

AMENDMENT OF SOLICITATION/MODIFICATION OF CONTRACT			1. CONTRACT ID CODE	PAGE OF PAGES 1 7
2. AMENDMENT/MODIFICATION NO. Amendment No. 01	3. EFFECTIVE DATE 3/24/2010	4. REQUISITION/PURCHASE REQ. NO	5. PROJECT NO. (If applicable)	
6. ISSUED BY USAID/GHANA REGIONAL OFFICE OF ACQUISITION & ASSISTANCE (RAAO) NO. 24 FOURTH CIRCULAR ROAD P.O. BOX 1630, ACCRA-GHANA	CODE	7. ADMINISTERED BY (IF OTHER THAN ITEM 6) CODE SAME AS BLOCK NO. 6		
8. NAME AND ADDRESS OF CONTRACTOR (No., Street, County, State, and Zip Code) ALL AIDSTAR 1 IQC CONTRACTORS		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9A. AMENDMENT OF SOLICITATION NO. RFTOP NO. 641-10-007	
			9B. DATED (SEE ITEM 11) 3/2/2010	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	10A. MODIFICATION OF CONTRACT/ORDER NO.	
CODE:		10B. DATED (SEE ITEM 11)		
FACILITY CODE:				
11. THIS ITEM ONLY APPLIES TO AMENDMENTS OF SOLICITATIONS				

The above numbered, solicitation is amended as set forth in item 14. The hour and date specified for receipt of Offers is extended is not extended.

Offers must acknowledge receipt of this amendment prior to the hour and date specified in the solicitation or as amended by one of the following methods:

(a) By completing Items 8 and 15, and returning _____ copies of the amendment; (b) By acknowledging receipt of this amendment on each copy of the offer submitted; or (c) By separate letter or telegram which includes a reference to the solicitation and amendment numbers, FAILURE OF YOUR ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO BE RECEIVED AT THE PLACE DESIGNATED FOR THE RECEIPT OF OFFERS PRIOR TO THE HOUR AND DATE SPECIFIED MAY RESULT IN REJECTION OF YOUR OFFER. If by virtue of this amendment you desire to change an offer already submitted, such change may be made by telegram or letter, provided each telegram or letter makes reference to the solicitation and this amendment, and is received prior to the opening hour and date specified.

12. ACCOUNTING AND APPROPRIATION DATA (If Required)	
13. THIS ITEM APPLIES ONLY TO MODIFICATIONS OF CONTRACTS/ORDERS, IT MODIFIES THE CONTRACT/ORDER NO., AS DESCRIBED IN ITEM 14	
<input type="checkbox"/>	A. THIS CHANGE ORDER IS ISSUED PURSUANT TO: (Specify Authority) THE CHANGES SET FORTH IN ITEM 14 ARE MADE IN THE CONTRACT ORDER NO. IN ITEM 10A.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B. THE ABOVE NUMBERED CONTRACT/ORDER IS MODIFIED TO REFLECT THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES (such as changes in paying office appropriation date, etc.) SET FORTH IN ITEM 14, PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY OF FAR 43,103 (b).
<input type="checkbox"/>	C. THIS SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT IS ENTERED INTO PURSUANT TO AUTHORITY OF:
<input type="checkbox"/>	D. OTHER (Specify type of modification and authority)

E. IMPORTANT: Contractor is NOT is required to sign this document and return 1 copies to the issuing office.

14. DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENT/MODIFICATION (Organized by UCF section headings, including solicitation/contract subject matter where feasible.)

THE PURPOSE OF THIS AMENDMENT NO. 01 IS TO:

- 1) PROVIDE RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS UNDER REQUEST FOR TASK ORDER PROPOSAL NO. 641-10-007 (SEE ATTACHMENT);
- 2) EXTEND THE SUBMISSION DATE FROM APRIL 14, 2010 TO APRIL 23, 2010; 3:00 P.M. LOCAL ACCRA, GHANA TIME.

