government. The Government reserves the right to make a single award, multiple awards, or no award at all.

THE GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE AN AWARD WITHOUT DISCUSSION

M.3 All proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the governing regulations and AHRQ policies and procedures. The technical proposal, past performance information and SDB Participation Plan will be evaluated in terms of the offeror's responses to each of the evaluation factors. Each proposal will be evaluated on the likelihood of meeting the Government's requirements. The evaluation factors and assigned weights which will be used in the overall review of the offeror's proposal are outlined below. The technical proposal shall consist of the responses to evaluation criteria 1 through 4. The offeror should show that the objectives stated in the proposal are understood and offer a logical program for their achievement. The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals and will be weighted as indicated in establishing a numerical rating for all proposals submitted. Factors facilitating the evaluation of each criteria below are referenced in the corresponding criteria found in Section L of this solicitation:

OFFERORS PLEASE NOTE: Evaluation Criteria 1 through 4, for a total of 100 points, will be evaluated by a technical peer review committee, who will also recommend technical acceptability or unacceptability of the proposal. Program staff and contracting staff will review and evaluate Criteria 5 and 6, for a total of 25 points. The total possible points for Evaluation Criteria 1 through 6 is 125 points.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

WEIGHT

(1) Technical Approach 40

This factor has three sub-factors:

(a) General Technical Approach 15

The proposal will be evaluated on the clarity, completeness, and reasonableness of the offeror's approach to accomplishing the requirements described in the Statement of Work (SOW). The approach will be evaluated on the methodology for performing the various tasks and subtasks and producing the deliverables listed in the SOW. Potential issues and problems in performing the various tasks and subtasks and ways of addressing them should be discussed. The factors of particular importance include:

- Use of innovative designs that will substantially increase levels of knowledge transfer and application;
- Ability to clearly explain the rationale for proposed strategies and methods for carrying out the tasks in the Statement of Work using knowledge transfer, technology transfer, diffusion of innovations, quality improvement and learning theories;

- Ability to demonstrate how knowledge transfer and application methods can be tailored to meet the needs of AHRQ's priority populations.
- Ability to provide content, interactive learning designs, and facilitation methods based on the distance learning literature that increase application rates through electronic media;
- Cost efficiency and cost effectiveness of electronic media approaches given the size and scope of this requirement;
- Approaches which integrate proposed programs into effective long-term strategies;
- Plans that ensure audio visual materials and presentations meet accepted standards for format, quality, readability, and accessibility;
- Selection of meeting venues and facilities that are of high quality and appropriate for the program type and audience;

(a) Sample Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy 15

The proposal will be evaluated on the clarity, completeness, creativity, and reasonableness of the offeror's sample knowledge transfer and application strategy. The factors of particular importance include:

- Innovative approaches to increasing the application of AHRQ and other appropriate research findings, tools, and improvement methods;
- Identification of appropriate impacts for each selected target audience for the given content;
- Identification of how the strategies would be tailored to have measurable impact for AHRQ's priority populations.
- Clear explanation of how the proposed program elements are logically linked to achieve the expected impacts using the frameworks of knowledge transfer, technology transfer, organizational development, quality improvement, and learning theory.

(c) Sample Evaluation Plan 10

The proposal will be evaluated on the clarity, completeness and reasonableness of the offeror's sample evaluation plan. The sample evaluation plan should include examples of how different types of knowledge transfer interventions would be evaluated.

(2) Management Plan 15

The proposal will be evaluated on the appropriateness of roles and responsibilities of proposed staff, expert consultants, and subcontractors, as well as plans for their

management. Plans for project scheduling, cost control, quality control, and communications with AHRQ will also be evaluated.

(3) Staff Experience **35**

This factor includes two sub-factors:

(a) Experience of Project Director **15**

The proposal will be evaluated in terms of the project director's knowledge, skills and experience in: designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions; working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policymakers, health and hospital senior decision makers, providers, health purchasers, health systems, including hospitals, clinics, group practices, and managed care organizations); and working on issues relevant to AHRQ stakeholder groups; providing helpful consultation to clients in designing strategic initiatives; working with AHRQ's priority populations.

(b) Experience of Other Project Personnel **20**

The proposal will be evaluated on the knowledge, skills and experience of other project personnel, consultants, and sub-contractors in the following areas: designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions; working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policymakers, health and hospital senior decision makers, providers, health purchasers, health systems, including hospitals, clinics, group practices, and managed care organizations); and expertise and national reputation on issues relevant to AHRQ stakeholder groups; working with AHRQ's priority populations.

(4) Corporate Experience **10**

Proposals will be evaluated on the extent of the offeror's corporate experience in designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies. The factors of particular importance include:

- Use of knowledge transfer and application theory, diffusion of innovations theory, learning theory, instructional design, and organizational development tools in developing knowledge transfer and application strategies and programs;
- Level of knowledge and experience with Offeror's identified primary stakeholder audience, AHRQ's priority populations, and other AHRQ audiences;
- Consistently attracting and utilizing nationally recognized experts, stakeholders and researchers to plan and implement similar projects;
- Producing impact (effective changes in processes and outcomes of health care or health policy) within and for AHRQ target audience organizations;
- Providing Information Technology support for development and management of the electronic media required by this Statement of Work.

TOTAL POINTS**100****(5) Past Performance****20**

An evaluation of the Offeror's past performance will be conducted subsequent to the technical evaluation. However, this evaluation will not be conducted on any Offeror whose proposal would not be selected for award based on the results of the evaluation of factors other than past performance.

The offerors' past performance will be evaluated on the basis of the following factors:

- (a) **Quality:** How well the contractor conformed to the performance standard in providing the research services or achieved the stated objective of the contract or grant. Quality will be evaluated by the personnel provided, the level of effort agreed to in the contract statement of work or grant, and quality of final products (e.g., written reports).
- (b) **Timeliness:** How well the contractor adheres to time-tables and delivery schedules in providing the research services or products. Consideration is given to contractor's effort to recommend and/or take corrective actions to keep the contract or grant on schedule.
- (c) **Customer-satisfaction:** Rates the professional and cooperative behavior of the contractor or grantee with the client.
- (d) **Cost control:** Rates the cost-effectiveness of the contractor or grantee in conducting the research.

Assessment of the offeror's past performance will be one means of evaluating the credibility of the offeror's proposal, and relative capability to meet performance requirements.

The completed questionnaires will provide a basis for determining past performance evaluation as well as information obtained from the references listed in the proposal, other customers known to the Government, consumer protection organizations, and others who may have useful and relevant information. Information will also be considered regarding any significant subcontractors and key personnel records. Past performance will be scored on a range from 0 to 20, with 20 being the most favorable.

Evaluation of past performance will often be quite subjective based on consideration of all relevant facts and circumstances. It will not be based on absolute standards of acceptable performance. The Government is seeking to determine whether the offeror has consistently demonstrated a commitment to customer satisfaction and timely delivery of services at fair and reasonable prices.

The assessment of the offeror's past performance will be used as a means of evaluating the relative capability of the offeror and the other competitors. Thus, an offeror with an exceptional record of past performance may receive a more favorable evaluation than another whose record is acceptable, even though both may have acceptable technical proposals.

By past performance, the Government means the offeror's record of conforming to specifications and to standards of good workmanship; the contractor's record of forecasting and controlling costs; the offeror's adherence to contract schedules, including the administrative aspects of performance; the offeror's reputation for reasonable and cooperative behavior and commitment to customer satisfaction; and generally, the offeror's business-like concern for the interest of the customer.

The Government will consider the number or severity of an offeror's problems, the effectiveness of corrective actions taken, the offeror's overall work record, and the age and relevance of past performance information.

The lack of a performance record may result in an unknown performance risk assessment, which will neither be used to the advantage nor disadvantage of the offeror.

The Government reserves the right to evaluate relevant past performance information not specifically provided by the offeror.

(6) Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan

5

The evaluation will be based on information obtained from the plan provided by the offeror, the realism of the proposal, other relevant information obtained from named SDB concerns, and any information supplied by the offeror concerning problems encountered in SDB participation.

Evaluation of the SDB Participation Plan will be a subjective assessment based on a consideration of all relevant facts and circumstances. It will not be based on absolute standards of acceptable performance. The Government is seeking to determine whether the offeror has demonstrated a commitment to use SDB concerns for the work that it intends to perform as the prime contractor.

The assessment of the offeror's SDB Participation Plan will be used as a means of evaluating the relative capability and commitment of the offeror and the other competitors. Thus, an offeror with an exceptional record of participation with SDB concerns may receive more points and a more favorable evaluation than another whose record is acceptable, even though both may have acceptable technical proposals.

SDB participation will be scored with offerors receiving points from 0 to 5, with 5 being the most favorable.

***** End of Section M replacement pages—replaced in its entirety.

ATTACHMENT 2, PAGE 113, Past Performance Questionnaire cover page Replacement Page. (Please use this page, the one in the initial RFP has the wrong title and RFP number.

ATTACHMENT 2

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-03-0002, entitled "AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse." 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. Smary Haines, 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 **September 16, 2003**. If you have any questions, please contact. Mary Haines at (301) 427-1786.

