FAQ
Detection Systems for Biological and Chemical Countermeasures
RA 03-01

Last updated: 12/11/2003

1. When exactly are white papers due? This date differs in web version and the RA included in my registration packet?

The RA distributed at the meeting was an early draft distributed in error. The only official RA for this solicitation is on the www.bids.tswg.gov website. As a courtesy, CDs are being provided to all registrants, which include the bidders brief as well as the official version of the RA.

Page 23 of the Research Announcement posted on the web contains ALL submission dates and times. White Papers are due at 4:00pm EDT on 24 October 2003. The paper copy of the Research Announcement included in the registration packet, regrettably, contains outdated information and should be discarded as indicated at the meeting.

2. Section 2.1.3, TTA-3 ARFCAM mentions LACIS in Phase II. Is this correct?

Page 6 of the official Research Announcement under section 2.1.3, paragraph 2 should read as follows:

In Phase II, the scientific evaluation initiated during Phase I will be carried forward to a level of engineering detail to support a CDR for a field prototype at the close of Phase II.

The following sentences from the second paragraph should be deleted:

"Field demonstration of the required wireless interface of LACIS with the Scene Control Unit (SCU) will occur during Phase II. As part of the Phase II effort, both a field prototype LACIS system and a laboratory prototype SCU will be employed to demonstrate critical end-to-end performance issues associated with the Phase III effort."

3. Section 3.2.1 Performance Targets, says that IDHL and PEL level concentrations can be found in Appendix B. I cannot find them there. Where IS this information?

The concentrations for IDHL and PEL are found at a Web Site referred to in Appendix D, a list of acronyms. Under IDHL and PEL in that list you are referred to the link: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/npgd0000.html

4. What kind of feedback can be expected on White Papers?

HSARPA plans to review all white papers no later than 14 calendar days after their due date. After the white paper review, HSARPA, at its discretion, will notify offerors, electronically or in writing, either encouraging or discouraging submission of full proposals based on the white paper. In certain instances more specific guidance may be given concerning how certain topics addressed in the White Paper might be better addressed in the Full Proposal.

5. Who is on the evaluation committee for White Papers and Full Proposals?

The Government intends to use US Government employees to review submissions. In certain cases topic area experts who are non-Government employees may be asked to consult on specific technical issues. In addition, support contractors or sub-contractors will assist in administering the evaluation of white papers and proposals. In both cases, all non-Government personnel will have signed, and will be subject to, the terms and conditions of non-disclosure agreements. Bidders may request a government-only review, but must indicate on the cover page of the white paper and proposal.

6. What role will National Labs play?

Teams, which may include academic institutions, Government laboratories, FFRDCs, and private sector organizations, are encouraged to respond with creative design concepts for the next generation of detector systems in each of these Technical Topic Areas. Only the specific laboratories listed in Appendix C of the Research Announcement are excluded from responding, including being members of Teams.

7. Can foreign companies bid and are they eligible to be part of a team? May a team include members with non-US citizenship?

Foreign companies may bid and non-US citizens are eligible to be part of teams. However, submissions must describe a plan to allow work to continue to be conducted in the event that a portion of the project becomes classified. The Government anticipates that some aspects of one or more of the TTA projects may require access to classified information for some Team members. The goals under this solicitation are currently unclassified. In the future, the DHS may choose to classify the performance of detection systems developed under this initiative. Bidders to this RA will need to include a plan to handle SECRET level material by the end of Phase I.

8. Are there any set-asides now or in the future?

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Minority Institutions (MI), small and disadvantaged businesses (SDB), women-owned businesses (WB), and HUB-zone enterprises are encouraged to submit proposals, and to join others in submitting proposals; however, no portion of the RA will be set-aside for these special entities because of the impracticality of reserving discrete or severable areas of research and development in the five technical topic areas listed above.