Except as provided herein, all terms and conditions of the document referenced in Item 9A or 10A, as heretofore changed, remains unchanged and in full force and effect.

15A. NAME AND TITLE OF SIGNER		16A. NAME AND TITLE OF CONTRACTING OFFICER JENNIFER CROW-YANG, REGIONAL CONTRACTING OFFICER	
15B. CONTRACTOR/OFFEROR (Signature of person authorized to sign)	15C. DATE SIGNED	16B. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (Signature of Contracting Officer)	16C. DATE SIGNED 3/24/2010

REQUEST FOR TASK ORDER PROPOSAL (RFTOP) NO. 641-10-007
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AMONG MOST AT RISK POPULATION (MARP)
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **Question:** Planning and implementing operations research can involve unforeseeable events beyond the control of the research organization. Examples include holds on approvals at the country level, changing priorities of the government, elections, and emergence of preliminary results or findings elsewhere that inspire a new research question or shape the direction of planned research. Research among MARPs can be further complicated by its sometimes controversial nature; for example, if religious groups protest or interfere with the conduct of research on MSM. USAID/Ghana has selected an award type, firm fixed price contract, which places all the risk on the contractor and does not take into consideration of any possible problems with implementation beyond the Contractor's control. Would USAID/Ghana consider an alternative award type to decrease this risk?

Response: We have reviewed the request and the IQC (which allows for firm-fixed price) and feel this RFTOP has specific studies that can be priced as a firm-fixed-price contract.

2. **Question:** Page 7 of the RFTOP states that this is a four-year task order with the total cost not to exceed \$800,000. However, page 9 of the RFTOP states that "in year 2, 3, and 4 additional research areas have been proposed for completion by the contractor, *subject to availability of funding*" (emphasis added). In addition, the RFTOP requests 20 protocols in the four year period, specifically, five studies in year 1 (with deliverables of a protocol, final report, 1-2 page advocacy paper, and in-country dissemination for each of the five topics) and additional research in years 2-4. From our experience, the cost of such small-scale research ranges from 100 to 200 thousand dollars, and, therefore, it is impossible to conduct 20 evaluations over the period of 4 years at total cost of 800 thousand dollars.

Response: (General): Based on previous experience, the cost for the studies we envision should be able to be carried out under the SOW with the existing budget. We have however revised the SOW to accommodate some of your concerns. Though the total ceiling remains the same at \$800,000, we have reduced the total number of studies to be conducted from 20 to a minimum of 10 for the same four (4) year period.

- a. Is our understanding of RFTOP correct, and reference to the 20 protocols over the 4-year period is an expectation to conduct 20 separate small-scale studies over this period?

Response: See response to (2) above. The new requirement is to conduct a minimum of 10 separate small-scale studies over the four year period.

- b. Could USAID/Ghana kindly clarify if \$800,000 is the budget ceiling for the first year or for the life of the task order?

Response: \$800,000 is the budget ceiling for the life of the task order.

- c. If the \$800,000 is currently the life of the project ceiling, would USAID/Ghana consider increasing the ceiling to allow adequate funding for the current scope of work?

Response: No (Also see response to (2) above)

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- d. If \$800,000 remains the ceiling for the four year period, would USAID/Ghana consider reducing the scope of work to align with the available funding?

Response: See response to (2) above

3. **Question:** The RFTOP states that the contractor will be required to submit quarterly financial summaries showing cost to date, budget estimate, advances, contractual obligation, variations, and cost to complete (p. 10). It also requires that the contractor track level of funding available and utilized for sub-grants and administrative support and oversight (p. 10). Finally, it states that the contractor shall provide monthly reports including accrued monthly expenditures, and annual work plans with estimated monthly funding requirements (p. 19). These requirements are not typically associated with firm fixed price (FFP) contracts, the award type for this contract.

- a. Could USAID/Ghana kindly clarify the award type for the contract? It is not more appropriate that this be a cost reimbursable mechanism under the IQC?

