

GENERAL

This revision to Set 1 Questions and Comments provides answers to questions 23, 24, 25, 40 and 41, and corrects typos in Answers 4 and 20. All information added and revised is shown in red font.

Question 1: Please provide clarification of the term “hybrid” as it relates to the procurement as stated in the cover page of the [Draft Request for Proposals] (DRFP) which states “... the procurement will result in a hybrid Cost-Plus Fixed Fee contract with core and IDIQ contract components for a potential 5 year period of performance”.

Answer: The use of the term “hybrid” with respect to this solicitation refers to the fact that it is a combination of a core component and an IDIQ component for the requirements described in the statement of work. Both the core and the IDIQ components will be awarded on a cost-plus-fixed fee basis.

Question 2: To facilitate a smooth transition with incumbent contractor and staff, for planning purposes and to reduce risk, who is the current incumbent?

Answer: The current incumbent is the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research.

Question 3: With the scope and cost of this program, there are many small businesses that can perform this work. Will the Government consider competing this as a Small Business Set Aside, preferably an Economically Disadvantaged Woman-Owned Small Business Set Aside?

Answer: Based on market research the Government has determined that it is appropriate to compete this requirement on a full and open basis.

Question 4: For planning purposes, how long has the current incumbent been working on the contract?

Answer: The incumbent contractor has been supporting the USGCRP for a total of 20 years. The first 19 years of support were provided through a cooperative agreement issued by the National Science Foundation (NSF); in 2013 NSF converted the funding instrument from a cooperative agreement to a contract.

Question 5: How many FTEs are on the current contract?

Answer: There are approximately 30 FTEs on the current contract.

Question 6: How many FTEs are anticipated going forward?

Answer: Offerors are invited to propose appropriate staffing levels based on their individual approaches to responding to this requirement.

CONTRACT VALUE

Question 7: The NAIS Business Opportunities description indicates that the anticipated maximum IDIQ ordering value is \$8M. To support level of effort planning, what is the current

total contract value?

Answer: The current contract is managed by the NSF. The total current value of the NSF contract, according to the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS), is \$4,999,989.00. Offerors may monitor future value increases to this contract (NSFDACS13C1421) through FPDS at: https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng_cms/index.php/en/

Question 8: To better understand NASA's funding profile for this program, how much of the current contract value is obligated?

Answer: According to the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS), \$4,999,989 is currently obligated to this contract. Offerors may monitor future obligations via the FPDS website at: https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng_cms/index.php/en/

Question 9: To better understand NASA's funding profile for this program, what is the contract ceiling going forward?

Answer: NASA plans to award a cost reimbursement contract. The estimated cost will be based on the successful offeror's proposed cost.

SIGNIFICANT SUBCONTRACTORS

Question 10: L.19.a.2 states "Offerors and proposed significant subcontractors for cost proposal purposes [defined as any subcontract that is likely to exceed 15% of the proposed core contract value (Base plus Option Periods)]..." Is this 15% of the value proposed in our cost estimate or 15% of the proposed \$8M value listed in the procurement documents (i.e. \$1.2M)?

Answer: In accordance with Section L.19.a.2, the 15% should be calculated based on the offeror's proposed core contract value (Base plus Option Periods) not to include the \$8M maximum ordering value of the IDIQ component.

PAST PERFORMANCE

Question 11: If company X is providing past performance references for a contract where they were a sub to Company Y, can Company X provide their Past Performance Questionnaire directly to their government customer rather than to their Prime (Company Y)? The concern is that Company Y may unfairly evaluate Company X if Company X is on a competing team but must use their contract with Company Y for past performance.

Answer: Subcontractors may submit their past performance questionnaires directly to their Government customers; however, the Government customers may not be able to provide comments on certain elements such as some of those elements in Section V of the Past Performance Questionnaire.

Question 12: Section L.24.a - Our small business firm has excellent past performance on NASA and other contracts. The average annual cost/fee of \$1.5 million per past performance could significantly limit small businesses from being able to demonstrate excellent past performance.

Can the average annual cost/fee of \$1.5 million be waived or lowered in order for broader small business participation and demonstration of past performance?

Answer: The Government is satisfied that the average annual cost/fee incurred of \$1.5 million demonstrates minimal relevance for this solicitation.