Mary Haines
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Contracts Management
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850
FAX: (301) 427-1786

NAME OF OFFEROR: _____

ADDRESS: _____

**END OF AMENDMENT NO. 2
RFP AHRQ-04-0001
42 PAGES IN WORD PERFECT**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: AHRQ-04-0001
TITLE: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND APPLICATIONS SUPPORT
RFP ISSUE DATE: JULY 17, 2003
NOTICE OF INTENT DUE: AUGUST 19, 2003 (NOT CHANGED)
PROPOSALS DUE: SEPT. 16, 2003 2:00 PM EST (NOT CHANGED)
AMENDMENT NO. 2 TO RFP, DATED AUGUST 8, 2003 (42 PAGES)

ISSUED BY: MARY HAINES, CONTRACTING OFFICER,
AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE AND RESEARCH/ DHHS

The amendment is includes the following four parts: A. CLARIFICATIONS TO RFP, B. QUESTIONS ON RFP AND RESPONSES, C. CORRECTIONS/ REVISIONS TO RFP, and D. REPLACEMENT PAGES. The Amendment has 42 pages.

A. CLARIFICATIONS TO RFP:

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code that best describes this requirement is corrected to read: 541611. The small business size standard of \$6 million remains the same.

Offerors should acknowledge receipt and understanding of all amendments issued to the RFP in their cover letter submitted with their proposal.

B. QUESTIONS ON RFP AND RESPONSES:

1. (Reference Subtask 3.4) Can AHRQ provide an estimation of the expected volume of both webcasts and web conferences? **NO**

2. Is the AHRQ looking for a services solution, whether they would notify the contractor of an upcoming webcast and the contractor sets up the event? Or, is the AHRQ looking for an application that would allow it's own teams to be self sufficient in producing these multi media events?

Both. The contractor will be expected to develop long range strategies on certain assigned topics independently. These strategies would include a number of different types of products or events which the Contractor would propose to carry out. AHRQ will then approve or ask for modifications of the Contractor's proposed strategy.

The contractor may also be tasked to carry out individual projects such as webcasts, workshops, or other products on a specific topic for a specific audience.

3. Does AHRQ anticipate that contractors will bid to serve a single constituent group, multiple groups, or all groups? C 2.6 indicates that contractors will assist in design and implementation of KT across all Centers and stakeholders. C 2.10 on Page 13 refers to 4 contracts, each serving a primary stakeholder audience category, taking into account "offeror's unique expertise with their identified stakeholder audience." Are you seeking 4 contractors with primary expertise in different audience categories, or is each contract expected to serve ALL categories, or do you expect to receive responses proposing to serve some but not all groups? Which of these would

be acceptable?

Each contractor will be expected to have the capability to serve, and may be asked to serve, multiple audiences and topics identified, however each Contractor MUST have a specialty in one of these audience types. (Emphasis added)

4. SDBPP and other SB contacting: Could you clarify the expectations as to the proportion of the total award that will go to small businesses, and whether that proportion is per contract, a proportion of subcontracts, or is AHRQ's target for this program overall? I am particularly concerned because comparing requirement L.8 B2.d (30% max) and L.11.B.2.g (23% goal) leaves little room for collaboration with other sorts of entities.

Section L.8 L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions is revised, it follows this section. The reference to "a ratio of less than seventy percent full time core staff to thirty percent consultants/ subcontractors..." has been deleted. Your attention is directed to page 86 of the RFP, L.11 BUSINESS PROPOSAL, PARAGRAPH b. Small Business Subcontracting Plan, subpart g. for the AHRQ recommended goals for Small Businesses. The goals, (i.e. 23% small business subcontracting) refer to the proportion of subcontracting for each contract for the base period. The subcontracting plan should be submitted for the three year base period.

5. Will there be a bidder's conference/ call? **No**

6. (Reference Section L8.B. Management Plan, Section 2(d), does AHRQ expect that the Prime Contractor on this contract will have to have 70% of the core personnel on its staff? Is the Prime to have 70% of the work and the subcontractors/ consultants 30% or can we have a blended team of committed key personnel chosen for their expertise and experience in specific task assignment areas?

See response to 4 above.

7. (Reference, page 1 Transmittal Letter) It stipulates that Proposal Intent forms are due on August 8, 2003, yet the Proposal Intent form stipulates that it must be submitted by August 16, 2003. Please clarify.

Proposal Intent Forms are to be submitted by August 19, 2003.

8. If a Small Business is proposing for this contract, how does it win the 5 points additional beyond the 100 points if it is not required to provide a SDB plan as part of its response?

Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plans are required for both small and large businesses are both eligible to receive up to five (5) points for their SDBPP, during evaluation.

9. Section L.10 says all offerors must have a SDB plan. Then Section L.11 says small businesses do not need to have such a Plan. Which is it? Please clarify.

See response to 8.

10. No SF 33 forms accompanied the RFP or the Amendment. When will they be provided so that we can make them part of our response?

See Part A, Clarifications, of this amendment.

11. Please clarify some of the inconsistencies regarding format for responses. Technical approach is supposed to be 125 pages, yet within that framework, we are to provide a 10-page single space document for a Knowledge Transfer strategy. In another area you request additional multi-page single space documents. Also, is the response to be limited in type point and specific font and page format, i.e. double spaced? Does usage of 11X17 graphics count as one page or two?

See Revised L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions, in Part D of this amendment. Usage of 11X17 graphics count as one page.

12. The RFP requests “certified documentation” for accounting programs and documentation of current indirect costs. Please clarify.

If a contractor has a current indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, this will indicate that it has an acceptable accounting system that segregates costs. If a contractor does not have a current indirect cost rate agreement with a federal agency, the contractor must submit a proposal to the cognizant indirect cost officials, within ninety (90) days of contract award, or face suspension of indirect cost reimbursement, until an agreement is made.

13. The RFP requests that respondents list ALL current contracts. Should this be all contracts or relevant contracts?

Relevant contracts.

14. How can a small business with excellent but limited past performance qualifications earn the additional 20 points for past performance when compared to the overwhelming number of contracts held by major prime contractors?

Past performance evaluation is an evaluation on “quality of past performance for previous relevant service” not quantity of performance on previous relevant contracts(number of past performance evaluations received from an offeror’s clients).

15. Can AHRQ provide us with reliable definitions of program, initiative, etc? Otherwise, what should we call these in the proposal? Is there a conceptual relationship that results in groups of programs (i.e., program areas) being as initiatives?

See section 3.2 of the SOW.

16. The initial “element” of the sample task is defining the “Knowledge transfer and application goals.” However, the RFP indicates that in an active contract, the Contractor will define program objectives, specific stakeholder audiences, and intended outcomes through consultation with the Project Officer, relevant stakeholders, and experts in the field. Thus, how are we to address this issue in the sample task (e.g., analyze the literature, define a methodology, etc.)?

The “Knowledge transfer and application goals” element does not refer to the sample plan, but to strategies developed after award. For the sample plan, offerors should use hypothetical goals based on their knowledge and experience.

17. The environmental scan subtask appears to involve search and assessment of both

“content findings” and information on dissemination of these findings. Is this an accurate interpretation?

Yes

18. The RFP states: For the program area chosen, the proposal must address how the strategy will be tailored so that it will effectively address the needs of AHRQ’s priority populations. Does this mean that it is preferred or required to define a best strategy to accommodate both the unique population and standard population, or can separate strategies be developed within each initiative/ stakeholder area?

Offerors can develop a single strategy if it can be shown that it does in fact work well for all populations, or if a single strategy can't meet the goals for all populations, then they would need to develop special approaches that work for specific special populations.

19. Tasks 3 and 4 are interrelated with task 1. That is, the design of applications and infrastructure such as networks, and assessments of need and resources are integral to the development of strategy. Moreover, as stated in the RFP, “Together, the needs and resource assessments shall guide the development of long-term knowledge transfer strategies, the types of programs offered, and the methods and aides employed to carry them out. Therefore, should the sample strategy task include completing Task 3 and 4 as required by the sample problem?

Yes

20. Reference Subtask 1.2 on page 18). It will be hard to estimate resources required to complete the material review without some “scope” from AHRQ. Can AHRQ quantify the amount of materials to be reviewed or provide some estimate of person-hours?

No

21. The Contractor will be working with national expert presenters. Will the contractor generally identify presenters for approval by AHRQ? Will the Contractor be able to screen and accept or reject presenters based on strategic criteria, such as willingness and ability to present information within a specific program structure?

The Contractor will screen potential presenters based on appropriateness for the task at hand for AHRQ approval.

22. Are other stakeholders, such as technology developers, being considered for inclusion in the knowledge transfer activity?

No

23. What are AHRQ specifications regarding the development of infrastructures as part of the knowledge transfer strategy? Currently most RFP discussion focuses on programs and activities, but network development may require new databases, etc.

Offerors will have to develop their own specifications based on the strategies and programs they propose to develop.

24. Should the proposal address a comprehensive set for a category of stakeholders or can the boundary of the stakeholder definition be limited, so as to better test and improve new concepts?

Boundaries of stakeholder groups can be limited to test and improve new concepts.

25. Please clarify the stakeholder audiences to be considered. Are there three or four? Please describe each.

The three groups are identified and described in section 2.10 of the SOW.

Are bidders required to select only one?

Offerors can select more than one stakeholder group if they can document equally substantial long term experience and expertise serving them.

If so, are they only eligible for an award for that group? **No**

26. Does the statement on page 26 that, “the evaluation component is not expected to exceed 7% of the total contract budget,” apply to the sample strategy budget, as well? **Yes.** Is the evaluation budget for the sample strategy limited to 7% of the \$350,000? **No. Please also note AHRQ has revised the value of the sample strategy from \$350,000 to \$500,000. See Part C, of this amendment for complete revision.**

27. Does the \$6 million standard for small businesses also apply for small businesses subcontractors to large business contractors? IT subcontractors are often defined at the \$21 million level.

The \$6 million standard applies to small businesses. The NAICS code of 541611 with the small business standard of \$6 million is designated because AHRQ does not consider the IT component of this requirement to be of the greatest emphasis in the overall performance of the requirement.