Response: As noted previously, this RFTOP will be firm fixed price. However, the financial reporting requirements and monthly reports denoted on (page 10) are hereby removed.

- b. If the award is a FFP, the Contractor assumes all financial risks and full responsibility for all costs, the only reporting requirements should be the submission of invoices.

Response: A quarterly progress report (not to exceed 2 pages) and an annual work plan shall be required.

4. **Question:** The RFTOP (p. 15) states that “A Marking Plan shall be developed by the *prospective* contractor” (emphasis added). It also notes that cost proposals will be evaluated in terms of whether “marking methods are clearly defined” (p. 36). Could USAID/Ghana please clarify if a Marking Plan is required as part of the proposal, or whether this plan is required only of the successful offeror?

Response: A Marking Plan is required only of the successful offeror.

5. **Question:** The RFTOP (p. 19) states that the contractor shall submit quarterly reports within seven calendar days before the start of the new quarter. Does USAID mean 7 business days after the start of the new quarter? Reports required to be submitted prior to the completion of the quarter may not include all relevant information for the previous quarter. Also, we request that AID revise the RFTOP to allow the report to be submitted 15 business days after the completion of a quarter.

Response: Quarterly reports shall be submitted within 15 business days after the completion of a quarter.

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6. **Question:** The RFTOP (p. 23) states that offerors should propose at least four “Ghana based” researchers.

- a. Could USAID/Ghana please clarify if these four researchers are considered key personnel under the RFTOP?

Response: Only one of the four researchers should be proposed as a key personnel because of the coordinating role attached to the position.

- b. Could USAID/Ghana please clarify if ex-patriate staff who are based in Ghana are acceptable for these positions?

Response: Ex-patriate staff who are based in Ghana are accepted for these positions on conditions that they are considered resident hire.

7. **Question:** The RFTOP (p. 29) requires both hard copy and electronic submission of proposals.

- a. Please state how many hard copies of both the technical and cost proposals are required?

Response: Three (3) hard copies and one (1) electronic copy of technical and cost proposals are required.

- b. Does USAID/Ghana have any limitations on file size for electronic submission?

*Response: Offerors must submit Task Order proposals electronically - internet email with up to 3 attachments (6 MB limit) per email compatible with MS WORD, Excel, PDF, in a MS Windows environment. There has been a problem with the receipt of *.zip files due to the anti-virus software. Therefore, offerors are discouraged from sending files in this format as we can not guarantee receipt by the internet server.*

8. **Question:** The technical proposal requirements (p. 31) include a performance monitoring plan (PMP) (p. 31). Can the PMP be included in tabular form in an annex, with a narrative description in the body of the technical proposal?

Response: Yes! The PMP can be included in a tabular form in an annex, with a narrative description in the body of the technical proposal.

9. **Question:** The technical proposal requirements (p. 31) include a “list of 5 contracts and/or subcontracts awarded with the last five years” including a description of the project and full contact information of the donor. Please advise if offerors should submit the USAID Performance Report – Short Form in an annex to provide this information.

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If USAID/Ghana requests the Performance Report - Short Form in an annex, would USAID/Ghana increase the page limit for the annexes (currently 15 pages) to allow for inclusion of CVs for the four research personnel, as well as the five Performance Report – Short Forms?

Response: Offerors should submit the USAID Performance Report –Short Form in an annex. To accommodate the performance report and CVs, the page limit for the annexes has been increased from 15 to 25 pages.

10. **Question:** In the RFTOP, USAID has stated that biomarkers shall not be a component of any of the operational research proposed under this scope, while at the same time, an expected result of the task order is identification of priority target populations. Additionally USAID states that the research should not utilize quasi-experimental methods, whereas another expected result is the identification of *effective* (emphasis added) future programming. As well established methods of achieving these expected results are excluded (e.g., sero-surveillance and quasi-experimental designs), would USAID please identify which methods that they will allow and or would consider?