Question 13: Sec L.19 (b) (1) indicates a 5 page limit for the Past Performance volume. This seems too short given the number of items required for each contract (~14 including narrative) and the breadth of SOW requirements. Suggest reducing required items for each contract and increasing page limit.

Answer: The Government considers the 5 page limit on information from the Offeror for Past Performance to be sufficient for this solicitation. There is no page limitation for the following items: Cover Page, Indices, List of those sent Past Performance Questionnaires, Small Business Subcontracting Plan History, Customer Evaluations, Termination/Desclope information, and List of Acronyms.

Question 14: Exhibit 19 - Past Performance Questionnaire: The level of specificity in SOW element questions (e.g. production of international climate change assessments) along with the breadth of areas covered by the combination of questions could significantly favor the incumbent by limiting possible contracts that are relevant across areas. Suggest eliminating some of the narrow language and/or adjusting how past performance is evaluated.

Answer: The Government will revise the language of the Past Performance Questionnaire in the final RFP to substitute “scientific assessments” for “climate change assessments”.

Question 15: Exhibit 19 – Past Performance Questionnaire, Section IV: In the table under “SOW ELEMENT” the SOW elements repeatedly reference experience related to a “highly-visible consortium” or supporting a “consortium”. However, consortium is not referenced in any part of the SOW, no other part of the draft materials is there an indication that the responder must be part of, or have experience supporting a consortium; in addition, it is clear the respondents role in supporting a highly-visible consortium. If it is not the Governments intent to limit this procurement to a consortium, we recommend that Past Performance SOW elements be updated (e.g., to address government research programs, interagency collaboration, etc.)

Answer: The Government will revise the language of the Past Performance Questionnaire in the final RFP to substitute “consortium or interagency collaboration” for “consortium”.

Question 16: Exhibit 19 - Past Performance Questionnaire, Section IV does not include any reference to the contractors management program past performance however this is one of the proposal volumes, therefore [we] recommend that some consideration be given to include management program in the past performance.

Answer: Section V of the Past Performance Questionnaire relates to contract management functions.

Question 17: In regard to evaluation of Past Performance, would the Government accept links to and/or copies of reports from the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) for ongoing contracts or those completed within the last 5 years? Federal clients who follow FAR 42.15 and report on contractor performance in CPARS sometimes resist completing Past Performance Questionnaires because they already made that information available to other Federal Contracting Officers.

Answer: Links to and/or copies of reports from CPARS are acceptable in lieu of past performance questionnaires from Federal clients; however, please note that the functions listed in Section IV of the past performance questionnaire may provide more targeted and therefore more relevant evaluation information than that available in CPARS.

LABOR

Question 18: For planning purposes, can the government provide a list of labor categories currently working on the contract including hourly rates?

Answer: The position descriptions shown in Attachment E are based on the labor categories currently working under the incumbent contract.

Question 19: Will the Government provide the specific locations for each labor category that will be working on Government site and contractor site?

Answer: Currently all FTEs are onsite with the exception of those attached to the current Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II Technical Support Unit (WGII TSU) and select administrative and financial support personnel. It is up to the offeror to indicate which positions will be offsite.

SECTIONS B-K

Question 20: Section B.5 states that “The maximum amount of supplies or services that may be ordered under the IDIQ component during the effective period of this contract is \$1.6M.” Please confirm whether maximum applies to the IDIQ (i.e., the total contract), individual task orders, or option years.

Answer: The maximum ordering value relates only to the IDIQ component of this contract, the value of which is measured by the cumulative value of all task orders issued. The \$1.6M is the maximum ordering value for the base period. As options are exercised, this amount will be adjusted to reflect the maximum ordering value associated with the cumulative value of the base period plus all option periods exercised.

Question 21: Section F.3. To determine allocation of resources between Government and contractor facilities, please provide information on the space that is available for contractor use at 1800 G Street N.W. to include number of offices and cubicles.

Answer: The Government will post additional information related to the 1800 G Street space in the solicitation library at: <https://foiaelibrary.gsfc.nasa.gov>

Question 22: Section F.3. Will the Government provide as either Government Furnished Equipment or Contractor Acquired Property computers and required peripherals for personnel working at a Government facility?

