

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS #21134
EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT SERVICES
ADDENDUM #1 – QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
JANUARY 14, 2021

1. Question: Given that you would like a data system to manage "internships, graduates, faculty positions, and career paths of students who participate in the Track-1 project," and are open to "novel approaches," how interested would you be in real-time, web-based reporting solutions in lieu of traditional .doc/.pdf reports listed under 4.4. Deliverables?

Answer: We are interested in novel approaches such as the question suggests.

2. Question: Can the contract be structured such that the services for evaluation design and proposal development can be invoiced and paid following submission to NSF at the end of July 2021? If not, how would compensation for that work be handled?

Answer: Yes.

3. Question: In the spirit of shared risk for the proposal development effort, is it a problem if lower pricing rates are applied to the pre-award phase of the work, than will be proposed for post-award execution of the evaluation once the award has been made?

Answer: It is not a problem to have a lower rate or do the pre-award work without compensation.

4. Do you have any additional specific expectations for how the pricing proposal is presented and if so, what are they?

Answer: If awarded by the NSF, the pricing should be for a per year amount during the five years of the grant. An additional fee for pre-award work may be added on.

5. Question: Do you anticipate proposing a project that approaches the maximum RII Track-1 cap of \$4m/year and the full funding period of 5 years? If not, what targets will you likely choose re: budget and period of performance?

Answer: Yes, we anticipate the proposal will be near the full funding cap.

6. Question: We note that other EPSCoR Track 1 evaluations have used external evaluators from non-EPSCoR jurisdictions in the past. Can you confirm whether external evaluators from non-EPSCoR jurisdictions are eligible to perform these evaluation services?

Answer: There is no requirement that the external evaluators be from an EPSCoR jurisdiction.

7. Question: Reference Section 6 of the RFP: Are the title page and exhibits excluded from the 50-page limit?

Answer: Yes.

8. Question: In light of COVID-19 considerations, will WV waive the requirement for hard copy submissions?

Answer: No.

9. Question: On page 11 of the RFP, it cites that the resulting contract would be inclusive of all costs, including fees, staff, supplies, equipment use and other necessary costs. Does that make the contract type Firm Fixed Price?

Answer: Yes.

10. Question: Is a digital copy of a signature allowed for the transmittal letter and Exhibits A-D or are wet signatures required?

Answer: Digital signatures are allowed with appropriate documentation except for Exhibit B – the Purchasing Affidavit. This will require an original signature which is properly notarized.

11. Question: Can the notarized affidavit document (Exhibit B) be included as a scanned copy?

Answer: A scanned copy will be acceptable for the submission of the bid. An original may be required at the time of contract award.

12. Question: Does the 50-page maximum include the cost/price proposal?

Answer: No.

13. Question: For the electronic submission, should the technical and cost/price proposals be submitted as one file or two separate files?

Answer: An original bid is required to be mailed to the address in Section 1.3. In that bid package, the Technical and Cost proposals must be in separate sealed envelopes. Each envelope should be labeled either Technical or Cost Proposal. For the electronic copy submitted on the flash/thumb drive, there should be two separate files: One for the technical proposal and one for cost proposal.

14. Question: If two separate electronic files are to be used for the technical and price, should the technical/price be submitted on two separate flash/thumb drives?

Answer: See Question #13.

15. Question: For this deliverable: “Address any additional reporting requests and/or requirements which may be required by NSF,” can West Virginia provide more information about how frequently (e.g., monthly, quarterly, annually) vendors should plan to submit NSF-required reports?

Answer: NSF requires an Annual Report but has the option to request more frequent reports. Evaluators should submit monthly reports to the management/leadership team once the grant starts.

16. Question: For this deliverable: “Attend various meetings virtually,” can West Virginia provide more information about how frequently (e.g., monthly, quarterly, annually) or approximately how many meetings vendors should plan to attend?

Answer: After the grant starts, evaluators should expect to attend meetings monthly.

17. Question: For this deliverable: “Additional evaluation activities as requested by the project administrators,” can West Virginia provide clarity about the types of activities anticipated in addition to the evaluation activities that vendors propose in order to budget accordingly?

