

Questions & Answers for RFP No. 270-06-0149

- 1) Section M of the RFP indicates that Past Performance is an evaluation criterion, and a sample letter (Attachment 12) and form (Attachment 13) are included in the solicitation. Can the government provide guidance as to (a) the process by which Past Performance information will be collected, and (b) the inclusion criteria for requests for past performance information? For example, do offerors send cover letters/forms to clients or does the government solicit this information? Should this information be collected from all current clients or clients for whom the offeror has performed work within a specified period of time (e.g., the last three years).

Answer: (a) Past Performance information shall be submitted directly to the Contract Specialist by clients selected by the offeror. Additional information will be collected from current databases and/or current contracts. (b) It is the offeror's responsibility to send the cover letter/forms to clients. The offeror should use their own judgment on which clients to send the letters to. In general, information should be collected from current clients who do comparable work to the work outlined in the RFP Statement of Work. A period of three years is reasonable unless it limits the number of clients contacted.

- 2) Attachment 12, "Client Letter-Sample" states that past performance information must be received by the government not later than June 1, 2006. Is this the actual due date?

Answer: Yes, this is the actual date.

- 3) The due dates for electronic submission of SF 294s and the annual SF 295 differ on pages 11 and 28. Which dates will be included in the final agreement?

Answer: The correct due date for submission of the SF 294 report is April 30 and October 30. The SF 295 due date for submission is annually thirty days after the close of the federal fiscal year (September 30).

- 4) Are we correct in assuming that the Small Business Subcontracting Plan will be included in the Business Proposal and the Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan will be included in the Technical Proposal or Technical Proposal Appendices?

Answer: No, both the Small Business Subcontracting Plan and Small Disadvantaged Business Participation plan shall be included in the Business Proposal.

- 5) Where (Business or Technical Proposal) should offerors include their required 508 Compliance information?

Answer: The Section 508 Compliance information shall be included in the Business Proposal.

- 6) In Section M "EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD" there is a typo. The word "offeror" replaces the word "officer." See below revised Section M:

SECTION M - EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD**1. General**

- A. Selection of an offeror for contract award will be based on an evaluation of proposals against two factors. The factors are as follows: technical and cost. Although technical factors are of paramount consideration in the award of the contract, cost/price is also important to the overall contract award decision. In any case, the Government reserves the right to make an award(s) to that offeror whose proposal provides the best overall value to the Government.

The evaluation will be based on the demonstrated capabilities of the prospective Contractor in relation to the needs of the project as set forth in the RFP. The merits of the proposal will be evaluated carefully. The proposal must document the feasibility of successful implementation of the requirements of the RFP. The Offeror must submit information sufficient to evaluate their proposal based on the detailed criteria listed below.

- B. All proposals will be reviewed in accordance with the governing regulations and SAMHSA policies and procedures. Each proposal will be evaluated on the likelihood of meeting the Government's requirements. The evaluation will be based on the technical and administrative capabilities in relation to the needs of the program and each task and the reasonableness of costs shown in relation to the work to be performed. The evaluation factors in Section M.2. are those that will be applied in the evaluation of each technical proposal including the assigned weight given to each factor.
- C. The Contracting Officer/Specialist will, in concert with program staff, decide if the proposal is in the competitive range. The Government reserves the right to include only those offers that have a good chance of award.

2. Evaluation Criteria

Your proposal will be evaluated on the likelihood of meeting the Government's objectives. The evaluation will be based on the technical and administrative capabilities in relation to the needs of the project/or task and the reasonableness of costs shown in relation to the work to be performed. The following criteria are those that will be applied in the evaluation of your technical proposal. The assigned weight of each factor is shown below.

OFFERORS PLEASE NOTE: The following Evaluation Criteria A through D, for a total of 100 points, will be evaluated by an ad hoc technical review committee, who will also recommend technical acceptability or unacceptability of the proposal; Criteria E. Section 508 Compliance and Criteria F. Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan, for an additional 25 points; and Criteria G. Past Performance, will be evaluated by SAMHSA staff.

Criteria E. Section 508 Compliance, Criteria F. Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan, and Criteria G. Past Performance will be evaluated on those technically acceptable proposals which have been determined to be included in the competitive range.

