

The Department of Homeland Security accepted questions through February 16, 2006 from prospective responders to the January 19, 2006 (71 FR 3107) request for [Expressions of Interest \(EOI\)](#). The FAQs and the Department's response are presented as follows:

❖ Potential Sites for the NBAF

1. Question: If a consortium would like to submit more than one site should a complete EOI be submitted for each site or should information for all sites be submitted in one EOI within the 20 page limit? Can the plan include more than one proposed site realizing that within the 20-page limit each site would need to be justified and prioritized?

Response: Each site requires its own submission. A consortium may propose more than one site, but each site must be submitted separately.

2. Question: We want to include economic impact information as part EOI be submitted for each site or should information for all sites be submitted in one EOI within the 20 page limit? Can the plan include more than one proposed site realizing that within the 20-page limit each site would need to be justified and prioritized?

Response: Each site requires its own submission. A consortium may propose more than one site, but each site must be submitted separately.

3. Question: Could a BRAC site be a possible location for the NBAF?

Response: A Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) site could be an appropriate site for the NBAF. We recommend that community support letters (local and state governments) be included with any proposal involving a BRAC site.

4. Question: Can any entity respond to the Request for Expressions of Interest for the NBAF? Is there any prohibition against a national laboratory being a member of a consortium responding to the EOI?

Response: Any entity can respond and should identify the level of community support (i.e., local and state governments, national and local agriculture producer and commodity stakeholders, industry, academia, etc.). National labs could be a member of a consortium responding to the EOI.

5. Question: What do you mean by "proximity" to "international airports?" Do you mean an airport with customs facilities? Do you have a list of the types of permits (environmental requirements) you need? Clarify "access to highways?" Can you provide any breakout by position and any indication of the number of employees? By proximity to vaccine industry capability, you are referring to vaccine research capability or vaccine manufacturing capability, or both? Clarify proximity to research infrastructure.

Response: DHS will review each application on its own merits against the criteria stated in the EOI. All viable options will be evaluated for the location on the NBAF.

6. Question: Is it necessarily the case that all of the facility will be built in one place? Might it be divided into two or three places?

Response: It is not currently envisioned that the facility will be built as separate buildings in different locations. Rather, the facility will be a single facility (with necessary support facilities) within an approximate 30 acre area.

7. Question: Will special consideration be given to previously designated DHS centers of excellence, etc?

Response: No, DHS will review each application on its own merits against the criteria stated in the EOI. All viable options will be evaluated for the location of the facility.

8. Question: Does the Government intend to select the NBAF's location prior to selecting a method of acquiring the facility (such as through assignable purchase option, development/lease from private sector, purchase) or does the Government intend to select the NBAF location based on a combination of geographic criteria and the offeror's proposal for how the facility would be acquired?

Response: The EOI was issued for DHS to explore potential sites for the NBAF. The method of acquiring the facility will be handled under a separate competitive procurement for the design and construction of the NBAF.

9. Question: Given the NBAF mission area, is it anticipated that the site would need to accommodate outdoor grazing and conventional animal care and storage facilities (e.g. stables; pens) for animal storage preparatory to their use in research? If so, what is the expected number of animals that would need to be accommodated, and would such storage necessarily be on site or (alternatively) could it be nearby in a non-contiguous area? What is the estimated usage for that land (minimum of 30 acres), in terms of building footprint, parking lots, buffer, support buildings, and animal grazing and storage? Would the government see it to its advantage an offering of greater than 30 acres? Given the size and unprecedented mission for NBAF, what are the estimated needs for power (kW), water supply, sewage handling? The EOI implies the need for distilled water as a supplied utility. Is that the intent? Can the government elaborate on the criteria that as part of the research capabilities, factor proximity to vaccine industrial capability as important.

Response: Specific facility and infrastructure requirements have not been determined. The forthcoming conceptual design process will provide a better estimate of both facility construction and operational requirements.

10. Question: Will the Government consider a build-to-suit for lease on a site owned or leased by a private sector property developer?

Response: All viable options will be evaluated for the location of the facility.

11. Question: Does the Government have any preference on how the site is obtained (i.e., Government purchase of land, Government long-term building lease, Government long-term ground lease etc?).

Response: DHS will consider and evaluate all viable options for how the site is obtained.

12. Question: Does the Government have funding set aside for this project?

Response: DHS was appropriated \$23M in FY06 to develop the NBAF project. Specific funding for construction has not yet been appropriated.

❖ PIADC and NBAF

1. Question: Will the location of the new facility also bring an established workforce from the current DHS facility at Plum Island?