Answer: As stated in Section 6, bullet 6 of Attachment A, Statement of Work, *“the Contractor shall provide IT seats, peripherals, and general shared office support equipment for up to 40 contract employees and government detailees in the NCO, and cell phones for contract employees whose duties require them.”* This section of the SOW continues: *“IT seats of comparable functionality shall be furnished by the Contractor to accommodate additional workers hired by the Contractor and additional Government detailees who may be assigned to support specific task orders under the IDIQ portion of the contract.”*

Section G.7 of the DRFP, **1852.245-71 INSTALLATION-ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT PROPERTY (JAN 2011) ALTERNATE I (JAN 2011)**, paragraph (c) identifies the property and services to be provided by the Government.

Question 23: Reference Section G.4 - Is the cost for Department of State Allowances for travel outside of the United States included in the Government provided estimate for Other Direct Costs?

Answer: Yes.

Question 24: Reference Section H.7 - Will the “onsite” space located at 1800 G Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20006 be designated as “NASA controlled space” and require contractor employees to obtain a PIV Card as defined in Section H.7?

Answer: See answer to Question 25 below.

Question 25: If 1800 G Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20006 is not designated as “NASA controlled space” and the Proposing Entity provides its own property (equipment) for performance of the contract, will the Proposing Entity have to apply for permanent NASA Headquarters PIV credentials per Section H.7?

Answer: The onsite space located at 1800 G Street will be designated “NASA controlled space”; therefore, Contractor employees will be required to obtain PIV Cards, since they are required for building access.

Question 26: Section H.11 states the contractor would be required to provide contract historical cost for potential follow-on competition. As stated in H.11 “Including this data in the solicitation is intended to ensure a comprehensive and fair evaluation of competitive proposals and increase the probability that realistic pricing is provided...” to reduce the risk that cost/price

become an inappropriate discriminator. Will NASA provide Historical Data from the current contract for this procurement to ensure competition?

Answer: Because the current contract is managed by NSF, NASA currently does not have access to this information.

SECTIONS L AND M

Question 27: L.19(b)(1) Is there a page limit on the narrative for the Cost Volume other than the Basis of Estimate? We recommend that the page limit is unlimited in order for offerors to provide detailed explanation of their proposed costs.

Answer: No, there is no page limit, except for the Basis of Estimate.

Question 28: Sections L and M, Exhibit 2-A: If a Proposing Entity has multiple staff in the same direct labor category (Attachment E – Position Descriptions) and their staff are paid within an approved salary range, may the proposing entity list more than one direct labor rate per direct labor category when completing CORE Requirements - Cost Exhibits?

Answer: Yes, but offerors must define each different level with respect to education and experience for each rate proposed.

Question 29: Cost volume instructions require breakdown at the lowest level of WBS but there are overlapping requirements across the WBS elements or SOW (e.g. support of GCIS, office IT support) which can complicate and impact fair evaluation of proposals. Suggest eliminate requirement for cost exhibits at lowest level of WBS.

Answer: Section L.23.2 of the DRFP identifies the lowest WBS level as WBS Level 3, summary of estimated cost plus fixed fee by Core Statement of Work II.1, II.2, II.3. The Government does not intend to change this requirement.

Question 30: Cost Volume requirements require submission of cost exhibits breaking cost down to the lowest level of WBS. At this level, there are requirements that are not definitive or are somewhat open-ended which impacts ability to accurately develop costs and thus favors the incumbent. For instance, several requirements state “including” but do not limit the requirement in some way and others indicate the needs “vary”.

Answer: The Government will consider revising the language in the Statement of Work with these comments in mind but not the level of WBS required in the cost exhibits.

Question 31: L.20.c. The DRFP states in this section that approval of an offeror’s accounting system is a Pass/Fail criterion. As evidenced by the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Proposed Rule; Business Systems Compliance (DFARS Case 2012–D042), numerous contractors do not have an adequacy determination of their accounting system through no fault of theirs, but primarily due to the backlog being experienced by DCAA and DCMA.

Therefore, it is requested that offerors who are interested in submitting a proposal for this effort that do not have an accounting system determined to be adequate by their cognizant Government contract administration office, be authorized to submit the substantiation information required by the above cited provision to the Contracting Officer to allow for a determination of Pass/Fail prior to the release of the final RFP. Determination of Pass/Fail prior to the release of the final RFP will eliminate the expenditure of resources and B&P funds in the event that an offeror receives a determination of "Fail."