Answer: If new initiatives or activities are requested by the NSF during the grant period, Evaluators may be required to assess the effectiveness of these activities. There may be other unanticipated requests for evaluation.

18. Question: For this deliverable: “Upon request, oral and/or written status reports and presentations for the principal investigator, advisory committees and other stakeholder groups,” can West Virginia provide more information about how many of these types of requests each year vendors should plan to expect?

Answer: An evaluator representative should be available to attend monthly management/leadership Team meetings after the grant starts to share plans, summarize results, and receive feedback. Presentations and reports will need to be presented at the Annual All Hands Meetings and discussed with the Leadership team.

19. Question: With regard to tracking Program Outcomes (RFP Section 4.2), does West Virginia have any existing data tracking systems in place that vendors should plan to use as part of this evaluation?

Answer: No.

20. Question: You noted that all prices are to be provided in a separate sealed envelope labeled as pricing information. To confirm, within the envelope we mail the RFP, there should be a separate envelope inside with the pricing information. Or do you want them mailed separately?

Answer: One envelope which contains: 1) the technical proposal and 2) a sealed envelope with the cost information.

21. Question: Is there anything other than the proposed budget that should be included in the pricing information?

Answer: Any information relating to price/cost must be in the sealed envelope.

22. Question: On page 7, point d “Impact on Workforce”, it mentions maintaining a database on internship graduates, faculty positions, and career paths of students. Is there a database the project team is already planning on using that the evaluator maintains or is the expectation that the evaluation team creates the database?

Answer: A database has not yet been selected.

23. Question: Reference Section 1.6 - The RFP indicates bidders must deliver an original and one (1) copy of the proposal. Is an electronic submittal acceptable to the POC listed; Is a physical/paper copy of the submittal required? If so, are there special instructions and/or delivery restrictions (e.g., courier (hand delivery) only, Fedex/UPS/DHL differing address, hours that the office is open/submittals will be accepted, etc.)?

Answer: An electronic submission is not acceptable. Bids may be mailed or delivered. The delivery address included in the RFP is a mail room. The mail room is open from 8:00am until 4:00pm daily. Bids will be collected and placed in a secure location until the bid opening.

24. Question: Reference Section 1.6 - The RFP indicates all prices are to be provided in a separate, sealed envelope labeled as pricing information. Is there a particular/specific pricing template that vendors are to use for the Price proposal?

Answer: No.

25. Question: Reference Section 1.16 - The RFP indicates this contract will be effective upon award (anticipated February 15, 2021) and shall extend until July 30, 2027. Is there a desired budget for the 77-month period?

Answer: The anticipated date of the 5-year grant is from July 30, 2022, to July 30, 2027. There will be a very specific budget for the grant period that is included in the proposal to the NSF. For services prior to the start date, there is no budget.

26. Question: What is the anticipated level of effort (in FTEs)?

Answer: We do not have an estimate in FTEs.

27. Question: Reference Section 1.16 - The RFP indicates the possibility of an additional one (1) year. Does WVHEPC intend to provide a separate statement of work for the option year? If not, can WVHEPC provide guidance on how to budget for the option year?

Answer: You are not required to bid the additional year. The additional year would be negotiated and budgeted separately.

28. Question: Reference Section 4.2 - The RFP indicates WVHEPC is looking for a vendor to monitor impacts on students. Will the WVHEPC obtain and provide student data (e.g., number of students participating in project events, STEM enrollment, matriculation, and workforce preparedness) from WVU, MU, or WVSU? Or should the evaluator be prepared to coordinate with WVU, MU, or WVSU for data collection purposes?

Answer: The evaluators will need to work with individual institutions to track and survey students involved in the project.

29. Question: Reference Section 4.2 - The RFP indicates WVHEPC is looking for a vendor to monitor impacts on the STEM workforce. Does the WVHEPC have an existing system for tracking employment data such as the number of internships filled, and the number of graduates who find jobs, including faculty positions, in STEM fields in West Virginia and the nation? Or should the evaluator be prepared to develop a system?

