

**Amendment #3**  
**RFP NIH-NIAMS-03-01**  
**NIAMS INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE**

- 1) Would NIAMS consider further defining the Mandatory Factor for the Offeror to be within 1-hour round trip commuting distance of the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland? In an area where time of day, weather conditions, day of the week, increased security, etc., affect commuting times, we ask that you consider using mileage as the Mandatory Factor rather than time, or at minimum, increase the commuting distance to ensure adequate and fair competition.

ANSWER: We expect that at most times of the day, during non-peak traffic, the Offeror and the Offeror's facilities would be within a 1-hour round trip driving distance of the NIAMS. In other words, given the close working relationship between the NIAMS and the Clearinghouse and the necessity of frequent meetings and daily pick-ups and deliveries, we expect that NIAMS staff should be able to arrive at any of the Offeror's work location or that the Offeror staff could arrive at NIAMS from any of their work locations within 30 minutes during most times of the day. We do not want to further restrict the Offeror's by introducing a mileage restriction.

Serious consideration was given to the mandatory factor and its impact on competition. The nature of the work requires frequent trips to and from the NIH Campus by NIAMS and Offeror staff. The travel time that would be expended due to an increased commuting time over that which is already stated could potentially increase contract costs. In light of these factors, the Mandatory Factor will remain unchanged.

- 2) 2.2.1 Contractor-furnished Resources. The Statement of Work notes that CHID interfaces with BRS NetAnswer for compatibility with the World Wide Web. Does this mean the Contractor must provide BRS and BRS NetAnswer for use with the CHID subfile, or can a Contractor provide another web-enabled database solution?

ANSWER: The Offeror can provide their choice of web-enabled database solutions.

- 3) Source data (Annual Report, July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001) indicated a 39% increase in inquiries from Year 2 to Year 3. Please project quantities for each year of the contract for the following:

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- Number of telephone inquiries
- Number of written inquiries broken down by e-mail, Web, fax, mail
- Breakdown of custom and standard responses
- Number of titles to be stored in the warehouse.
- Number of requests to be filled/orders to be distributed, including daily average
- Average length and types of calls (e.g., publications requests, referrals, substantive content)

ANSWER: All statistics that the NIAMS Clearinghouse currently tracks are included in the Annual and Sample Monthly Reports which can be found under Section 3, "Applicable Documents" in the SOW or in the Resources Section of the Web version of the RFP. ("Sample reports" are listed as Resource #9.) We do not currently require reporting of statistics other than those presented in the sample reports. Please review the document provided in the Resource List for the RFP.

In some cases we were able to project future requirements. In those cases, the projections were provided in the NOTES TO OFFERORS. For those issues that are not addressed we are unable to make projections because we have either not tracked statistics on the particular activities, or are not able to provide projections with accuracy.

- 4) What is the number of skids of materials to be stored at Contractor's warehouse or number of cubic feet required?

Our current inventory is contained on between 100 and 115 skids.

- 5) Number of new information packages created yearly?

ANSWER: 0-3 new information packages are created, annually.

- 6) OASPA approval is discussed. What is the average turnaround time for approval of draft NIAMS publications?

ANSWER: There has been no consistency in the turnaround time for concept clearance of NIAMS publications. Clearance can take anywhere from 1 month to 1 year or in some instances, even longer. (Please note: The OASPA approves the concept of a publication and not a draft.)

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- 7) In addition to OASPA approval, is OMB clearance required for any of the materials (e.g., “test instruments” referenced in 4.3.1 C) to be developed/revised under this contract?

ANSWER: Yes. However, none of the instruments currently utilized have required OMB clearance. It is possible that in the future we might develop some test instruments that will require OMB clearance.

- 8) Should Contractors assume that Clearinghouse materials developed/revised shall be 4-color? 2-color?

ANSWER: Most, but not all, NIAMS publications are in black and white or in two-color.

- 9) What is the average length of the print version of booklets in the Q/A series?

ANSWER: The average length of the print version of a NIAMS’ “Q&A” booklet is 35 pages.

- 10) What is the average length of the print version of booklets in the Handout on Health Series?

ANSWER: The average length of the print version of a NIAMS’ “Handout on Health” booklet is 19 pages.

- 11) What is the average length of the print version of low-literacy booklets to be developed/revised? Should Contractors assume that these materials will be derived from current/to-be-developed Clearinghouse materials disseminated to the general population?

ANSWER: This has not been decided yet, and we have not had the concepts cleared by OASPA.