Answer: NASA is not currently able to make pass/fail determinations regarding offeror accounting systems or assess accounting systems generally; rather, it delegates this function to DCMA. As needed, NASA requests pre-award accounting system audits for offerors based on proposals received, but not based merely on expressed interest. For further information regarding the applicability of the cited DFARS proposed rule change to your individual circumstance, and the possibility of receiving an assessment of your accounting system before bidding, please contact the DCMA office that would have administration/audit cognizance over your company.

Question 32: Section L.22.3. Please confirm that the Technical Approach should address only section 7 of the SOW.

Answer: The Technical Approach shall address Section 7 of the SOW and the Representative Task Order (RTO) found in Exhibit 18.

Question 33: L.22.3 and M.3. The Evaluation Factors regarding the Technical Approach presented on Page 94 seem to be focused upon the sample task order and not inclusive of the full range of requirements needed to successfully perform the entire Statement of Work. Would the Government consider expanding the evaluation criteria to cover the full range of services described in Attachment A "II. Statement of Work – CORE SERVICES"?

Answer: As stated in Section M.1, the evaluation factors regarding Technical Approach will focus on Section 7 of the SOW and the RTO shown in Exhibit 18. No change to this approach is contemplated at this time.

Question 34: L.22.3 Please confirm whether the total small business goals for this procurement are 10%, with the following targets within this 10%. For a competition of this size, requiring individual threshold goals for each category could result in a long list of subcontractors that is suboptimal, increases management complexity and impacts successful performance as well as limiting proposers. While the instructions state proposers may propose levels other than those listed, the requirements to do so are extensive.

Answer: The total small business goal for this procurement is 10% of the contract value, with the targets to be included within this 10% goal.

Question 35: Will NASA consider eliminating the individual category goals in favor of one overall small business goal or reduce proposal requirements for explaining goals other than those listed?

Answer: FAR 19.702 states that any contractor receiving a contract for more than the simplified acquisition threshold must agree in the contract that small business, veteran-owned small business, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, and women-owned small business concerns will have the maximum practicable opportunity to participate in contract performance consistent with its efficient performance.

The subcontracting goals provided are based on the contract value and scope of work. It is up to the prime contractor to determine what work will be subcontracted and to which companies. Based on market research, the Government is satisfied that the subcontracting goals specified are realistic.

Question 36: The RFP, in Sections L and M, Page 78, Management Approach, third paragraph, states: “The Offeror shall identify the type of personnel and skill levels that are currently available . . .” Does “currently available” refer to staff currently working on the project? If so, how would any offeror other than the incumbent be able to address the suitability of the current staff? If “currently available” staff does refer to incumbent staff, would the Government then consider removing the “type of personnel/skill levels that are currently available” from the evaluation criteria on Page 95?

Answer: The reference to “type of personnel and skill levels currently available” refers to individuals within the offeror’s own organization who are available to work on the project.

Question 37: Similarly, also in the third paragraph under Management Approach on Page 78, the RFP states that the “staffing plan shall include a comprehensive hiring plan that presents the expected number of personnel to be hired from incumbents.” How would any offeror other than the incumbent be able to make the determination of which incumbent staff to hire? This requirement would appear to provide the incumbent with an unfair advantage.

Answer: As stated in Section M.3.1, Management Approach, “*the Government will evaluate the effectiveness of the offeror’s proposed staffing plan including type of personnel/skill levels that are currently available [within the offeror’s company] and for its ability to recruit and retain qualified personnel, to include incumbent workforce (if proposed) as needed. The Government will also evaluate the effectiveness of the Offeror’s plans for attracting, recruiting and training staff not currently employed within the company.*” There is no requirement to hire incumbents; however, if an offeror proposes to hire incumbent staff, it is expected that the company would use its established procedures for identifying and evaluating any new personnel.

Question 38: The RFP, in Sections L and M, Page 78, Management Approach, fourth paragraph, states “The 30-day phase-in period will be accomplished through the issuance of a separate Firm Fixed Price contract.” Please confirm that this Firm Fixed Price contract will be awarded to the incumbent.

Answer: The Firm Fixed Price contract will be issued to the successful offeror to implement its phase-in plan.