28. On page 77, the proposal instructions call for no more than 125 pages, with the majority of the text double spaced. Should the detailed narrative, sample strategy and evaluation plan also be presented as double-spaced pages? If so, do the length parameters still stand, i.e., if the contractor were to present the text in single-spaced pages it would be no longer than 45 pages. **See Part C. Replacement Pages (of this amendment) for the revised Section L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions, immediately following these responses to questions.**

29. Page 82, sub bullet “b”, and again on page 83, the proposal references “contracts and subcontracts identified in (1) above.” Should the (1) be replaced with “a” above? (This refers to the Past Performance Information L.9 paragraph “b.” There is a reference to “(1) above. Please clarify that this should be “a.” above.

Yes, you are correct. The statement is meant to state, “The attached Past Performance Questionnaire and Contractor Performance Form shall be completed by those contracting organizations listed in (1) above. The evaluation forms shall be completed and forwarded directly to the following: Mary Haines ...”

30. (Reference section B.2, page 4), it states that the total amount per year will be \$1 million, including estimated costs and fees. It then explains that both the fixed fee and award fee are “TO be negotiated.” In developing our budget proposal, what estimated rates should we use for these two fees in order to determine how much to allocate for covering the estimated costs of producing the required deliverables/ activities?

The Government anticipates a Base Fee of about 2 to 3%. The determination of the proposed award fee is an issue for the contractor to determine. The Government is bound by the parameters of the Federal Acquisition Regulations for negotiation of the fees. It should be noted that AHRQ’s history supports fixed fees that are equal to

approximately 5 to 8% of the estimated costs.

31. We would appreciate some clarification about your use of the term “strategy.” The list of tasks uses the singular, implying that we would develop a single, encompassing strategy for assisting our primary audience. However, if we are working on multiple topical initiatives simultaneously, each could presumably require its own separate strategy, therefore requiring use to develop multiple strategies. How do you envision this?

There will be multiple initiatives for which separate strategies will be developed.

32. What mix of initiatives/ activities/ deliverables should we use in developing our work plans and budget proposals?

-Given that a single major initiative should consume no more than \$350,000 per year, should we assume two major initiatives and the remaining \$300,000 for ad hoc task orders?

The Statement of Work has been modified to state that the sample knowledge transfer strategy should be limited in scope to not more than \$500,000. This limitation is for the sample strategy only and does not refer to any strategies that might be assigned to a contractor after award.

AHRQ does not yet know exactly how many initiatives or which of the identified stakeholders will be the focus for topics under this procurement. Therefore it is not possible to specify a number of specific deliverables that will be required. Offerors shall, therefore, prepare a budget for each of five years that is based on a hypothetical mix of programs including, but not limited to, the following types:

- **Conventional and electronic network building functions;**
- **Conventional workshops or conferences;**
- **Web conferences or Webcasts;**
- **Audio Conferences;**
- **Research synopses or policy briefs;**
- **Marketing methods;**
- **Technical assistance (including meetings and other methods).**

The program mix should include the programs proposed in the sample strategy but other methods selected by the Offeror not specified in the Statement of Work may also be used. The budget shall include all costs associated with producing these services including project management, evaluation, other direct, and indirect costs, as well as fee. The cost of the evaluation task can be prorated evenly across five years.

Offerors should include logistics costs to cover staff and presenter travel, meals, and lodging and registration fees. However, offerors should not include travel, meals, lodging, or registration fees for participants for any proposed programs.

Offerors should assume that the maximum amount of funds available for the first year shall total no more than \$1 million including indirect costs and fee. Offerors should assume a cost escalation of 4% each year with no change in indirect cost rates.

-Related to our early questions about term “strategy,” should we include the costs of strategy development” in the \$350,000 or is that separate?

Include it.

-Would we be allowed to provide travel scholarships for workshop participants?

Yes, but the COST for scholarships should NOT be included in the cost proposal.

33. Provide clarification regarding how the \$350,000 set aside for Task Two fits into the overall project budget, which, on page 4 of the RFP is estimated at \$1,000,000? That is, is the \$350,000 inclusive of the overall project budget, or is it a yearly budget line item?

The \$350,000 (revised to \$500,000 by this amendment) figure is used only for the purpose of limiting the scope of the sample strategy and is not to be counted as part of the cost proposal.

Does AHRQ anticipate that a successful contractor may be required to implement more than one knowledge transfer strategy during the life of the contract? **Yes**

34. (Reference Section C. Background, page 11) AHRQ lists three stakeholder audiences; however, AHRQ notes on page 10 of the RFP that four contract awards will be made. Will two contractors be dedicated to one stakeholder audience? And, if so, which stakeholder audience?

Contractors may or may not be tasked to address only one stakeholder group. Depending on the nature of the offers, it is possible that awards could be made to organizations with expertise with more than one stakeholder group. AHRQ has not identified a particular stakeholder group for which more than one contractor would be required.

35. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Could AHRQ provide specific information on the program areas listed? For example, does AHRQ have findings specific to patient safety that they want disseminated? The program choices listed are very broad.

AHRQ has not made decisions yet about which of its many areas of expertise will be the subject of a strategy. Information on AHRQ program areas can be found on the Agency website, www.AHRQ.gov .

36. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Is a bidder limited to the program area it chooses to develop a sample knowledge transfer and application strategy? That is, should an organization choose to develop a sample strategy around bioterrorism, and is subsequently awarded a contract, would that contractor be limited to bioterrorism, or would AHRQ also consider that contractor for other program areas?

AHRQ will also consider the offeror for program areas other than that chosen for the sample strategy. Additionally, the offeror should not assume that they would be assigned to develop a strategy around a specific topic just because they chose to develop their sample strategy around that specific topic.

37.(Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Can or should a bidder discuss its expertise/ knowledge of additional program areas other than the one chosen to develop a sample strategy?

Yes

38. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Two, page 13) Eight potential program areas are listed; however, AHRQ states they will be awarding four contracts. Does AHRQ intend on equally dividing the program areas amongst the four contractors, or will some program areas not be addressed during the contract term?

AHRQ will divide program areas among the four contractors, as it determines necessary.

39. (Reference Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Three, Pg. 16-18) Is AHRQ anticipating that a successful contractor would use all of the electronic media listed, or a sampling as deemed appropriate?

Only those appropriate for the task.

40. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Three) For budgeting purposes, can AHRQ provide clarification as to what types and volume of computer and/or audio equipment will the contractor be required to provide?

No. That will be dependent on contractor proposed strategies and AHRQ assignment of tasks and topics.

41. (Section C Scope of Work, Task Area Four) Can AHRQ provide clarification as to what programs would require a pilot test? A pilot test or "talk-through" may not be feasible for all mediums listed in Task Area Three.

It is most likely that pilot tests or talk-throughs will be required for those program types which are new, experimental, complex, or which use presenters of whom and methods of which we are unsure or require rehearsal to perfect.

42. (Part I, The Schedule, Section A- Solicitation Form) The proposal states that "Multiple awards (approximately four [4] are anticipated." On page 4, under Estimated Cost and Fee: "NOTE: The Government estimated that the total amount per year (including estimated costs and fees) will be \$1,000,000.00. This estimate is for one contract." For clarification, are we then to understand that the Government will award up to four [4] contracts, totaling \$1,000,000.00 per year for three years, with 2, 1-year options.

As stated in the response to 3 above, each contractor will be expected to have the capability to serve, and may be asked to serve, multiple audiences. However, each Contractor should have a specialty in one of these audience types. Contractors who specialize in serving multiple stakeholders should discuss their capabilities in the proposal. However, the Agency anticipates awarding up to 4 contracts..

43. Can a contractor bid on more than one stakeholder audience as defined on page 11 of the RFP?

Contractors may or may not be tasked to address only one stakeholder group. Depending on the nature of the offers, it is possible that awards could be made to organizations with expertise with more than one stakeholder group. AHRQ has not identified a particular stakeholder group for which more than one contractor would be required. This response also includes the response to question 3 above. Each contractor will be expected to have the capability to serve multiple audiences, however each Contractor should have a speciality in one of these audience types

44. Can a contractor include plans to disseminate knowledge to consumers, or was this

stakeholder group left out intentionally?

Consumers were not included as a stakeholder group in the Statement of Work.

45. As per page 7, Consultant fees in excess of \$500 per day are not allowed. Yet on page 23, Subtask 4.10 Speaker fees are allowable up to \$1,000.00 per day. Is this a discrepancy? If so, what is the correct fee ceiling?

\$1,000.00 per day is the correct figure.

46. The instructions for responding to this RFP direct bidders to describe their overall approach to carrying out the project's requirements, and identify creative approaches and strategies to be incorporated into this approach. The RFP also calls for the development of a sample knowledge transfer and application strategy in a given topic area and for a specific target audience. However, on page 15 of the RFP, it notes that: "A cost proposal is not to be submitted with the sample strategy."

Given that reasonably accurate cost estimates for the overall project cannot be developed from the appropriately general nature of the SOW, would you please provide clarification with respect to the following:

a. What should be the mix of activities and tasks that form the basis for developing the cost/ price proposal to be included in the business proposal?

B. Similarly, what should be used as the basis for developing person-loading estimates called for as part of the management plan section of the proposal?

C. The RFP calls for the inclusion of a PERT chart in the management plan. Would a GANNT chart be equally acceptable? An again, what set of tasks and activities should be reflected in these charts?

See response to 32. Further, this amendment deletes the requirement for a PERT chart, and makes other changes to L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions. See replacement L.8 in Section D. of this amendment.