Response: It is anticipated that existing programs at PIADC would transfer to the new facility. Currently, at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC), the USDA performs both basic and applied research to develop countermeasures (vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics), as well as, operational responsibilities for foreign and emerging animal diseases, e.g., testing of imported products, training of veterinarians, diagnostic evaluation of samples. Simultaneously, DHS focuses on targeted advanced development of promising countermeasures and, in conjunction with private industry, speeds their evaluation for potential rapid deployment for foreign animal diseases (FAD). DHS is placing greater emphasis on rapid diagnostic development, threat assessment, bioforensics, and countermeasures such as vaccines and antivirals for the highest consequence agent – the Foot and Mouth disease virus.

2. Question: Will DHS consider the option of building the new facility at Plum Island without a proposal from an outside source or consortium recommending the site?

Response: Yes, Plum Island has been from the beginning one of the options for siting the NBAF. Three options are still being considered: To retain the PIADC at its present BSL-3 and scope of work, and recapitalize to meet 21st century laboratory standards; upgrade the PIADC to meet the requirements for an interagency facility with BSL-4 working spaces; or request permission to construct a new facility elsewhere in the United States.

3. Question: Since PIADC is now owned by DHS, could a proposal be submitted by another source recommending the NBAF be built at Plum Island?

Response: Yes, a consortium might be formed to provide a strong Expression of Interest supporting Plum Island as the site of the NBAF.

4. Question: Will the evaluation of proposals take into account the cost of decommissioning Plum Island if another site is selected?

Response: No decision or selection has been made at this point. While no decision has been reached and the response to the request for EOI has not yet closed, it should be pointed out that PIADC is at its half-century and is becoming increasingly costly to maintain. Even if the NBAF were located on Plum Island, the current PIADC facility would need to be decommissioned. Whatever the solution, a carefully considered process will be initiated to assess all of the options and identify a “best use” solution for Plum Island.

5. Question: What is the future of Plum Island as a resource to the Federal Government if a new facility is not constructed on Plum Island?

Response: No decision or selection has been made at this point on the future of Plum Island. While no decision has been reached and the response to the request for EOI has not yet closed, it should be pointed out that the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) is 50 years old and is becoming increasingly costly to maintain. Even if the NBAF were located on Plum Island, the current PIADC facility would need to be decommissioned. Whatever the solution, a carefully considered process will be initiated to assess all of the options and identify a “best use” solution for Plum Island.

6. Question: Below is an excerpt from Dr. Maureen McCarthy's testimony to the Senate on July 20 2005. Dr. McCarthy (Director, Office of Research and Development, Department of Homeland Security) makes reference to a study---NATIONAL BIO AND AGRODEFENSE FACILITY. PIADC is a unique and critical facility for the nation's foreign animal disease defense and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2004. Thus, the facility is now well beyond its originally planned life span, and is in need of recapitalization. In FY 2005, the S&T Directorate is funding a conceptual design study for a next-generation facility, the National Bio and Agro-defense Facility (NBAF). The goal of this study is to determine the programmatic drivers for the necessary size and scope of the facility and the research and development to be conducted there.” Was that study done? If so is it available? How would I obtain a copy? Would I need to file a FOIA request?

Response: This study has not been done yet. The conceptual design study will be initiated later this year.

❖ Design of NBAF

1. Question: Will DHS be solely responsible for the architectural and engineering design, construction and commissioning of the NBAF?

Response: An interagency working group composed of subject matter experts from the occupying agencies will determine the programmatic requirements for the new facility. These programmatic requirements will be incorporated into the facility design by the Architect Engineering firm selected by DHS to design the NBAF. DHS will also competitively select the construction firm that will be responsible for building and commissioning the NBAF.

2. Question: Is the DHS going to run a separate procurement for the development/construction of this facility?

Response: DHS plans to issue separate competitive procurements for the design and construction of the NBAF.

3. Question: What is the estimated timeline for the development of this facility and when does the Government anticipate the completion of this facility?

Response: Construction is anticipated to begin in 2009 and the facility will be operational in 2013.

4. Question: Will DHS take into consideration cost sharing opportunities?

Response: DHS strongly encourages cost sharing including cost sharing in kind from state and local jurisdictions that could be applied toward construction and operations of the NBAF.

5. Question: Does the EOI include the activities for the design and construction of the NBAF facility?

Response: No. The EOI is only intended to explore and evaluate potential sites for the NBAF and will not include evaluation of NBAF facility design and construction contractors. The solicitation for the selection of AE firms (for design) and construction firms (for construction) will be conducted by DHS independently and separately from the EOI process

❖ NBAF Operations

1. Question: What will be the mode of governance and/or who will be responsible for identifying research topics, prioritizing research programs and managing NBAF operations?