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Evaluation Criteria	Weight
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A) <u>Understanding: the Project and Technical Objectives</u>	10
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The evaluation of understanding the project will be based on the degree to which the offeror demonstrated an understanding of the project and project purposes in responses to the tasks outlined in the statement of work, consistent with the goals, objectives, purposes, and required compliance with program needs. This includes:

- Evaluation of the offerors the understanding of the need and uses for the spending estimates reports for the MH/SA field
- Demonstrated understanding of tasks to be performed, most specifically, the offeror's demonstration of a thorough knowledge of the methods used by CMS to create the National Health Accounts and of the methods used by the SAMHSA Spending Estimates Project to create previously published National Estimates of Expenditures for Mental Health and Substance Abuse treatment and
- The offeror's understanding of the critical importance of maintaining consistency in the methods applied to produce the estimates and make comparisons to all health.
- The offeror shall demonstrate thorough knowledge of the major policy issues facing the mental health and substance abuse treatment fields especially related to financing, utilization and cost.
- Publications directly related to the project's focus should be specifically cited.
- Understanding of MHSA policy must also be reflected in knowledge of report preparation and editing for the component audiences in the MH/SA field, and how such estimates are relevant to and how such estimates can be used to inform such policy.

B) <u>Technical Approach</u>	40
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The offeror's technical approach will be evaluated for a clear explanation and presentation of the proposed plan of performance for accomplishing the general and specific requirements and tasks included in the statement of work. The offeror's proposed work plan will be evaluated on tasks correctly conceptualized and properly sequenced to show

- how well the offeror can replicate the steps akin to arrive at previous sets of published MH/SA estimates and methods and integrate methodological and policy issues related to the National Health Accounts, published by CMS into the work undertaken on the MH/SA spending estimates;
- the technical soundness, practicality, feasibility and appropriateness of the methods proposed in both past national expenditures, projections and special reports; this includes demonstration of both statistical, econometric and actuarial methods.
- The demonstration of an understanding of an wide array of MHSA specialty data bases as well as other health or health financing data bases, Census surveys; and clear demonstration of skills in how to use them.
- the extent to which the offeror is able identify potential major challenges to the attainment of consistency in the sets of estimates to be prepared with the estimates of MH/SA expenditures previously published and identify solutions to such challenges;
- the technical quality, soundness, and appropriateness of methods proposed for the creation of additional levels of desegregations within the MH/SA estimates (at a minimum into inpatient, outpatient and residential services);
- the relevance of other proposed desegregations to the MH/SA policy fields and the technical quality and appropriateness of the methods proposed
- the creativity, technical soundness, practicality, feasibility and appropriateness of

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improvements to the currently utilized methods for creating the MH/SA estimates, including proposed, including the identification of new relevant data sources.

C) Key Personnel

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The resumes of proposed key personnel, consultants (if any), and sub-contractors (if any) to be assigned to this project will be evaluated on qualifications and experience in actuarial work including cost projections, mental health and substance abuse economics and health services research including the utilization and cost of pharmaceuticals, mental health and substance abuse treatment policy studies, and technical report writing, editing and publication. Amongst the staff, the key personnel proposed must reflect the following skills and experience necessary to successful completion of the project:

- actuarial skills;
- skill in manipulating complex data sets, including the National Health Accounts, and the other relevant data sources. the Uniform Facility Data System, and data from the Survey of Mental Health Organizations, data from NMES and MEPS, as well as IMS pharmaceutical data;
- the application of statistical and econometric skills in data including complex cost models and estimation algorithms,
- the application of findings to important policy questions in the MH/SA field, as well as ability to communicate the findings and implications in written form to a diverse audience.
- experience in successfully preparing MHSA findings for peer reviewed journal publication.

Each proposed individual's experience and skills must be compared with the individual's proposed role in the project. For example, it is essential that the proposed project manager have successful experience in the management and promotion of team work among various technical experts in a project of national significance. Letters of commitment from proposed key staff, sub-contractors (if any) and consultants (if any) will also be evaluated for their availability and appropriateness to the project.

D) Management Plan and Equipment

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A detailed management plan including staff hours (or days) planned task for all personnel will be evaluated on its demonstration of the offeror's ability to carry out effectively the proposed project. Due to the complexity and technical nature of the work, it is expected that a high level of staff must predominantly perform most tasks. The offeror's management plan for accomplishing tasks will be evaluated for efficiency and timeliness, and clearly described procedures and management tools to be used to achieve complete performance of all tasks. Minimally, the plan shall include:

- a detailed schedule of project tasks including milestones and deliverables,
- a person-loading chart, specific to what level of staff is performing the work,
- organizational chart delineating lines of authority and the staff lead on all tasks,
- proposed mechanisms for facilitating team work among the project contractors, subcontractors and consultants,
- a proposed plan for organizational backup and
- the offeror's ability to provide close coordination with CSAT /CMHS GPOs, and responsiveness to changing requirements.
- the plan shall include information about the offeror's management information system and how it will be used to manage and track all contract tasks. A description of the offeror's equipment,

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especially the Information Technology hardware and software that will be used to complete contract tasks will be evaluated.

Subtotal Points **100**

E) Section 508 Compliance 10

The proposal will be evaluated based upon the offeror’s demonstrated commitment to complying with the provisions of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires agencies and their contractors to buy Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) that is accessible to people with disabilities.