47. (Reference Subtask 3.4 of the Scope of Work) Can AHRQ provide an estimation of the expected volume of both webcasts and webconferences?

No

48. (Reference Subtask 3.4 of the Scope of Work) Is AHRQ looking for a services solution, where they would notify the contractor of an upcoming webcast and the contractor sets up the event? Or is AHRQ looking for an application that would allow its own teams to be self sufficient in producing these multi media events?

See Response to 2 above.

49. (Reference Section L.6) Would the agency consider proposals that focus exclusively or predominantly on specific priority populations, such as women and children, including those with special health care needs?

No, it is anticipated that such a proposal would not be responsive to the requirements of this RFP. See FAR subpart 15.6 Unsolicited Proposals

50. (Reference Section L.6)Would the agency consider proposals that focus exclusively or predominantly on stakeholder audiences that are subsets of or groups that cross-cut AHRQ's three identified audiences, such as executive branch officials who are responsible for developing policy, as well as for developing supporting or overseeing systems for purchasing or providing care (e.g., public health, Medicaid, SCHIP, behavioral health, etc)?

No, See response to 49.

51. (Reference Section L.6) Would the agency consider proposals that focus exclusively or predominantly on specific methods within the fields of diffusion of innovations and knowledge transfer, such as network building, electronic conferences, email serves and newsletters, research synopses, policy briefs and other written documents (but excluding, for example, workshops)?

No, see response to 49.

52. Is there an incumbent for the proposed work or for similar kinds of work previous to this?

As part of AHRQ's recent reorganization, the User Liaison Program is housed in the newly named Office of Communications and Knowledge Transfer. The current contractors under the current ULP Dissemination Support program are: Health Systems Research, Inc., Academy Health and National Academy for State Health Policy. This procurement is substantially different than the existing contracts and is not viewed as a recompetition of the current contracts.

53. Can the offeror, if a large business, also be part of a small business team eligible for the set-aside without impacting opportunity for award as other than a small business?

Yes

54. (Reference Exhibit I - Performance Requirements Summary–Pages 116-124 is cut off. Would you please provide completely readable text and boxes to ensure that critical information is not overlooked?

Exhibit 1 - Performance Requirements Summary is duplicated in Part C. of this amendment.

55. Is the intent to award four contracts each at \$1M per year or four contracts totaling \$1 million per year?

It is AHRQ's intent to award up to four contracts for approximately \$1 M per year for three years, as set forth in the RFP. There are also two one-year options included in this negotiated procurement.

56. Is there a minimum award for each of the four successful offerors in each year?

No, see response to 55.

57. As a successful offeror, is it possible that an offeror could get \$1M in effort or \$0 effort in any one year?

No response, at this time, AHRQ was not able to clarify intent of question in order to respond in this amendment.

58. The RFP indicates that a successful offeror might be involved with budgeting information. Does this kind of budget information expose the successful offeror to organizational conflicts of interest for other work that may be ongoing or available for bid in the future?

The successful offeror(s) would not be exposed to any “AHRQ budget information” during the successful completion of this requirement. Since specific reference was not provided, AHRQ cannot provide more definitive answer.

59. (Section C) Can the offeror propose to more than the one stakeholder audience referenced in Section C.2.10?

See response to 34.

60. (Section H) Would you please provide further insight to the performance measures of success that constitute the criteria for award at each level (i.e. what is the measure of success for 90-100% awarded, 80-89% awarded and so on...) In Section H.1?

A. Are the performance measures of success used to evaluate performance for awarded fee for those referenced in Section C.2.10?

B. When will the specific performance measures of success be provided?

See Section H.1, in conjunction with Attachment 1, Performance Evaluation and Award Fee. Note, Attachment 1, Performance Evaluation and Award Fee is duplicated in this amendment.

61. Can the award fee be rolled over to the next period if the maximum amount available for award is not earned?

No.

62. Section L and section M do not align with each other (e.g. technical requirements do not align with evaluation criteria for each section) Will there be any changes to Sections L and M to bring them into alignment?

See Part C. of this amendment for revisions to Sections L and M

63. (Section M) The focus of past performance seems to be on work that involved providing research services (p. 113) and delivery. Is this a major consideration? Or is the goal to appreciate the ability to deliver what you say will be delivered on time, within cost, and to customer requirements (p. 114)

Please use Attachment 2, Past Performance Questionnaire to obtain evaluations from your clients. See L.9 Past Performance Information and M, both revised by this amendment..

64. What is the dollar value of current contract?

The current contracts awarded June 1998 for a five year period were: Health Systems Research, Inc.-\$3,960,721, AcademyHealth - \$4,881,281, National Academy for State

Health Policy - \$3,747,654.

65. Will a source list be available?

No. For assistance in identifying potential subcontractors, go to PRONET on the Small Business Administration website, www.sba.gov/PRONET

66. Is there an incumbent? Is the incumbent eligible to re-compete?

See response to 52, above. Yes, incumbents are eligible to re-compete.

67. What is the anticipated award date?

December 15, 2003.

68. Have you determined acceptable levels for Base fees and Award fees, if so, what are they?

See response to 30, above.

69. Would GSA approved labor and other direct cost rates and fees be sufficient justification for the business proposal?

Only if the proposed rates were developed and are to be used for the type of effort being responded to. However, these rates are usually loaded rates for use on T&M/ labor hour type contracts(fixed price). These rates would not be appropriate for a cost reimbursement contract.

70. For costing purposes, would you please clarify what costs besides those for each labor category should be included in the business proposal? For example, in Section L.11, Item C, a proposed amount for travel should be included. For costing, how many out of town trips do you anticipate? Does this include staff travel and presenter/ speaker travel for meetings and workshops?

See response to 32.

71. How many meetings do you anticipate per year?

See response to 32.

72. How many speakers/ presenters do you anticipate per year?

See response to 32.

73. Does the sample knowledge transfer need to include all of the elements stated on page 13, and if so what level of detail?

Yes, all except for the budget. The total cost for this sample strategy is \$500,000. Level of detail depends on offeror's assessment of importance of each item and sample strategy length limits.

74. How many programs is the contractor expected to design/ supply in one year?

See response to 32.

75. Under Task 2, "Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy for Program Areas," does the \$350,000 ceiling for the development and implementation of the sample strategy include the planning of the logistics, travel, per diem and honoraria?

Yes, however please note that the \$350,000 ceiling has been changed to \$500,000. Also see responses to 32 and 33.

76. Is the 90 day marketing/ mailing of information definite for each program for ongoing programs and/ new initiatives and those programs and initiatives developed as a result of the needs assessment?

Offerors should propose marketing/ mailing time lines that will ensure that stakeholders are made aware of programs so they can comfortably decide to attend and make financial and travel arrangements. A wide variety of programs will be offered under this procurement, and a standardized marketing time line cannot be applied to all of them.

77. Is there any information available regarding the make-up of AHRQ stakeholders?

Information on AHRQ stakeholders can be found on the Budget and Mission page of the AHRQ web site

78. Subtask 3.4, Electronic Dissemination Programs, how many of these programs/ activities do you anticipate per year? How many Distance Learning, Simulation and Decision Support Programs do you anticipate per year?

See response to 32.

79. Is the contractor expected to pay for meeting room rental and other onsite facility fees (audiovisual, set up) associated with conducting meetings and workshops?

Yes

80. For costing purposes, on average what has been the speakers fee provided to the presenters?

Not available. Use maximum \$1000 consultant fee per day for budgeting purposes, including preparation days.

81. Section B.3, Provisions Applicable to Direct Costs, items unallowable, item #10, "consultant fees in excess of \$500/day, does this mean the speakers honoraria fees or the consultant/ experts the contractor may retain to conduct analysis and needs assessments?

Both, however, please note that the correct maximum rate for consultant fees is \$1,000 per day, corrected by this amendment.

82. In Subtask 3.3, what is AHRQ's anticipated cost for the Seminars and Conferences mentioned?

Offeror must determine this based on their proposed strategies and service designs.

83. For subtask 3.4, what is the anticipated cost for the Electronics Dissemination Programs required number of developed hours of distance learning programs, computer-base and online simulation and decisions support tools does the Agency have in mind?

See response to 32.

84. Subtask 4.2: What is AHRQ's anticipated cost for offsite meetings where "the contractor shall arrange for travel, lodging and per diem for approximately 15 non-federal participants." And how many of these meetings are anticipated a year?

Offeror must determine this based on their proposed strategies and service designs.

85. In subtask 4.4, what is AHRQ's anticipated cost for Subject Matter Experts (SME) in the field of Program Design, noting that AHRQ works with presenters, researchers, stakeholders, and other experts who are preeminent in their fields.

Offeror must determine this based on their proposed strategies, service designs, and knowledge of the field.

86. For subtask 4.6, what is AHRQ's anticipated cost for the Conduct Program Pilot Tests, in the case of the contractor's arranging "for travel, lodging, and per diem for each non-Federal person representing the stakeholder audience and presenters....The representatives of the target stakeholder audience may be offered a 1-day honorarium for each day of the meeting."

See response to 32.

87. In subtask 4.9 and 4.10: What is Agency's anticipated number of speaker fees?

See response to 32.

88. What is AHRQ's anticipated number of programs per year?

See response to 32.

89. What is AHRQ's recommended frequency of electronic newsletter and communication publication, or is the current number of productions a fair recommended number of publications?

See response to 32.

90. What is AHRQ's estimate for distances to be traveled by meeting and conference attendees and the estimated number of attendees?

See response to 32.

91. The RFP mentions that up to 4 awards will be made. Should the contractor assume that each award would be to serve one of the 4 stakeholder groups identified by AHRQ?

