

Request for Information (RFI)/ Sources Sought Notice National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center (NBACC) Operating Contract

Background

1. The National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center (NBACC) program addresses the need for scientific research to better anticipate, prevent, and mitigate the consequences of biological attacks. NBACC was established to integrate national resources for homeland security, drawing on resources from public health, law enforcement, and national security. The NBACC is a critical component in the overarching Homeland Security national biodefense complex (National labs, Plum Island Animal Disease Center, Bioknowledge Center, and University Centers of Excellence) and will be responsible for both helping to coordinate biodefense research activities among various federal agencies and to execute its own research plan. As such, it will be a key component in implementing the President's National Strategy for Homeland Security by addressing the need for substantial research into relevant biological and medical sciences.

2. Specifically, NBACC's mission is twofold: 1) Understand current and future biological threats, assess vulnerabilities, and determine potential impacts by conducting biothreat risk assessment and focused laboratory studies to guide the research, development, and acquisition of biodefense countermeasures such as detectors, drugs, vaccines, and decontamination technologies and; 2) Provide a national capability for conducting forensic analysis of evidence from biocrimes and terrorism to attain a "biological fingerprint" to identify perpetrators and determine the origin and method of attack.

3. The NBACC is made up of two centers, the Biological Threat Characterization Center (BTCC) and the National Bioforensic Analysis Center (NBFAC) to carry out these missions. Currently there is an interim NBACC Program Office, located in Federick, Maryland, which supports the BTCC and NBFAC in areas such as program execution, business operations, support services, and human capital resource management. For example, the NBACC Program Office facilitates the development of annual program objectives and execution plans in accordance with Department of Homeland Security, Science & Technology Directorate (DHS S&T) requirements. The Program Office also provides assistance in program management, quality control, facilities, and infrastructure planning, and preparations for annual program reviews. The NBACC Program Office functions will be performed

in the NBACC facility upon completion. To carry out the current NBACC programs, interim facilities are being used in partnering laboratories until the NBACC facility (described below) can be constructed and commence operations in 2008.

4. A new, state of the art NBACC facility will be constructed to help carry out the program missions described above by providing research laboratory and office space. The location for the NBACC facility is the new National Interagency Biodefense Campus (NIBC) at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The NBACC will share the campus at Fort Detrick with the laboratory facilities belonging to the Department of Defense (DoD), the US Department of Agriculture, and the National Institutes of Health. This will allow for the agencies to share a common knowledge base and provide opportunities to perform joint and collaborative research projects.

5. The new NBACC facility will provide a dedicated, safe, secure, and responsive biocontainment laboratory capability to manage biothreat risk assessments and to conduct biothreat characterization and dedicated bioforensics operations. As stated above, the NBACC facility will be comprised of the BTCC and NBFAC elements. The BTCC will conduct research to better understand current and future biological threats to include biothreat risk assessments, focused laboratory studies, and fill scientific knowledge gaps for high consequence biological threat agents. The NBFAC has been designated in the Presidential Directive for the 21st century to be the lead Federal facility for conducting analysis of evidence from a bio-crime or terrorist attack. Identification of a “biological fingerprint” is needed to determine where the agent came from and the perpetrator of the attack in support of the appropriate lead federal agency. As such, the NBFAC is partnered with the FBI and supports other Federal law enforcement agencies in scientific assessment of biological materials leading to attribution of use and legal proceedings.

6. The NBACC facility is designed (conceptually) to be 160,000 gross square feet characterized by a concentration of research and associated space including high containment (BSL-4 and BSL-3E) laboratories, BSL-2 support laboratories, evaluation laboratories, and facility support space. When fully completed, the NBACC will support approximately 120 personnel. An A&E firm, yet to be chosen, will develop the detailed design plan beginning in early 2005. Construction will commence in 2006 and the facility will start operations in the 3rd quarter of 2008.

Notional Concept

To meet the need described above, the Department envisions a Federally Funded Research and Development Contract (FFRDC) that operates a National Laboratory for DHS. The role of the FFRDC will evolve over time from managing NBACC research being conducted at external locations (government, university, and private facilities) to conducting the bulk of NBACC research once the facility at Fort Detrick is constructed. The research to be conducted at Fort Detrick will involve both unclassified, classified, and law enforcement sensitive matters. Additionally, the NBACC, in its capacity as the operator of the National Bioforensic Analysis Center (BFAC) is required to conduct forensic research in support of law enforcement investigations and judicial actions.

Special Relationship

1. A FFRDC shall conduct its business in a manner befitting its special relationship with the Government; i.e., to operate with objectivity and be free from conflicts-of-interest, to fully disclose its affairs to its sponsors, and to serve the unique needs of its sponsors, while holding their full confidence and trust. Any subsidiary relationship the FFRDC may have with a parent organization, or consortia of organizations, must demonstrate and maintain strict safeguards from conflicts of interest with such parent organizations. Work performed by the FFRDC for non-DHS customers may be performed only with the explicit permission of DHS (S&T). The parent organization, or consortium of organizations, may also have to accept restrictions on the types of work that it is allowed to undertake to ensure that the special FFRDC relationship cannot be exploited by the parent or that the work of the parent does not, in any way, detract from the objectivity or independence of the work done by the FFRDC or its availability to DHS to perform quick response work to respond to real-world crises or similar events.
2. The nature of their mission requires that FFRDCs operate in a strategic relationship with their sponsor and users. Strategic relationships have the following characteristics:
 - a. FFRDCs and their sponsor commit to stable and long-term relationships.
 - b. FFRDCs are granted access to Government and contractor information beyond that which is common to the normal contractual relationship, including intelligence data and program planning information.