Answer: The HEPC does not have an existing system that would provide data relevant to this specific project. The evaluators should be prepared to develop a way to determine the impact of the project on the STEM workforce.

30. Question: Reference Section 4.2 - The RFP indicates WVHEPC is looking for a vendor to maintain a database on internships, graduates, faculty positions, and career paths of students who

participate in the Track-1 project. Does this database already exist? Or should the evaluator be prepared to create the database?

Answer: The HEPC does not have an existing database that would provide data relevant to this specific project. The evaluators should be prepared to develop the database.

31. Question: Reference Section 4.4 - The RFP indicates WVHEPC is looking for a vendor to provide oral and/or written status reports and presentations for the principal investigator, advisory committees, and other stakeholder groups upon request. For budgeting purposes, can WVHEPC provide an estimate of how many ad hoc reports and presentations may be requested each year?

Answer: An evaluator representative should be available to attend monthly Leadership Team meetings after the grant starts to share plans, summarize results, and receive feedback. Presentations and reports will need to be presented at the Annual All Hands Meetings and discussed with the Leadership team. HEPC does not have an estimate.

32. Question: Reference Section 4.4 - The RFP indicates WVHEPC is looking for a vendor to address any additional reporting requests and/or requirements which may be required by NSF. For budgeting purpose, can WVHEPC provide an estimate of how many ad hoc reporting requests or requirements may arise each year?

Answer: If new initiatives or activities are requested by the NSF during the grant period, evaluators may be required to assess the effectiveness of these activities. There may be other unanticipated requests for evaluation. HEPC does not have an estimate.

33. Question: Reference Section 6.2 - The RFP indicates proposals should be limited to 50 pages. Can the WVHEPC please confirm the 50-page limit? Does this limit apply to both the Technical and the Price proposal?

Answer: The 50-page limit is for the Technical Proposal only. It does not include the Cost Proposal.

34. Question: Reference Section 6.4.2 - The RFP indicates that responses to section 3 and 4 will be reviewed and evaluated under the Services component. Section 3 is Background Information. Please provide the content that is expected under Section 3.

Answer: Section 6.4.2 has been changed to refer to only Section 4. See revised page attached.

Replacement page 10 for RFP

Vendors failing to score at least 70% or 49 points for Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 will not be considered to have met the minimum acceptable score. Any vendor not meeting the minimum acceptable score will NOT have their prices opened and will NOT be considered for award of the bid.

6.4.1 Qualifications, Experience and Company Background – 40 points

Responses to Section 5 will be reviewed and evaluated here.

6.4.2 Services – 30 points

Responses to Section 4 will be reviewed and evaluated here.

6.4.3 Price – 30 points – The low bid will receive the full 30 points. Each higher bid will receive a percentage of the 30 points on a ratio basis compared to the low bid cost.

6.5 Award will be made to the bidder receiving the highest point total.

6.6 In the event that mutually acceptable terms cannot be reached within a reasonable period of time, with the highest ranked bidder, the Commission reserves the right to undertake negotiations with the next highest ranked bidder and so on until mutually acceptable terms can be reached.

SECTION 7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7.1 By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, a firm shall be deemed to have accepted all the terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in herein unless otherwise clearly noted and explained in writing. Any exception(s) or additional terms and conditions a firm wishes to offer for consideration must be clearly itemized and explained. Otherwise, the RFP in total shall be incorporated into the contract by reference. The Systems may accept or reject the Firm's proposed exceptions as it deems appropriate and in the best interests of the Systems.

7.2 The State's Agreement Addendum (WV-96) is attached to demonstrate the State law and guidelines which must be adhered to in any contracts presented to the Systems for execution (See Exhibit E). A copy of additional terms and conditions that a firm wishes to offer for consideration should be enclosed with the proposal. The West Virginia Attorney General's Office must accept or reject proposed modifications to the WV-96.

OTHER:

If funded, this is a 5-year project that will commence in early summer 2022 under a cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation (NSF). The cooperative agreement is renewed annually based on performance review including a report from the evaluator.