Please note that there are only three stakeholder groups. The intent is that each award would be made to serve one stakeholder group but it is possible that some or all resulting contracts will serve more than one.

92. Will AHRQ consider awarding more than one award to a single contractor? For example, one contractor being chosen to serve 2 critical stakeholder groups.

No.

93. If a contract is awarded as a small business set-aside, will that same contractor be excluded from another award where they are sub-contracting to another party?

No, but the small business (or any type of business) must be able demonstrate capacity for holding more than one contract or subcontract.

94. Does the Agency anticipate that this procurement will supplant the role currently being held by the ULP and TRIP programs? If so please describe the roles expected for the collecting and aggregating of data and AHRQ's vision for the transition. If this is not the case please describe the interactions expected between the contractors under this procurement and the ULP and TRIP programs.

This procurement will serve as the User Liaison Program's primary program

dissemination support contract mechanism. It will not serve as the TRIP program's primary contract mechanism. The TRIP program will continue to operate as it has in the past. This procurement may, however, will enhance TRIP program outcomes.

95. Will the requirement of this procurement only cover information related to the ULP or will it encompass all AHRQ knowledge dissemination activities?

It is anticipated that the four contracts will provide dissemination services across all of AHRQ's content/ audiences rather than just policy oriented dissemination. This does not limit AHRQ's ability to disseminate information through other programs or mechanisms.

96. Can AHRQ elaborate about the role of the contractor with respect to continuing knowledge dissemination practices already in place at the agency versus commencing new dissemination practices?

It is anticipated that Contractors under this procurement will work collaboratively with on-going agency projects as appropriate when the goals and strategies are related. This procurement is not intended to replace or duplicate existing programs and projects.

97. Will the role of the contractor be involved in the gathering and aggregation of knowledge or will the appropriate knowledge be gathered by other factors within the Agency and presented to the contractor for dissemination to critical stakeholder groups? For example, will the contractor be expected to determine what information is critical for dissemination or will those roles reside within other parties within the Agency?

The contractor will be responsible for gathering and aggregating a large portion of the knowledge to be transferred.

98. The business plan requires assumptions about deliverables and activities beyond the sample strategy. The deliverables are not specified in the RFP as a basis for constructing a budget. How should the budget and business plan be constructed?

See response to 32.

99. The RFP requires a PERT chart for all tasks. Is this limited to the tasks outlined in the sample strategy? Or does it include all tasks that are expected to be assigned and which tasks should we assume will be assigned? The question also applies for presentation of person hours?

Section L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions have been revised to more accurately reflect our needs, the requirement for the PERT chart was deleted. See Part D. of this amendment for Replaced Pages.

100. Section L.11.B describes a small business subcontracting plan and indicates that there is a copy of the AHRQ model subcontracting plan attached. It was missing from the package. How can we obtain a copy?

The model subcontracting plan is currently being revised by the DHHS, so please contact Mary Haines (after August 25, 2003 to obtain an electronic copy of the Model Subcontracting Plan.)

101. On page 14 the RFP says that the sample strategy should cover 1 year but the overall strategy is expected to extend over 3 years. On page 79 A3 says that the sample strategy should be described for 3 years. Many significant activities will occur in the second and third

years while planning and development will occur during much of the first year. Which period should be used?

The scope of the sample strategy should cover 3 years. A broad description of the methods to be employed should be provided for the 3 year period. The broad description should include a discussion of the rationale for the entire plan. There should be a much more detailed description and rationale for the programs to be implemented in year 1; such as would be required to prepare budgets, assign staff, hire consultants, prepare evaluation plans, prepare marketing materials, and ensure reaching strategic goals and impacts if such a strategy were to actually be implemented.

102. The small business set aside seems very high considering the responsibilities of the contractor and the activities which are likely to be handled by a small business. Is this threshold required?

This requirement is partially set-aside for small businesses. Small businesses are not required to submit a Small Business Subcontracting Plan. The AHRQ recommended Subcontracting Goals (reference L.11. Business Proposal, para. B., subpart 'g.' on page 86 of the RFP) for this procurement are the overall GOALS for all of DHHS. AHRQ fully supports the small business subcontracting goals. The Small Business Subcontracting Plan for each offeror, being considered for award is evaluated on the basis of their efforts in meeting or obtaining the goals.

103. The solicitation says that resumes are required for key personnel. Are resumes and letters of support from potential speakers expected to be included?

Yes

104. Should all the tasks in the statement of work (pages 14-29) be included in the sample strategy?

It should include the elements listed in Task 2, page 13.

105. The solicitation uses the term fixed fee and base fee in different places. Are they the same? Should the offeror propose and budget an amount for a fixed fee and the performance based award fee?

Yes, the fixed fee and the base fee are the same. Yes the offeror should propose an amount for the base fee and the performance award fee?

106. One section of the RFP indicates that the narrative should be double spaced yet another section says the narrative, sample strategy and sample evaluation plan may be single spaced. May these specified sections be single spaced or should the entire document be double spaced?

107. Can salary costs be shown as a percentage of each person's time rather in hours?

Yes, however an offeror may be requested to provide further detail during negotiations, if they are in the competitive range.

108. Should the budget be presented for the base three year period or for five years?

See L.9 Business Proposal Instructions and Attachment 4 Estimated Cost Proposal Format.

109. The cover of the RFP lists the solicitation as AHRQ-04-0001, "Knowledge Transfer and Applications Support." Attachment 2 lists the solicitation as AHRQ-03-0002, Publications Clearinghouse. We assume it is alright to change the reference
Yes, for your convenience a corrected Attachment 2 is included in Part D of this amendment.

C. CORRECTIONS/REVISION TO RFP.

1. Section B.3 Provisions Applicable to Direct Costs, paragraph a. (10) is revised to state: Consultant fees in excess of \$1000/ day (in place of \$500/day)

2. Section C Statement of Work, Task 2-Knowledge transfer and Application Strategy for program areas, last paragraph before Subtask 2.1 is revised to state: "For the program area chosen the proposal must address how the strategy will be tailored so that it will effectively address the needs of AHRQ's priority populations. It is expected that the sample strategy included in the proposal would address most of the elements listed above, but in less detail than the strategy developed after contract award. The scope of the sample strategy should not exceed \$500,000 per year for development and implementation of its associated programs. A cost proposal is not to be submitted with the sample strategy. The sample strategy shall be presented in a maximum of 10 single-spaced pages. Please note that the sample strategy may not actually be assigned for implementation following contract award."