- 12) When was the last time the 30 information packages were revised (as it is stated they will be revised every 3 years)?

ANSWER: Most information packages are being revised this year.

- 13) Please provide further specifications regarding required support for the 250-person event (4.4.1 Event Support) e.g., number of persons to be traveled, number of sponsored speakers, number of breakout rooms, anticipated audiovisual requirements, etc.

ANSWER: In the NOTES TO OFFERORS in "Section 4.4.1, Event Support" we have estimated that we will need the Offeror to fully support a 250-person event at the NIH once per year. We have stated this estimated annual requirement capability *because we want to make certain that the Offeror could provide such support if necessary*. Therefore, please consider the following: Event participants will make their own travel reservations. The only travel the Offeror will need to arrange is the transportation of 5-8 Offeror staff members from the Offeror site to the NIH. There will be an estimated 10-12 speakers at the event, and the event will take place in an estimated 4-5 breakout rooms and one large conference room. On-site audiovisual needs will be handled by the NIH staff. The Offeror may be asked to help design and produce promotional posters, flyers and other materials for the event and to transport NIAMS publications and exhibit displays to and from the event.

Please keep in mind that the NIAMS wants assurance that the Offeror will have the capability to support such a 250-person event, and that is why we have stated it as an estimated annual requirement. However, in the same NOTE TO OFFERORS, we state that "for the purposes of this solicitation, in response to this task, Offerors should describe how they would support an event at NIH on current and future information needs on NIAMS topics... There would be 75 participants (most from outside the NIH), and the meeting would last 2 days..." Therefore, we *only* expect Offerors to give us a detailed description of how they would approach the 75-person event, not the 250-person event nor the 3 other events where we require partial assistance. In other words, we have stated that there may be a 250-person event only so Offerors know our needs; Offerors are not required to describe in detail how you would approach the 250-person event.

- 14) Please clarify the "partial assistance" required for the 3 other NIAMS-sponsored events each year.

ANSWER: "Partial assistance", means the NIAMS may require Offeror staff to attend the event in order to assist NIAMS staff, and/or help preparing packages or folders for the event, recommending or developing original materials for the event, shipping and delivery of materials, etc.

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- 15) Which events are being referred to in the description of 75 participants, 2 days, etc., at the top of page 32 of the Statement of Work?

ANSWER: The event referred to in the description of the 75-participant event in the NOTE TO OFFERORS in "Section 4.4.1, Event Support" is an example of the type of event we anticipate hosting. We have provided this detailed example so that Offerors can explain how they would approach supporting such an event. At this point in time we would rather not give examples of which events would be supported as it could ultimately restrict the types of events we would want the Offeror to support.

- 16) Will the individual assigned as Patient Liaison be based on site at the NIAMS Community Health Center or at NIH, and if so, is this considered a full time assignment or will they have appointment schedules to support?

ANSWER: Patient Liaisons will not be based at the Community Health Center or at the NIH campus. They will be based at the Offeror's facility. Whether they are full-time or not is at the discretion of the Offeror. Please consult the SOW and Question 21 under RFP Amendment #1 for more information about the Patient Liaison Services required. Careful consideration should be paid to the Level of Effort anticipated for this labor category.

- 17) The Statement of Work includes a large number of materials development, writing, and editing activities. In the estimated level of effort only 443 hours per year have been allowed for an editor. Isn't the writing for these materials done by the clearinghouse, and if so, where are those writing hours accounted for in your estimated level of effort?

ANSWER: In the NOTES TO OFFERORS in Section 4.3.1, "Materials Development" we estimate how many new and revised NIAMS materials we intend to produce each year. We feel the editing hours estimated in the level of effort represent the amount of editorial services required. Almost all of the writing of NIAMS materials is done by NIAMS staff or NIAMS-designated science writers. Writing will be required only as specifically stated in the SOW, and has been grouped into the "editing" category of the level of effort.

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- 18) Over the five year contract, it may well be necessary to upgrade and replace the exhibits. Will costs for a new exhibit be expected to be covered under this contract?

ANSWER: SOW Section 4.4.1, paragraph D.1) c., states that the exhibits will be required to be repaired, updated and refurbished. The purchase of a new exhibit is not anticipated under this contract.

- 19) Will the Contractor be expected to staff any of the 38 local exhibits that are anticipated? And if so, please provide an approximate percentage of these events that will need to be staffed.

ANSWER: We expect the Offeror to staff no local showings and approximately 6 of the non-local showings. Please read the last NOTES TO OFFERORS in Section 4.4.1, "Event Support."