9. How is a non-traditional team member defined?

In this context, a “nontraditional contractor” is defined as:

1) an entity that has not, for a period of at least one year prior to the date that a transaction (other than a contract, grant, or cooperative agreement) for a prototype project under the authority of this section is entered into, entered into or performed with respect to –

    i) any contract that is subject to full coverage under the cost accounting standards prescribed pursuant to section 26 of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act (41 U.S.C. 422) and the regulations implementing such section; or

    ii) any other contract in excess of $500,000 to carry out prototype projects or to perform basic, applied, or advanced research projects for a Federal agency, that is subject to the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

The Government has discretion in determining the level of “significant extent." Some factors may include:

1) criticality of the technology being contributed;

2) role of the non-traditional government contractor(s) in the design process;

3) value of the effort being proposed.

10. Will HSARPA “match” us with a company or agency with expertise in an area we are lacking?

A critical element of the DSBCC Program is to enable the use of Teams that cut across organization boundaries to achieve optimal mixes of technical talent and innovation. To facilitate this teaming, the awards in this program will be executed as an "Other Transactions for Prototypes" (OT) under Section 831(a) (2) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002.

A teaming website has been made available for those who would like to find experts in other areas that are potentially valuable to the work they are proposing. The website can

be found at http://www.davincinetbook.com/teams/login.asp However, it is the responsibility of individual performers to create, select, and join Teams of their own choosing.

11. Can a company submit multiple White Papers against a single TTA?

Offerors may propose to any, some or all of the five TTAs. Offerors proposing to more than one TTA should submit separate proposals. Responses to this RA are limited to one per individual principal investigator/program director/Team leader per TTA. Separate responses should be made for each TTA addressed. Organizations may submit more than one response as long as a different principal investigator/program director/Team leader is making each submission.

Although there is not a prohibition on companies submitting more than one white paper, the intent in allowing multiple white papers is to permit large organizations with distinct operating entities to submit separate white papers and proposals. Even under these circumstances, companies are strongly encouraged, but not required, to submit only one white paper per TTA.

12. Where can I find the list of TICs of relevance to RA 03-01?

The list of TICs can be found in Appendix B.

13. The RA says that it is neither required nor encouraged to cost share, how would this affect bid evaluation?

Whether you choose to cost share or not will not directly influence the evaluation of your submissions. It may effect how your Team is composed. The fiscal part of your submission will be evaluated on cost realism and best value to the government.

14. All of the detection discussions in the RA imply that only vapor based contaminants should be considered. What about liquid contaminants as well?

Presume for TTAs 1-4 that you will sample from the vapor phase. In TTA-5 you should consider samples from all categories; vapor phase, liquid phase, solid phase and mixed state matter.

15. What methods of detection are considered acceptable? Do you have to satisfy the CDC with PCR or culture?

We are interested in exploring any technical approach which meets the requirements specified in the RA including PCR.

16. How far should projects be carried under the work funded under this RA? To prototype, to field, to preproduction stage?

Phase I will result in a preliminary design review, including demonstration of key technical elements. Phase II will include the development and demonstration of a laboratory prototype and a critical design review for a field prototype. Phase III will result in the development and demonstration of one or more fielded prototypes. Phase III will also develop a production plan to achieve the desired cost per unit. .

The suggested schedule for TTA-5 modifies Phase I and combines Phase II and Phase III (see the RA for more details).

17. How many awardees do you anticipate for Phases I, II, and III?

We anticipate making multiple awards in Phase I, and beyond.

18. Are the maximum funded levels mentioned per contractor, or for the total in that area?

The funding levels are the government's estimated upper value per awardee.

19. What is the upper limit of funding available for Phases II and III combined?

Bidders are requested to provide preliminary estimates for Phase II and Phase III based upon their technical plans. There will be an opportunity to update both the work plan and the funding request during Phase I prior to Phase II execution.

20. How much funding is available for Phase IB in TTA-2?

We have provided funding guidance for Phase IA. We are requesting that bidders provide Phase IB cost estimates based upon the anticipated technology development plan as part of the white paper.