3. Exhibit 1 - PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY is duplicated below:

Exhibit 1- Performance Requirements Summary

Performance Factor	Key Performance Standards	Surveillance Methods
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<p>1. Develop and Update Detailed Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy for Program Areas Specified by AHRQ</p>	<p>a. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is detailed and complete and includes the following elements: (1) knowledge transfer goals; (2) intended audiences; (3) analysis of stakeholder resources; (4) mix and sequence of interventions and associated activities; (5) general technical approaches for each intervention; (6) supporting references; (7) organizational responsibilities; (8) schedules; (9) budget; (10) staffing plan; and (11) approach for promoting AHRQ as a science partner and resource.</p> <p>b. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is effective and supported by knowledge transfer and diffusion literature and practice with respect to the program area specified by AHRQ. Interventions and other elements of the strategy are appropriate given the nature of the program area and policy issues specified by AHRQ.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff, and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>1. Develop and Update Detailed Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy for Program Areas Specified by AHRQ (cont'd)</p>	<p>c. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is innovative and reflects comprehensive understanding of the principles of knowledge transfer, diffusion of innovations, training and learning transfer, and related disciplines.</p> <p>d. Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is submitted on a timely basis, in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>e. Final Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy is responsive to comments by PO and other AHRQ staff on draft.</p> <p>f. Contractor's updated Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy appropriately reflects results of evaluations and program implementation experience. Updated strategy is submitted on a timely basis in accordance with Schedule of Deliverables.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs</p> <p>(Programs may include Knowledge Transfer Networks; Workshops, Conferences and Other Meetings; Technical Assistance; Distance Learning, Simulation and Decision Support Programs; Email List Servers and Newsletters; Research Synopses, Policy Briefs and other Documents; and other knowledge transfer vehicles.)</p>	<p>a. Program <u>planning meetings</u> (e.g., needs assessment and resource assessment, meetings) are effective in eliciting specific, comprehensive and relevant information on the needs, interests, and expectations of the target audience, as well as the available research, tools and other resources in the field. Contractor effectively facilitates such meetings such that: (1) relevant issues are discussed and inputs provided; (2) all participants have an opportunity to express their views; and (3) a consensus or other type of direction is obtained to support the design of the program.</p> <p>b. Agendas for planning sessions and workshops, conferences and other meetings are clear and complete and reflect the following: (1) objectives and desired outcomes are clearly spelled out; (2) time periods are provided for each agenda item; (3) presenters are listed for each agenda item; and (4) agenda items reflect the inputs from the planning meeting(s). Final meeting agenda are responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>c. Program design documents are clear, complete and methodically sound with respect to the nature of the program, and contain the following: (1) statement of AHRQ's strategy/program intent;(2) (2) key needs and resource assessment findings; (3) statement of the problem the strategy/program will address; (4) strategy/program goals and outcomes; (5) participant learning objectives; (6) outline of sessions, modules, and other activities; (7) methods and aides to be employed; (8) working agenda(s), as appropriate; (9) evaluation design; and (10) marketing plan. Final design documents are responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft.</p> <p>d. Contractor conducts program meetings efficiently and effectively. This includes facilitating selected sessions; giving selected presentations, as appropriate; and providing or coordinating all technical services. Facilitation is conducted such that: (1) relevant issues are discussed and inputs provided; (2) all participants have</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>an opportunity to express their views and provide input; and (3) a consensus or other type of common understanding is obtained regarding the nature of the issues for application on the job.</p> <p>e. Program summary report is complete, well-written, suitable for publication on the AHRQ Web site; and effective in summarizing the program process and contents, audience, significant issues, suggested program improvements, and (for selected national programs), key take home issues. Final summary report is responsive to PO comments on draft.</p> <p>f. Program audiotape or other electronic recording is clear and complete.</p> <p>g. Network building activities conducted by Contractor through meetings or electronic media are useful in creating opportunities for participants to establish networks or support pre-existing networks. New networks are established or pre-existing networks are enhanced, as indicated by mission statements, member lists, meetings, formation and use of list serves and other electronic</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>communication vehicles, and other activities of networks.</p> <p>h. Technical assistance (TA) activities and products provided by Contractor (e.g., on site meetings, conference calls, training, publications, etc.) are clear, complete, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p> <p>i. Distance learning programs, simulations, decision support systems and other performance support tools provided by the Contractor are clear, complete, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p> <p>j. List Serves, Electronic Newsletters and Other Electronic Communication products provided by Contractor are clear, complete, technologically sound and current, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Surveys/feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>2. Plan, Design, Develop and Implement Knowledge Transfer Programs (cont'd)</p>	<p>k. Research Synopses, Policy Briefs and Other Written Documents provided by Contractor are clear, complete, appropriate and useful in terms of the nature and needs of the target audience. Final products are responsive to AHRQ comments on draft.</p> <p>l. Contractor effectively utilizes content and functional experts in designing and developing knowledge transfer programs.</p> <p>m. All deliverables are submitted on timely basis, in accordance with Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>n. Participants actually use the information disseminated through the knowledge transfer programs on the job. Policies or other actions are developed, changed or otherwise impacted as a result of the use of information disseminated via the workshop.</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p> <p>Peer review of selection of experts by PO and other AHRQ staff.</p> <p>Monitoring by PO.</p> <p>Surveys/feedback from participants.</p> <p>Peer review by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>3. Provide Logistics for Knowledge Transfer Programs</p>	<p>a. Logistics for planning meetings (needs and resource assessments) for knowledge transfer programs are conducted efficiently.</p> <p>b. Contractor logistical services and products for conduct of knowledge transfer programs (e.g., invitation letters; electronic marketing tools; pilot tests/rehearsals/talk throughs; speaker presentation materials; site selection; arrangement of travel, lodging and meals; registration data base and collection of registration fees; assembly and distribution of materials; logistics during program; coordination of recording of program, etc.) are developed and conducted efficiently and effectively support program objectives.</p> <p>c.. Contractor special logistical services and products for teleconferences (e.g., hiring a moderator; preparing a script; selecting and providing the appropriate technology, computer and audio equipment; provision of full streaming archive with open or close captioning, etc.) are developed and conducted efficiently and effectively support program objectives.</p>	<p>Peer review by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p> <p>Feedback from participants.</p>
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<p>4. Design and Implement Evaluation Plan for Assessing the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy</p>	<p>a. Evaluation Plan is detailed and complete and includes the following elements: (1) program area(s) to be evaluated; (2) questions to be addressed by the evaluation; (3) measures (process and impact) for addressing questions; (4) information to be gathered to address questions; (5) sources of information; (6) approach for obtaining information; (7) types of analyses to be performed; (8) general outline of report(s) to be produced; (9) potential evaluation problems and methods to resolve them; and (10) timeline for major evaluation tasks.</p> <p>b. Evaluation Plan is appropriate with respect to the program area and related policy issues specified by AHRQ.</p> <p>c. Evaluation Plan provides a sound, thorough and feasible method for assessing the extent to which the goals of AHRQ and the Contractor's knowledge transfer and application strategy are achieved. Evaluation Plan includes an effective approach for assessing the following knowledge transfer components and stages : (1) extent to which participants acquired the knowledge and skills</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>4. Design and Implement Evaluation Plan for Assessing the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy (cont'd)</p>	<p>the knowledge transfer initiative intended to support; (2) extent to which knowledge transfer initiative was appropriately targeted to the needs and interests and met the expectations of the participants; (3) effectiveness of the presenters, materials and logistics of the knowledge transfer initiative judged by the participants; (4) extent to which the participants actually used the information disseminated by the knowledge transfer initiative and (5) impact of the information disseminated and used on changes in policies or other actions.</p> <p>d. Evaluation Plan is submitted on a timely basis, in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables. Final Evaluation Plan is responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft.</p> <p>e. Evaluation Plan is implemented in a efficient and effective manner, consistent with the Plan. Contractor conducts an appropriate pilot test and incorporates the results of the pilot test into the Evaluation Plan.</p> <p>f. Evaluation report(s) provide detailed,</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>4. Design and Implement Evaluation Plan for Assessing the Effectiveness of the Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy (cont'd)</p>	<p>useful and methodologically sound information on the extent to which the goals of AHRQ and the Contractor's knowledge transfer and Application strategy were achieved. (See above for types of information to be provided.)</p> <p>g. Final evaluation report(s) are responsive to comments by AHRQ on draft(s).</p>	<p>Peer review of deliverables by PO, other AHRQ staff and appropriate experts in the field.</p>
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<p>5. Prepare Plans (Budgets, Schedules), Reports and Briefings of Project Activities</p>	<p>a. Schedules and budgets for each project task assignment are detailed and complete, and include the following: (1) list, schedule and sequence of activities; (2) labor hours by staff category; (3) labor costs; (4) indirect costs; (5) breakdown of ODCs; and (6) fee.</p> <p>b. Schedules and budgets for each project task assignment are reasonable given the nature of the program.</p> <p>c. Schedules and budgets for each project task assignment are submitted in a timely manner in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>d. Progress reports are informative and complete and contain the items listed in the SOW. Progress reports are submitted in a timely manner in accordance with the Schedule of Deliverables.</p> <p>e. Briefings of deliverables are well organized and appropriate in content, format and length according to the nature of the subject and audience. Briefings are effective in conveying the key elements of the deliverable to the audience.</p>	<p>Monitoring of deliverables by PO and other AHRQ staff.</p>
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- D. **REPLACEMENT PAGES (76 - 83) for L.8 Technical Proposal Instructions, L.9 Past Performance Information and L.10 Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan are set forth below to incorporate changes/ revisions of this amendment.**

REPLACEMENT PAGES (91 - 96) for all OF Section M— EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD ARE PROVIDED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE Section L replacement pages.

REPLACEMENT PAGE (113) ATTACHMENT 2, Past Performance Evaluation Questionnaire, cover sheet follows the replaced Section M

L.8 TECHNICAL PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

The technical proposal shall contain an original and nine (9) copies. The technical proposal described below shall be limited to **125 pages** not including resumes or bibliographies, with no less than a 11 point pitch, with the majority of the text double-spaced (lists of deliverables, person loading charts, and similar materials need not be double-spaced, so long as they are legible). Resumes or CVs are only required for key personnel. Brief biographic sketches of other personnel may be provided. Lengthy proposals and voluminous appendices are neither needed nor desired as they are difficult to read and evaluate and may indicate the offeror's inability to concisely state their proposal

a. Recommended Technical Proposal Format

The Offeror's proposal should present sufficient information to reflect a thorough understanding of the work requirements and a detailed plan for achieving the objectives of the scope of work. Technical proposal shall not merely paraphrase the requirements of the Agency's scope of work or parts thereof, or use of phrases such as "will comply" or "standard techniques will be employed." The technical proposal must include a detailed description of the techniques and procedures to be used in achieving the proposed end results in compliance with the requirements of the Agency's scope of work.

To assist in the expeditious and comprehensive evaluation of your proposal, the Government desires that you follow the guidelines and format listed below:

- (1) Cover Page: The name of the proposing organization, author(s) of the technical proposal, the RFP number and the title of the RFP should appear on the cover. One (1) manually signed original copy of the proposal and the number of copies specified in the RFP are required.
- (2) Table of Contents: Provide sufficient detail so that all important elements of the proposal can be located readily.
- (3) Introduction: This should be a one or two page summary outlining the proposed work, your interest in submitting a proposal, and the importance of this effort in relation to your overall operation.

(4) Technical Discussion: For ease of evaluation, the technical proposal shall be divided into four parts as follows, corresponding to the evaluation criteria in Section M:

- A. Technical Approach
- B. Management Plan
- C. Key Personnel
- D. Corporate Experience and Facilities

Technical proposals submitted in response to this RFP shall address each of the items described below, and shall be organized in the same manner and within the page limitations specified. Proposals shall be prepared in double-spaced format, with numbered pages, unless stated otherwise.