ATTACHMENT A – STATEMENT OF WORK

Question 39: To support estimation of the proper resource mix, will the Government provide more details regarding the scope of the support and deliverables required as part of Core Services?

For example, in support of this SOW requirement:

The Contractor shall support the planning and execution of periodic expert meetings and executive sessions, including the development of agendas, presentations, minutes, and records of attendance, and the writing and editing of technical reports and planning documents e.g., Federal Plans, workshop reports, and other documents, as appropriate, as well as other activities required for supporting the program.

We suggest that the Government provide additional detail, e.g., the number of working groups; the number of meetings per year for each working group and executive session; a schedule for producing meeting agendas, presentations, minutes, and records of attendance, i.e., agendas are due 3 days in advance of each meeting; and the number of technical reports and planning documents along with their size and technical complexity.

In support of this SOW requirement:

The Contractor shall assist in drafting and editing reports, budgets, or testimony as directed by the SGCR Chair or NCO leadership. The Contractor may play a lead role in planning and organizing interagency workshops or other events approved by the SGCR in support of USGCRP priorities.

We suggest the following additional information: the number of reports by complexity level with a brief description of the complexity levels, budgets, or testimonies annually; the number of interagency workshops or other events.

Answer: The Government will provide additional information as suggested through the solicitation library, which can be found at: <https://foiaelibrary.gsfc.nasa.gov>

Question 40: Per NASA's statement of work (Attachment A, page 6), the contractor shall be required to manage all aspects of the IT systems and website for the NCO to ensure compliance with government IT security policies and procedures. If all websites were to be hosted on contractor or vendor supplied servers, and the contractor had employees onsite for at least six months, will the contractor be required to apply for permanent NASA Headquarters PIV credentials per Section H.7?

Answer: Yes. Contractor employees will be required to obtain PIV Cards, since they are required for building access. However, PIV Cards will not necessarily be required for IT authentication, as long as the Contractor's security policy and procedures comply with NASA security policy requirements.

Question 41: Reference Section 6. Is the cost of obtaining and maintaining necessary equipment and maintenance agreements required by Section 6 of the SOW included in the Government-provided estimate for Other Direct Costs (ODCs)?

Answer: No.

Will the Government please clarify the current and anticipated number of Government detailees versus contract employees?

Answer: Currently there are approximately 10 Government detailees. It is estimated that this number will remain the same under the new contract.

Question 42: Reference Statement of Work Section 6, bullet 7: Would the Government consider a FedRamp accredited cloud-hosting provider for the website and GCIS?

Answer: Yes. The Government will consider any mix of Fed web hosting as long as it meets Federal IT security requirements.

ATTACHMENT E – POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Question 43: Would the Government modify this attachment to allow for substitution of additional education for years of experience and additional years of experience for education? For instance a statement that an additional 2 years of relevant experience may be substituted for a Master's degree, an additional 4 years of relevant experience may be substituted for a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree may be substituted for 2 years of experience, and a PhD may be substituted for 4 years of experience.

Answer: Yes, the Government will modify Attachment E as suggested, but only for support staff.

Question 44: Position Description - Project Director: We recommend adding "or relevant discipline" to the Education. The education would read, "Minimum Master's degree in science, public policy, or public administration or relevant discipline."

Answer: The Government is agreeable to this suggested change. Attachment E will be modified accordingly.

Question 45: Position Descriptions – Associate Director for Program Planning, Staff Scientist, and Project Scientist: We recommend that these positions require a Master's degree rather than a Ph.D.

Answer: The Government is satisfied that the specified educational levels are appropriate for this solicitation.

EXHIBIT 18

Question 46: RTO language requires "...travel support, as necessary, to facilitate participation of non-Federal scientists..." Does this include processing payment of travel costs as is done with NASA panel reviewers and thus should be included in RTO costs?

Answer: Offerors are not required to price the RTO; however, for purposes of developing a staffing plan for the RTO, individuals providing travel support should be included in the RTO staffing plan if those personnel are considered a direct cost in accordance with the offeror's established accounting policies and procedures.

Question 47: Will the Government please clarify the relative scope of the RTO? For example, is it considered representative of a high, medium, or low complexity task order?

Answer: The Government considers the RTO to be representative of a task of medium to high complexity.