At a minimum, the offeror’s proposal must:

- (1) identify the offeror’s point of contact responsible for implementing and monitoring the firm’s compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act;
- (2) describe any Section 508-related training the offeror’s point of contact has completed and/or intends to complete in the next year; and
- (3) include a detailed Section 508 Implementation Plan describing the specific steps the offeror intends to take over the next year to implement and maintain compliance with the provisions of Section 508.

F) Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan 15

A Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) is entitled to EITHER the evaluation adjustment allowed by FAR Subpart 19.11 OR credit under the evaluation factor prescribed by FAR 15.304(c)(4) and as explained below. The SDB must waive the price evaluation adjustment in order to get credit under the evaluation factor. This should be done in the Business Proposal cover letter. Further, in order to qualify for either, the SDB must be an SDB under the RFP’s SIC code identified in Section K. For a large business to get credit for using an SDB, the SDB must be an SDB for the tasks that the SDB is being proposed to accomplish. In order for the a small disadvantaged business submitting a proposal as a prime to get these points, it must also offer a small disadvantaged business subcontracting plan.

Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Factor

The Small Disadvantaged Business Participation Plan will be evaluated on those technically acceptable proposals which have been determined to be included in the competitive range.

The evaluation will be based on information obtained from the plan provided by the offeror, sources of past performance information (both those provided by the offeror and others identified by the Government), the realism of the proposal, other relevant information obtained from Small Disadvantaged Business (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 consideration of all relevant facts and circumstances. 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.

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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.

Offers will be evaluated on the following sub-factors that will be worth the indicated number of points:

a. Commitment to use SDB Concerns *5 points*

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. Specific SDB concerns must be identified with points of contact and phone numbers. Enforceable commitments will be weighted more heavily than non-enforceable ones. Targets expressed as dollars and percentage of total contract value for each SDB participating will be incorporated into and become part of any resulting contract. The extent of participation of all SDB concerns in terms of the value of the total acquisition must be identified.

Note: Targets as expressed in dollars and percentages of total contract value will be judged based on findings of technical merit by the Peer Review Committee, and on findings by the Contracting Officer that proposed costs are fair, reasonable, and realistic. Additional points will not be given simply for higher dollars or percentages of work going to SDBs.

b. Complexity of Work *4 points*

The complexity and variety of the work SDB concerns are to perform. Greater weight will be given for arrangements where the SDB shall be performing a greater variety of work, and work of greater complexity.

c. Cost Realism of SDB Concerns *3 points*

Fairness, reasonableness, and realism of costs proposed by SDBs for the work they will perform.

d. Past Performance in using SDB Concerns *3 points*

Past performance of the Offeror in complying with subcontracting plans for SDB concerns. An offeror with an exceptional record of participation with SDB concerns will receive a more favorable evaluation than another whose record is acceptable.

Total Possible Points

125 Points

PAST PERFORMANCE WILL BE RATED ONLY AFTER A DETERMINATION OF TECHNICAL ACCEPTABILITY OF THE OFFEROR'S PROPOSAL, BASED ON THE ABOVE TECHNICAL CRITERIA

G. Past Performance

Past Performance will be evaluated on all offerors in the competitive range. In evaluating past performance, the Government will consider the offeror's effectiveness in quality or product or services; timeliness or performance; cost control, business practices; customer (end user) satisfaction; and key personnel past performance.

The criteria for a rating of excellent are described with each sub factor. Past performance will be evaluated as follows:

- (a) Quality of product or service - compliance with contract requirements; accuracy of reports and publications; technical excellence. Excellent = there are no quality problems.
- (b) Timeliness of performance - met interim milestones; reliable; responsive to government project offeror; responsive to technical direction; completed on time / including wrap-up and contract administration; no liquidated damages assessed. Excellent = there were no unexpected delays.
- (c) Cost control - stayed within budget; current, accurate and complete billings; relationship of negotiated costs to actual costs; cost efficiencies. Excellent = there were no cost issues.
- (d) Business relations - effective management; reasonable/cooperative behavior; effective small/small disadvantaged business subcontracting program; flexible/responsive; effective contractor recommended solutions; business like concern for government's interests. Excellent = response to inquiries, technical/service/administrative issues was effective and responsive.
- (e) Customer satisfaction - satisfaction of end users with the contractor's service. Excellent = 80 percent or more of end users rated the service as excellent or better.

3. Evaluation of Options (JUL 1990) (FAR 52.217-5)

Except when it is determined in accordance with FAR 17.206(b) not to be in the Government's best interest, the Government will evaluate offers for award purposes by adding the total price for all options to the total price for the basic requirement. Evaluation of options will not obligate the Government to exercise the options.