A. Technical Approach

The Offeror shall submit:

1. General Technical Approach- Detailed narrative which presents the offeror's methodology for performing the various tasks and subtasks and producing the deliverables listed in the Statement of Work. This should clearly show how the offeror plans to design, develop and implement the knowledge transfer and application strategies, programs, and methods required to produce program impacts. Offerors shall include in this section their approach to electronic dissemination programs, including their use of in-house resources or agreements and/or subcontracts with technology vendors. Issues and problems in performing the various tasks and subtasks and ways of addressing them should be discussed. Any proposed deviations to the requirements in the SOW should be discussed.
2. Sample knowledge transfer and application strategy as described in Task 2 of the SOW. In presenting their sample strategy, offerors shall identify a primary stakeholder audience from the three AHRQ audiences listed in Section 2.10 of the SOW. The primary stakeholder audience should be the one the offeror has the most experience with on related projects. The sample strategy shall focus on the Offeror's identified primary stakeholder and one of the AHRQ program areas listed in Task 2 of the SOW. The sample strategy should cover most of the elements listed in Task 2 of the SOW, but in less detail than the strategy developed after contract award. The sample strategy shall cover a 3 year period, and shall be described in no more than 20 double-spaced pages.
3. Sample evaluation plan aligned with the sample knowledge transfer and application strategy. The sample evaluation plan should address most of the elements listed in the Task 5 of the SOW, but in less detail than the plan developed after contract award. The sample evaluation plan should include examples of how different types of knowledge transfer programs would be evaluated. and shall be described in no more than 10 double-spaced pages. (As guidance to offerors, AHRQ expects that the evaluation program would be more thorough than the paper and pencil post-event evaluations conducted in the past; however the evaluation component is not expected to exceed 7% of the total

contract budget.)

B. Management Plan

The Offeror shall demonstrate the ability to achieve the delivery of performance requirements through appropriate project management techniques. In doing so, the offeror shall:

1. Describe corporate experience in managing projects of a similar size and nature.
2. Provide a narrative showing offeror's understanding of the requirements in the Statement of Work from a managerial perspective. The narrative should at a minimum address the following topics:
 - a) How the project will be organized, including the roles and responsibilities and plans for management of the various project staff, expert consultants and subcontractors.
 - b) Staff selection and assignment, including labor mix, and explanation for these choices.
 - c) Approach to monitoring and control of services provided, technical quality, responsiveness, cost control, effective and efficient resource utilization, and compliance with technical requirements and contract provisions. Clearly present proposed approach for quality control of work performed.
 - d) Managerial problems offeror expects to encounter and methods proposed to solve these problems.
 - e) Flexibility to respond rapidly to changes in budget, priorities, and schedule.
3. Indicate clear lines of authority and delineation of staff responsibilities.
4. Describe coordination with proposed subcontractors, including monitoring of their performance.
5. Provide a signed letter of commitment between the offeror and any personnel other than current employees, that includes dates of proposed employment and tasks to be performed.

C. Staff Experience

- a. Offerors shall describe the experience and qualifications of personnel proposed to perform the contract. Resumes for all persons proposed are to be restricted to experience pertinent to this acquisition. Offerors shall indicate the roles for proposed staff.
- b. For the proposed Project Director (the individual with day-to-day responsibility for the management of the project, as opposed to the corporate monitor),

offerors shall provide a resume and three professional references (name, organization and phone number) as evidence of experience and qualifications in the following areas:

- i. Designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions.
 - b) Working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policy makers, health and hospital senior decision makers, health purchasers, and health systems, including hospitals, clinics ,group practices and managed care organizations) on issues relevant to these groups.
 - c) Making substantive written and verbal presentations to AHRQ stakeholder groups.
 - d) Providing helpful consultation to clients in designing strategic initiatives.
 - e) Working with AHRQ's priority populations.
 - f) Managing contracts of a similar size and nature.
3. For other substantive in-house staff proposed to perform under this contract, offerors shall provide resumes as evidence of the experience and qualifications in the following areas:
- a) Designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions.
 - b) Working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policy makers, health and hospital senior decision makers, health purchasers, and health systems, including hospitals, clinics ,group practices and managed care organizations) on issues relevant to these groups.
 - c) Providing helpful consultation to clients in designing strategic initiatives.
 - d) Working with AHRQ's priority populations.
4. Offerors shall provide resumes for consultants proposed under this procurement. Descriptions of the consultants' experience and qualifications for the specific work proposed shall also be provided as well as a statement of their availability.

D. Corporate Experience and Facilities

Offerors shall describe their corporate experience and facilities in designing and implementing knowledge transfer and application strategies. The factors of particular importance include:

- Use of knowledge transfer and application theory, diffusion of innovations theory, learning theory, instructional design, and organizational development tools in developing knowledge transfer and application strategies and programs.

- Level of knowledge and experience with Offeror's identified primary stakeholder audience, AHRQ's priority populations, and other AHRQ audiences.
- Consistently attracting and utilizing nationally recognized experts, stakeholders and researchers to plan and implement similar projects.
- Producing impact (effective changes in processes and outcomes of health care or health policy) within and for AHRQ target audience organizations.
- Providing Information Technology support for development and management of the electronic media required by this Statement of Work. Offerors should describe their in-house capability to produce high quality electronic dissemination programs, or agreements and/or subcontracts with appropriate technology vendors to produce such programs.

L.9 Past Performance Information

Offerors shall submit the following information as part of their proposal for both the Offeror and proposed major subcontractors. For the purpose of this solicitation, a "major subcontract" is defined as exceeding \$500,000 in total value.

1. A list of the last five (5) contracts and subcontracts completed during the past three years and all contracts and subcontracts currently in process. Contracts listed may include those entered into by the Federal Government, agencies of State and local governments, and commercial customers. Offerors that are newly formed entities without prior contracts should list contracts and subcontracts as required for all key personnel. Include the following information for each contract and subcontract:
 - a: Name of contracting activity
 - b: Contract number
 - c: Contract type
 - d: Total contract value
 - e: Contract work
 - f: Contracting Officer and telephone number
 - g: Program Manager and telephone number
 - h: Administrative Contracting Officer, if different from item f, and telephone number
 - i: List of major subcontracts
2. The Offeror may provide information on problems encountered on the contracts and subcontracts identified in (1) above and corrective actions taken to resolve those problems. **Offerors should not provide general information on their performance on the identified contracts. General performance information will be obtained from the Offeror's references.**
3. The Offeror may describe any quality awards or certifications that may indicate the Offeror possesses a high-quality process for developing and producing the product or service required. Identify what segment of the organization (one division or the entire organization) that received the award or certification.

Describe when the award or certification was bestowed. If the award or certification is over three years old, present evidence that the qualifications still apply.

4. Each Offeror will be evaluated on its performance under existing and prior contracts for similar products or services. Performance information will be used for both responsibility determinations and as an evaluation factor against which Offeror's relative rankings will be compared to assure best value to the Government. The Government will focus on information that demonstrates quality of performance relative to the size and complexity of the procurement under consideration. References other than those identified by the Offeror may be contacted by the Government with the information received used in the evaluation of the Offeror's past performance.

The attached Past Performance Questionnaire and Contractor Performance Form shall be completed by those contracting organizations listed in (a) above. The evaluation forms shall be completed and forwarded directly to the following:

Mary Haines
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Contracts Management Staff
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850

FAX: 301-427-1740

Evaluation questionnaires must be received by **September 16, 2003** in order to be included in the review process. Questionnaires received after September 16, 2003, will not be considered in the past performance rating. It is the responsibility of the offeror to ensure that these documents are forwarded to the Contracting Officer.

L.10 Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan

NOTE: Small Disadvantage Business Participation Plans are required for both small and large businesses, so these businesses are all eligible to receive up to five (5) points for their SDBPP, during evaluation of proposals.

In accordance with FAR Part 15.304(c)4, the extent of participation of Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) concerns in performance of the contract shall be evaluated in unrestricted acquisitions expected to exceed a total estimated cost of \$500,000 (\$1,000,000 for construction) subject to certain limitations (see FAR 19.201 and 19.1202).

- A. All offerors, regardless of size, shall submit the following information in an original and one copy:

A plan on the extent of participation of Small Disadvantaged Business concerns in performance of the contract. Participation in performance of the contract includes the work expected to be performed by SDB concern(s). This can include SDB (as prime contractor), joint ventures, teaming arrangements, and subcontracts. Include the following information in SDB participation plans:

1. The extent of an offeror's commitment to use SDB concerns. Commitment should be as specific as possible, i.e., are subcontract arrangements already in place, letters of commitment, etc. Enforceable commitments will be weighted more heavily than non-enforceable ones.
 2. Specifically identify the SDB concerns with point of contact and phone number.
 3. The complexity and variety of the work SDB concerns are to perform.
 4. Realism for the use of SDB in the proposal.
 5. Past performance of the Offeror in complying with subcontracting plans for SDB concerns.
 6. Targets expressed as dollars and percentage of total contract value for each participating SDB; which will be incorporated into and become part of any resulting contract.
 7. The extent of participation of SDB concerns in terms of the total acquisition.
- B. SDB participation information will be used for both responsibility determinations and as an evaluation factor against which offeror's relative rankings will be compared to assure the best value to the Government. The Government will focus on information that demonstrates realistic commitments to use SDB concerns relative to the size and complexity of the acquisition under consideration. The Government is not required to contact all references provided by the offeror. Also, references other than those identified by the offeror may be contacted by the Government to obtain additional information that will be used in the evaluation of the offeror's commitment to SDB participation.

***** End of Replacement Section L.8, L.9 and L.10*****

SECTION M - EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

- M.1** Selection of an offeror for contract award will be based on an evaluation of proposals against four factors, and award will be made to that responsible offeror whose proposal is most advantageous to the Government. The four factors are: technical, cost, past performance, and the Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Participation Plan. Although technical factors are of paramount consideration in the selection of the Contractor(s) for this acquisition, past performance, cost/price and SDB Participation Plan are also important to the overall contract award decision. Offerors that submit technically acceptable proposals will then be evaluated for past performance, SDB Participation Plan and cost/price. Following this evaluation, a competitive range will be determined.
- M.2** All evaluation factors, other than cost or price, when combined are significantly more important than cost or price. However, cost/price may become a critical factor in source selection in the event that two or more offerors are determined to be essentially equal

following the evaluation of all factors other than cost or price. In any event, the Government reserves the right to make an award to that offeror whose proposal provides the best overall value to the Government. The Government reserves the right to make a single award, multiple awards, or no award at all.