Response: NBAF could be a government-owned government-operated (GOGO) or government-owned contractor-operated (GOCO) facility. A decision will be made at a later date.

2. Question: How will continual public transparency of NBAF operations be accomplished?

Response: The public will be able to provide comments during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, which will start when enough facility information exists to begin the NBAF site selection. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be published at the start of this process and DHS would hold public meetings in the impacted communities to solicit public input on the scope and content of the EIS. The EIS would analyze the potential environmental impacts of a range of reasonable alternatives for constructing and operating the NBAF.

3. Question: Will DHS declare that any research related to developing or preparing biological warfare agents will never be allowed?

Response: DHS conducts all of its biological agent research in full-compliance with the regulations governing such work in the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and other applicable laws and regulations. The BWC explicitly bans the production of biological agents for hostile purposes or armed conflict.

4. Question: What is the likely staffing plan for the facility, listed with pay grades and pay scales? How many positions at the NBAF are expected to be filled by managers, scientific staff (by area of interest; i.e., microbiologists, chemists, etc), clerical staff, building maintenance staff?

Response: It is currently anticipated that 250-300 full-time research and support staff would be employed at the NBAF. This number does not take into account visiting research staff. It is expected that no more than 70-80 percent of the NBAF would be "laboratory space" per se based on current planning requirements. The forthcoming conceptual design process will provide a better estimate of both facility construction and operational requirements including employment levels.

5. Question: Is BSL 3 required only for investigating infectious agents of food animals? Is the BSL 4 required only for laboratory work and not for animal accommodation? In other words, no human pathogens will be used for these BLS3 and BSL4 facilities, only for agricultural diseases?

Response: The interrelated Homeland Security missions of the three Departments (DHS, HHS and USDA) all require new research and development infrastructure that can accommodate extensive testing with a variety of animal models. The proposed NBAF is envisioned to provide the nation with the first integrated agricultural, zoonotic disease and public health research, development, testing and evaluation facility with the capability to address threats from human pathogens, high-consequence zoonotic disease agents, and foreign animal disease. A further breakdown of use and floor space requirements has not been determined.

❖ NBAF EOI Submission Questions

1. Question: Will there be the ability to request an extension of time, to submit after the March 31, 2006 deadline?

Response: DHS has no plans to extend the March 31, 2006 deadline for EOI submissions.

2. Question: With respect to the letter of expression of interest, can you please acquaint me with what kind and how much information should be included at this time? Are there some guidelines you could provide beyond that?

Response: DHS will evaluate each EOI submission using the 4 site criteria categories (research capabilities, workforce, acquisition/construction/operating and community acceptance) cited in the EOI. Information is required on the 7 items listed in the EOI (i.e., description of consortium, letters of support, etc.). Any page which contains technical information is included in the 20-page limit. Therefore, you do not need to count tabs, tables of contents, title sheets and indices or maps attached to the main EOI response.

3. Question: Is there any prohibition against a national laboratory being a member of a consortium responding to the Request for Expressions of Interest for the NBAF? The question is posed as national labs were not specifically mentioned in the request as potential respondents.

Response: National labs could be a member of a consortium responding to the public health research, development, testing and evaluation facility with the capability to address threats from human pathogens, high-consequence zoonotic disease agents, and foreign animal disease. A further breakdown of use and floor space requirements has not been determined.

4. Question: Is DHS willing to have a pre-application F&Q session with members of the consortium to answer questions related to the application process?

Response: There is not a pre-application meeting planned.

5. Question: Are specific federal agencies/laboratories able to be included in an EOI as indicated in the Federal Register? If yes, who do we contact to form potential partnerships with specific federal laboratories/agencies? What is the mechanism to contact the appropriate person?

Response: Yes, it is incumbent on the respondent to develop the partnership(s) supporting their EOI.

6. Question: How important is community acceptance to an institution's chance of winning the competition for the NBAF? Would an expression of interest from Boston, for instance, be viewed negatively as a result of the controversy there about the BSL-4 lab at Boston University?

Response: As stated in the EOI, community endorsement of the project is one of the criteria that will be considered. Clearly, having a strong and consistent level of endorsement in a candidate's application is advantageous.

7. Question: Is this procurement being run solely by DHS and what, if any, other federal agencies or individuals are involved in the decision-making process?

Response: The EOI is not a procurement. It is a method to explore potential sites for the NBAF.

8. Question: Does the Government intend to enter into joint research projects with universities (CRADA's)?

Response: At this stage, this has not been determined.