21. In TTA-2 (RABIS), are the RABIS units to approach the $50K cost in Phase III?

No. The cost goals are for the final engineering units following Phase III production quantities. The Phase III device is a field prototype required for full validation and demonstration.

22. In regards to TTA-5, how many of them are you going to buy and how long are they going to be used?

As stated in the Research Announcement, we anticipate acquiring on the order of tens, not hundreds. They will be used as long as they are needed. They have to be transportable and fully operable within 2 hours. In that regard, they do not have a lifetime.

23. In TTA-5, no cost of ownership goals are provided. Will this be a factor in white paper/proposal evaluation?

Throughput is the predominate criteria for TTA-5. That does not mean that best value to the government has been reduced; it does mean proposals will be selected based upon that criterion. If throughput objectives listed as performance goals cannot be met, the cost of ownership is a secondary issue in that regard.

24. At the end of Phase III, will companies be able to sell their resultant products on the open market?

Companies will be permitted to sell their resultant products subject to contractual and security restrictions negotiated at time of award in addition to any applicable export restrictions.

25. The RA indicates that the white papers and proposals are due at 4PM EST. Are these items actually due 4PM EDT?

Yes.

26. On slide #30 of Steven Buchsbaum's presentation the following question and answer are provided:

Question: The Limit of Detection is specified as 100 organisms per liter of air – is there an assumed air collection rate?

Answer: The notional collection rate is 100 liters per minute with 90% efficiency. Bidders are welcome to propose different air collection/concentration rates.

Does this imply that bidders may choose different threat concentration levels in the environment?

No, bidders may propose systems which have different air collection rates. This typically implies different concentration efficiencies in the bioaerosol particle size range.

27. Are viable organisms required for archived (preserved) samples? The RA states that the proposed instrument should preserve all samples collected within the previous 5 days for further analyses. Are there special preservation requirements? What volume of liquid sample is required for the preserved sample?

The goal of preserving samples for 5 days is to permit follow-up testing for confirmation and background characterization. Viability is desired, but not required. No specific requirements, such as volume of liquid sample, have been derived for this goal. Bidders are asked to provide innovative solutions to this goal.

28. The RA states a LOD of 100 collected organisms. Does this mean 100 of the same species/strain of organism or all organisms combined?

The LOD of 100 collected organisms is for the threat organisms. Under normal circumstances it is likely that there will be a complex mixture of organisms sampled from the environment, with a desired detection threshold of 100 threat organisms in this background:

29. For TTA2 does "detect to protect" require precise identification of the pathogen, or just that one of 20 or so pathogens is present?

Pathogen identification is desired, but not required. If you have a specific concept which can meet a majority of the other goals for this TTA, but will not provide pathogen identification, we strongly encourage you to submit a white paper.

30. Recently HSARPA informed all that over 500 White Papers were submitted to various Technical Topic Areas. What is the number of White Papers received for each individual TTA and what percentage were encouraged to submit full proposals for each individual TTA?

There were 517 total White Papers submitted. 73 or 14% were encouraged. The breakout is as follows:

TTA-1: 136 Submitted, 14 Encouraged
TTA-2: 118 Submitted, 12 Encouraged
TTA-3: 128 Submitted, 20 Encouraged
TTA-4: 105 Submitted, 22 Encouraged
TTA-5: 30 Submitted, 5 Encouraged

31. We are slightly confused as to the wording on page 27 of RA-03-01 Section III subsection K. It states '.... Include separate break

outs of subcontracts, man hours, task summaries, quarters and consumables, not to exceed two pages in length....' The focal point of our question is 'Quarters and consumables' Do we have to list out our consumables by quarter? Do we have to list out the subcontractors, man hours, etc. by quarter? Please provide some guidance.

Page 27 of RA-03-01 Section III subsection should read as follows:

K. Cost Summary.* Summarizes the projected costs for each task in each year in quarterly intervals of the effort, total cost and cost share, if any. Include separate break outs in quarterly intervals of subcontracts, man hours, task summaries, and consumables, not to exceed two pages in length.