- c. FFRDCs bear a special responsibility to avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest, and they accept stringent restrictions on their scope, method of operations, the kinds of efforts they can undertake either for their sponsor or for other users, and restrictions on the public dissemination of research, studies and analyses conducted on behalf of DHS.

3. Policy

- a. FFRDC Work: A DHS FFRDC may only perform core work as defined in its core statement and in accordance with the following guidelines:

- (1) The US(S&T) or its designee must approve all work.
- (2) Work may only be accepted from DHS, other Government entities, state and municipal governments, and public charities.
- (3) A DHS FFRDC may accept no commercial work.

- b. Non-FFRDC Work: Parent institutions operating DHS FFRDC(s) may perform non-FFRDC work subject to US(S&T) or its designee review for compliance with established criteria mutually agreed upon by the US(S&T) and parent institution. The criteria shall be addressed in the Sponsoring Agreement. In establishing these criteria, the following guidelines shall be used:

- (1) Non-FFRDC work by parent institutions should be in the national interest, such as addressing economic, social, or governmental issues.
- (2) Non-FFRDC work shall not undermine the independence, objectivity, or credibility of the FFRDC by posing an actual or perceived conflict of interest, nor shall it detract from the performance of current or future FFRDC work.
- (3) Non-FFRDC work shall not be acquired by taking unfair advantage of the parent institution's operation of its FFRDC(s) or of information that is available to that parent institution only through its FFRDC(s).
- (4) Non-FFRDC work may be done for public sector entities and public charities. Commercial work (i.e., work for entities outside the public sector that are not public charities) may only be accepted if the sponsor grants a specific exception in writing for the commercial work request at issue. If the sponsor grants an exception, such work must be non-proprietary and may not exclusively benefit any individual for-profit entity.

- (5) There are no specified dollar limits on the volume of non-FFRDC work. However, subject to any specific terms in the Sponsoring Agreement the US(S&T) will periodically assess whether the non-FFRDC work performed by the parent institution is impairing its ability to perform its FFRDC work.
- (6) Universities operating DHS-sponsored FFRDCs are not restricted from performing non-FFRDC work. Such work must be obtained, however, in a manner compliant with applicable procurement policies to ensure that work is not acquired through an unfair advantage associated with the FFRDC mission, purpose or special relationship.

Responses

No contract will be awarded as a result of this RFI. The Government will not pay for costs associated with developing a response to this RFI. No other information is available to respondents. To be of greatest value, responses should be received by close of business, March 23, 2005. Electronic submissions (email with Microsoft Word attachment) are required. Attachments should be no longer than 20 pages. Please send responses to usamraa.rfiresponse@det.amedd.army.mil. Responses should address the following areas:

Comments on Objectives and Notional Concept

1. Is the notional concept the best way to meet NBACC's objectives? Why or why not? Does the objective lend itself to formulation of a FFRDC? Why or why not? Should competition be limited to non-profit or not-for-profit organizations? Why or why not?
2. Address how the research program will be managed in the interim before construction completion of the laboratories as it evolves over time, eventually resulting in a full scale research laboratory facility. Address how the research program will be integrated into the Homeland Security Biodefense complex. An initial concept is envisioned that the role of the operator of the NBACC facility will scale up and evolve over time since the initial work efforts will be focused on managing the ongoing and planned research projects on a smaller scale until the facility can become operational in 2008. What management competencies/constructs/capabilities will be necessary to manage NBACC scientific objectives at disparate, geographically dispersed facilities? What metrics are meaningful for the initial, management stage of the contract?

3. Address what type of industry teaming arrangements would best accomplish the mission of managing the research facility operations and performing the research in a way that will inspire public confidence in the capabilities of the FFRDC to operate a very sensitive facility. Current industry expertise should be collectively considered in a way that will benefit the government and allow it to fulfill its mission objectives described above.
4. Address how the contract mechanisms should be arranged to conduct the above missions and best benefit the government from a cost and schedule standpoint. Should the type of contract evolve with the contractor's role? What evaluation criteria are particularly meaningful, considering the evolving nature of the contractor's role? Include any special issues or challenges with the source selection process.
5. Describe any other challenges or special considerations the Government should take into account for the NBACC operating contract.

**Capabilities
Statement**

1. Tell us about your organization and its capabilities to meet NBACC's objectives. Identify your organization's salient characteristics: small or large business, for profit or not for profit, university or consortium, etc.
2. Identify your organization's relevant experience with respect to NBACC's objectives.
3. You may identify current or prospective teaming partners, their salient characteristics, and relevant experience.
4. The Contractor shall be required by the terms of contract to obtain insurance to operate a biocontainment facility. If Contractor is unable to obtain sufficient insurance coverage for activities under the contract, and the Contractor requires indemnification pursuant to Public Law 85-804 or 10 USC 2354 from the USGG, the Contractor shall submit a request to DHS for indemnification by the USG. The Contractor's request for indemnification shall provide all information and documentation required by FAR 50.403-1(a). Since final decisions on extension of indemnification rest with the Office of Management and Budget, it cannot now be determined whether the Contractor performing the contemplated effort will be offered indemnity. Would the absence of an offer of indemnity under PL 85-804 and 10 USC 2354 affect your firm's decision to participate in this acquisition?