- 20) Fax-on-demand had been one of the services that was provided by the Clearinghouse and we didn't see it mentioned in this SOW. Can we safely assume that this is no longer a requirement?

ANSWER: Correct. Fax-on-demand is no longer a requirement.

- 21) In your labor categories and estimated labor hours, you have a Project Director and a Project Manager. Which of these two positions do you consider to be the more senior?

ANSWER: The Project Director is senior.

- 22) In your level of effort you reference 116,755 direct labor hours of effort, yet the next sentence says that these hours include vacation, sick leave, and holidays, which are not normally a direct charge to a contract. Please clarify.

ANSWER: In developing our estimate we used the 2,080 hours inclusive of vacation, sick leave and holidays. We used this method of estimating because industry has several different ways of accounting for their work years. Offeror's should propose the level of effort consistent with their own accounting procedures.

- 23) Is the clearinghouse staff the only web resource for the OCPL? What part of the NIAMS web site is the responsibility of OCPL?

ANSWER: The NIAMS has a Webmaster and several other technical staff devoted to working on the NIAMS Web site. In Section 4.3.1, N, of the SOW, "Graphic Design, Production, and Reproduction Services" we state in annual requirement number 7 that the Offeror is responsible for the Clearinghouse Web site. However, we should have been more specific and explained that by "Clearinghouse Web site" we mean that the Offeror is responsible for maintaining the Web-based Publications Order Form on the NIAMS Web site. This form actually shall reside on the Offeror's server, although to users it appears as part of the NIAMS Web site. To view this form, visit "Order Publications" in the "Health Information" Section of the NIAMS site. Or visit this link:  
<http://www.aerie.com/cgi-bin/namsicpubgen>

In annual requirement number 8 we state that the Offeror will be responsible for "Conversion of text and graphics of materials created or edited in subtask 4.3.2 for placement on the Clearinghouse Web site." To make our expectations clearer, we should have explained that the Offeror would be responsible for conversion of texts and graphics of materials for placement on *the NIAMS Web site in the "Health Information" section*. NIAMS staff actually places the Clearinghouse-prepared (and NIAMS-approved) HTML files of the NIAMS materials on the NIAMS Web site. Also please keep in mind that in Section 4.3.1,D, "Publication Processes" we state that the Offeror will be responsible for maintaining "a current record of the materials being created or revised under this contract," which includes HTML versions of materials.

- 24) Each clearinghouse has its own working definition of a "custom letter" or custom response. Please provide us the distinctions that NIAMS uses to define a custom letter and, if different, a custom response.

ANSWER: A custom response (or a custom letter) is any response that deviates significantly from one of the Clearinghouse's standard, pre-prepared answers to public inquiries.

- 25) What format are the current documents in? (MS Word, WordPerfect, PDF, etc.)

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ANSWER: The current documents are in a variety of formats. In addition to the formats stated in your question, HTML formats are also used in preparing documents for posting to the NIAMS Web site.

- 26) Will NIAMS provide the license to NetAnswer (now BRS/Search) or does the Contractor need to have it's own license?

ANSWER: Please see question number two to this amendment. Whichever software solution the Offeror opts to use for web-enabled databases they are required to obtain their own license.

- 27) Who has developed this(these)database(s)/ utility(ies)?

ANSWER: A number of PHS agencies( some NIH Institutes, CDC and HRSA) got together many years ago to develop combined health resources hence the name--Combined Health Information Database.

- 28) What are the specifications, size, tables etc., especially what are the limits of this database?

ANSWER: The fields were all agreed upon by the database producers and content is generally agreed upon between the database owner (NIAMS) and the contractor. Most of the requirements for the database will be clear from looking at the records. Please see the CHID web site including the HELP section for more detailed information about the database.

- 29) Who maintains them? What is the hardware/software used?

ANSWER: Each subfile owner maintains their own portion of the database and submits updates to the CHID Coordinator on a quarterly schedule. To our knowledge, each clearinghouse maintains its own in-house version as well as submitting to CHID. It is the internal database that most people use to answer questions. Also, the each clearinghouse selects and uses whatever software they choose. All that's required is that it is possible for it to be loaded into CHID.

- 30) Have there been any Denial of Service (DOS) attacks or threats in the past?

ANSWER: No

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31) Any shutdowns/crashes in the past?

ANSWER: There were some server difficulties when the database was moved to the web version, but there have been no crashes or shutdowns in the last few years.