THE GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE AN AWARD WITHOUT DISCUSSION

M.3 All proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the governing regulations and AHRQ policies and procedures. The technical proposal, past performance information and SDB Participation Plan will be evaluated in terms of the offeror's responses to each of the evaluation factors. Each proposal will be evaluated on the likelihood of meeting the Government's requirements. The evaluation factors and assigned weights which will be used in the overall review of the offeror's proposal are outlined below. The technical proposal shall consist of the responses to evaluation criteria 1 through 4. The offeror should show that the objectives stated in the proposal are understood and offer a logical program for their achievement. The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals and will be weighted as indicated in establishing a numerical rating for all proposals submitted. Factors facilitating the evaluation of each criteria below are referenced in the corresponding criteria found in Section L of this solicitation:

OFFERORS PLEASE NOTE: Evaluation Criteria 1 through 4, for a total of 100 points, will be evaluated by a technical peer review committee, who will also recommend technical acceptability or unacceptability of the proposal. Program staff and contracting staff will review and evaluate Criteria 5 and 6, for a total of 25 points. The total possible points for Evaluation Criteria 1 through 6 is 125 points.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

WEIGHT

(1) Technical Approach 40

This factor has three sub-factors:

(a) General Technical Approach 15

The proposal will be evaluated on the clarity, completeness, and reasonableness of the offeror's approach to accomplishing the requirements described in the Statement of Work (SOW). The approach will be evaluated on the methodology for performing the various tasks and subtasks and producing the deliverables listed in the SOW. Potential issues and problems in performing the various tasks and subtasks and ways of addressing them should be discussed. The factors of particular importance include:

- Use of innovative designs that will substantially increase levels of knowledge transfer and application;
- Ability to clearly explain the rationale for proposed strategies and methods for carrying out the tasks in the Statement of Work using knowledge transfer, technology transfer, diffusion of innovations, quality improvement and learning theories;

- Ability to demonstrate how knowledge transfer and application methods can be tailored to meet the needs of AHRQ's priority populations.
- Ability to provide content, interactive learning designs, and facilitation methods based on the distance learning literature that increase application rates through electronic media;
- Cost efficiency and cost effectiveness of electronic media approaches given the size and scope of this requirement;
- Approaches which integrate proposed programs into effective long-term strategies;
- Plans that ensure audio visual materials and presentations meet accepted standards for format, quality, readability, and accessibility;
- Selection of meeting venues and facilities that are of high quality and appropriate for the program type and audience;

(a) Sample Knowledge Transfer and Application Strategy 15

The proposal will be evaluated on the clarity, completeness, creativity, and reasonableness of the offeror's sample knowledge transfer and application strategy. The factors of particular importance include:

- Innovative approaches to increasing the application of AHRQ and other appropriate research findings, tools, and improvement methods;
- Identification of appropriate impacts for each selected target audience for the given content;
- Identification of how the strategies would be tailored to have measurable impact for AHRQ's priority populations.
- Clear explanation of how the proposed program elements are logically linked to achieve the expected impacts using the frameworks of knowledge transfer, technology transfer, organizational development, quality improvement, and learning theory.

(c) Sample Evaluation Plan 10

The proposal will be evaluated on the clarity, completeness and reasonableness of the offeror's sample evaluation plan. The sample evaluation plan should include examples of how different types of knowledge transfer interventions would be evaluated.

(2) Management Plan 15

The proposal will be evaluated on the appropriateness of roles and responsibilities of proposed staff, expert consultants, and subcontractors, as well as plans for their

management. Plans for project scheduling, cost control, quality control, and communications with AHRQ will also be evaluated.

(3) Staff Experience **35**

This factor includes two sub-factors:

(a) Experience of Project Director **15**

The proposal will be evaluated in terms of the project director's knowledge, skills and experience in: designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions; working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policymakers, health and hospital senior decision makers, providers, health purchasers, health systems, including hospitals, clinics, group practices, and managed care organizations); and working on issues relevant to AHRQ stakeholder groups; providing helpful consultation to clients in designing strategic initiatives; working with AHRQ's priority populations.

(b) Experience of Other Project Personnel **20**

The proposal will be evaluated on the knowledge, skills and experience of other project personnel, consultants, and sub-contractors in the following areas: designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies and specific interventions; working with AHRQ stakeholder groups (State and local policymakers, health and hospital senior decision makers, providers, health purchasers, health systems, including hospitals, clinics, group practices, and managed care organizations); and expertise and national reputation on issues relevant to AHRQ stakeholder groups; working with AHRQ's priority populations.

(4) Corporate Experience **10**

Proposals will be evaluated on the extent of the offeror's corporate experience in designing and implementing knowledge transfer strategies. The factors of particular importance include:

- Use of knowledge transfer and application theory, diffusion of innovations theory, learning theory, instructional design, and organizational development tools in developing knowledge transfer and application strategies and programs;
- Level of knowledge and experience with Offeror's identified primary stakeholder audience, AHRQ's priority populations, and other AHRQ audiences;
- Consistently attracting and utilizing nationally recognized experts, stakeholders and researchers to plan and implement similar projects;
- Producing impact (effective changes in processes and outcomes of health care or health policy) within and for AHRQ target audience organizations;
- Providing Information Technology support for development and management of the electronic media required by this Statement of Work.

TOTAL POINTS

100

(5) Past Performance

20

An evaluation of the Offeror's past performance will be conducted subsequent to the technical evaluation. However, this evaluation will not be conducted on any Offeror whose proposal would not be selected for award based on the results of the evaluation of factors other than past performance.

The offerors' past performance will be evaluated on the basis of the following factors:

- (a) **Quality:** How well the contractor conformed to the performance standard in providing the research services or achieved the stated objective of the contract or grant. Quality will be evaluated by the personnel provided, the level of effort agreed to in the contract statement of work or grant, and quality of final products (e.g., written reports).
- (b) **Timeliness:** How well the contractor adheres to time-tables and delivery schedules in providing the research services or products. Consideration is given to contractor's effort to recommend and/or take corrective actions to keep the contract or grant on schedule.
- (c) **Customer-satisfaction:** Rates the professional and cooperative behavior of the contractor or grantee with the client.
- (d) **Cost control:** Rates the cost-effectiveness of the contractor or grantee in conducting the research.

Assessment of the offeror's past performance will be one means of evaluating the credibility of the offeror's proposal, and relative capability to meet performance requirements.

The completed questionnaires will provide a basis for determining past performance evaluation as well as information obtained from the references listed in the proposal, other customers known to the Government, consumer protection organizations, and others who may have useful and relevant information. Information will also be considered regarding any significant subcontractors and key personnel records. Past performance will be scored on a range from 0 to 20, with 20 being the most favorable.

Evaluation of past performance will often be quite subjective based on consideration of all relevant facts and circumstances. It will not be based on absolute standards of acceptable performance. The Government is seeking to determine whether the offeror has consistently demonstrated a commitment to customer satisfaction and timely delivery of services at fair and reasonable prices.

The assessment of the offeror's past performance will be used as a means of evaluating the relative capability of the offeror and the other competitors. Thus, an offeror with an exceptional record of past performance may receive a more favorable evaluation than another whose record is acceptable, even though both may have acceptable technical proposals.

By past performance, the Government means the offeror's record of conforming to specifications and to standards of good workmanship; the contractor's record of forecasting and controlling costs; the offeror's adherence to contract schedules, including the administrative aspects of performance; the offeror's reputation for reasonable and cooperative behavior and commitment to customer satisfaction; and generally, the offeror's business-like concern for the interest of the customer.

The Government will consider the number or severity of an offeror's problems, the effectiveness of corrective actions taken, the offeror's overall work record, and the age and relevance of past performance information.

The lack of a performance record may result in an unknown performance risk assessment, which will neither be used to the advantage nor disadvantage of the offeror.

The Government reserves the right to evaluate relevant past performance information not specifically provided by the offeror.

(6) Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan

5

The evaluation will be based on information obtained from the plan provided by the offeror, the realism of the proposal, other relevant information obtained from named SDB concerns, and any information supplied by the offeror concerning problems encountered in SDB participation.

Evaluation of the SDB Participation Plan will be a subjective assessment based on a consideration of all relevant facts and circumstances. It will not be based on absolute standards of acceptable performance. The Government is seeking to determine whether the offeror has demonstrated a commitment to use SDB concerns for the work that it intends to perform as the prime contractor.

The assessment of the offeror's SDB Participation Plan will be used as a means of evaluating the relative capability and commitment of the offeror and the other competitors. Thus, an offeror with an exceptional record of participation with SDB concerns may receive more points and a more favorable evaluation than another whose record is acceptable, even though both may have acceptable technical proposals.

SDB participation will be scored with offerors receiving points from 0 to 5, with 5 being the most favorable.

***** End of Section M replacement pages—replaced in its entirety.

ATTACHMENT 2, PAGE 113, Past Performance Questionnaire cover page Replacement Page. (Please use this page, the one in the initial RFP has the wrong title and RFP number.

ATTACHMENT 2

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-03-0002, entitled "AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse." 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. Smary Haines, 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 **September 16, 2003**. If you have any questions, please contact. Mary Haines at (301) 427-1786.

Mary Haines
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Contracts Management
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850
FAX: (301) 427-1786

NAME OF OFFEROR: _____

ADDRESS: _____

**END OF AMENDMENT NO. 2
RFP AHRQ-04-0001
42 PAGES IN WORD PERFECT**