Response: USAID discourages quasi-experimental and sero-surveillance methods because the cost of such studies is often high. If these methods are needed to address a research question, other instruments than this SEARCH task order will be used.

11. **Question:** We support and applaud the Mission’s desire to establish a partnership with a research entity for ongoing analysis and to help them target emerging issues for MARPs. However, this kind of partnership clearly requires a flexible approach on both the side of the contractor and USAID. A fixed priced mechanism does not seem to provide that flexibility. Why does USAID feel that FFP is the best mechanism to use when many factors remain unknown – specifically, that the funding and scope of work for year 2, 3 and 4 are to be determined?

Response: Please see response to Question 1.

12. **Question:** If USAID/Ghana revises the scope of work and/or budget for this RFTOP, will it also extend the deadline for submission of proposals?

Response: The submission deadline has been extended. The new submission deadline will be Friday, April 23, 2010.

13. The RFTOP’s reporting requirements, as outlined in Sections C.6, C.8 and F.6 are inconsistent and overly burdensome, especially with the limited funding. Please clarify the following:
- a. Which section is correct? C.6 requires a quarterly financial report while C.8 requires monthly. If they are both correct, what is the rationale for both monthly and quarterly reports?

Response: See response to Question 3.

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- b. Are we correct in understanding that these are in addition to the technical reports and deliverables?

Response: See response to Question 3.

14. **Question:** Page 8 specifies: “The operational and formative analyses shall not require experimental or quasi-experimental epidemiological methods ... nor should there be any experimental comparison groups. ... Additionally, the operational research shall not necessarily seek to produce generalizability of the results.”

“... the HIV/AIDS operational research activities ... shall be linked with HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support services ... to ensure that data and analyses are used for program planning and improvement.”

- a. Is this a firm exclusion of all experimental or comparison designs?

Response: The intention is not to use large and complex study designs.

- c. If the results are to be used for program planning and improvement, they must be “generalizable” at least in the Ghanaian context.

Response: The results should be generalizable for the specific subpopulation in a specific context (e.g. older MSM in metropolitan areas in Ghana)

15. **Question:** “... The primary aim is to utilize available data and evidence-based recommendations for improved HIV prevention programming and targeting...”

Does this exclude collecting new (primary) data, or does it direct the Contractor to conduct primary data collection only when available data are insufficient to address the specified research questions?

Response: It directs the Contractor to conduct primary data collection only when available data are insufficient to address the specified research question.

Year 1 research activities include: (a) prison populations; (b) injecting drug users; (c) peer educators; (d) MSM engaged in sex work; and (e) young MARP in high-prevalence areas.

Note: Because the number of studies is reduced to a MINIMUM of 10 studies, the offerer should include no more than three studies in the year one workplan.

16. **Question:** Under US Government regulations (45 CFR 46), prison populations are a protected category and research activities with them cannot be exempted from IRB review. Mapping locations of IDU should also be IRB-reviewed and obtain protection for data collected. The remaining research activities may or may not require IRB review, depending on design. This has implications for start-up time and costs.

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Deliverables (pages 10-11):

- 20 research protocols
- Final report for each research activity
- 1-2 page advocacy paper for each study completed
- Dissemination sessions for each topic pursued
- Bound/color printed deliverables as specified by COTR
- Final synthesis report

Response: The cost element has been reviewed. See answer to Q.2 above.

17. **Question:** Proposed budget ceiling of \$800,000 is insufficient to produce these deliverables.

Response: See answer to Q.2 above.

Page 20: Contract Reports and Information/Intellectual Products. "... The Contractor shall also submit ... databases..."

18. **Question:** If these "databases" are to include primary data collected from MARP, this has implications for informed consent, IRB approval, data entry to de-link, anonymize and protect confidentiality of respondents. This will add to time and costs.

Response: IRB reviews are required. In order to keep costs low, the offeror is advised to design the studies such that only a minimum of identifiers are collected and will have to be removed from the databases.

END OF AMENDMENT 01