Table of Contents

Overview

1) What is the PICS III Contract?

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Public Information and Communication Services II (PICS III) contract is a multiple award Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) acquisition vehicle established to provide communication goods and services. PICS III is available to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HHS Operating Divisions (OPDIVS), and on a case-by-case basis, other Federal agencies.

The focus of the PICS III contract is to provide all the necessary services, qualified personnel, facilities and funding, not otherwise provided by the Government as needed to perform the services. Seventeen (17) small business contractors have been awarded a contract and are available to support the NIH. All requirements will be fulfilled under task orders that will provide detail of the specific services that will be required.

The contract consists of a five (5) year base.

2) Who can use the PICS III?

Customers at all ICs and offices across the NIH may use this contract as well as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HHS Operating Divisions (OPDIVS), and on a case by case basis, other Federal agencies.

3) How long is the contract for?

The life of the PICS III contract vehicle is five (5) years.

4) What is the maximum duration of a task order issued during the life of the PICS III contract?

The life of the PICS III vehicle is five (5) years. The completion of the task order period of performance must be within 12 months after the master contract expires.

5) Can we get a list of contractors from you?

Yes. They are posted on our website on the Vendors page.

1

NIH National Institutes of Health

6)   Is the use of the PICS III contracts mandatory?

This vehicle is not mandatory; however, its use is highly encouraged. The PICS III contract vehicle is aligned with NIH's corporate goal to consolidate contracts. Similarly, PICS III is structured as a total small business set aside. Therefore, use of the PICS III contract may consequently support NIH in meeting its small business contracting goals.

7)   When can the PICS III contract vehicle be terminated?

The contract with any PICS III prime can be terminated at any point during the period of performance of this contract. If this event occurs, all task orders will also be terminated.

8)   What are the benefits of using the PICS III?

The PICS III contract is a flexible means for NIH's ICs and offices to obtain media, communications, and information dissemination services and technology.

Created with community input in mind, PICS III will work to increase effectiveness and usability. PICS III provides experienced and cost-effective personnel through competition among qualified contractors. Benefits of using PICS III include:

- Relieves the customer of the burden of executing a full contract.

- Relieves the customer from completing the Small Business Review process.

- Offers competition among a pre-screened group of qualified vendors.

- Promotes small business goals.

- Lessens the burden on the customer by making debriefings optional.

- Reduces the risk of protest.

9)   Will contractors have access to the PICS III logo?

No. The logo will not be released to contractors, as that action may be perceived as the Government favouring a particular contractor. However, "PICS III" can be identified in text format without use of the logo.

Task Order Process

1)   How do I place an order on the PICS III contract?

Detailed instructions on how to place a task order against PICS III are provided in section 3 the SOP. A brief overview of the task order process is described below.

Steps:

Step 1	Task Order COR develops TORP and sends it to the Task Order CO for review
Step 2	Task Order CO reviews the TORP and sends it to the PICS III support team

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Step 3	PICS III support team receives the TORP and assigns a TORP number
Step 4	PICS III support team reviews and releases the TORP
Step 5	Contractors review TORP and submit questions, if necessary, to the Task Order CO
Step 6	Task Order CO works with the Task Order COR to draft responses to Contractor questions
Step 7	Task Order CO sends questions and answers to PICS III support team
Step 8	PICS III support team releases questions and answers to the contractors
Step 9	Contractors submit proposals in response to the TORP to the Task Order CO
Step 10	Task Order CO and COR evaluate the proposals and select an Awardee by completing the Selection Recommendation Document (SRD)
Step 11	PICS III support team reviews and concurs on the SRD
Step 12	Task Order CO processes the task order award and forwards a signed copy of the award document to the PICS III support team
Step 13	PICS III support team releases award letter to Awardee and Task Order CO/COR announcing the task order award
Step 14	Contractor starts work under the task order
Step 15	Upon task order expiration, the Task Order COR completes a performance survey and works with the Task Order CO to close out the order

Task Order Guidelines are subject to change; please refer to the latest version of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

2)   What must the Task Order Request Package (TORP) include?

The TORP will include (1) a completed TORP form, (2) a Statement of Work (SOW), (3) an Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) (not released to contractors), (4) a Determination & Findings (D&F) (if applicable), and either a (5) funding memo if the total value (base value plus option years) is less than $250,000 or an (6) Acquisition Plan if the total value is greater than $250,000.

*NOTE: For Task Orders Involving Conferences/Meetings:

All required conference/meeting forms and waivers based upon NIH's most recent policy guidance must be approved and submitted prior to TORP award. If the customer does not have the required conference/meeting form to submit initially with the TORP, it must be submitted with the Selection Recommendation Document (SRD).

Additional information can be found in Section 3 of the SOP.

3)   What is the funding memo?

It is a memo stating that funds are available. It is generally signed by the EO or budget officer or any authorized personnel from your IC or agency.

4)   What is a "No Response" statement?

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A "No Response" statement must be submitted if a contractor is unable or otherwise cannot perform a requirement. This shall be submitted electronically to the Task Order Contracting Officer via e-mail copying the PICS III email address (PICSIII@mail.nih.gov).

5) Will every contractor receive all Task Order Request Packages (TORPs)?

Yes, all contractors will receive each TORP in accordance with FAR 16.505(b)(1), Fair Opportunity, unless an exception to Fair Opportunity has been approved.

6) Are customers allowed to sole source to a particular contractor?

All task orders are competitive. All contractors will receive all requirements unless an exception to the Fair Opportunity applies and has been approved by the PICS III CO.

7) How long does it take to process and award a task order for the PICS contract?

Task order timelines will be largely dependent on the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative. The timeline for the PICS III support team to review and release the TORP to contractors is targeted to be approximately 5 business days. Task orders with special requirements or complex orders may take longer. This processing time begins once a complete, acceptable TORP is received by the PICS III support team. Incomplete or unacceptable TORPs will require additional time for the PICS III support team to advise the Task Order CO on minimum acceptable requirements.

Task Order CO will establish a TORP response time that will afford contractors a reasonable opportunity to respond to the requirement. When establishing the TORP response time, the Task Order CO should consider the circumstances of the individual acquisition and account for factors such as the complexity, availability, and value of the requirement.

8) Is it possible to see the status of the task order?

If you have any questions regarding the status of the task order, please contact your Task Order CO.

9) For questions about the TORP process and during each phase of the pre-award stage, with whom should we follow up if we have questions?

The PICS III support team (PICSIII@mail.nih.gov) is available to consult users on the contract.

10) What is the evaluation process for the task order proposals?

The Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative and Task Order Contracting Officer will coordinate the evaluation of the contractors' technical and price proposals in order to recommend an Awardee. Fifty percent of the technical evaluation panel chosen to evaluate the technical proposals will have successfully completed Contracting Officer's Representative training before assuming their designated role. It is the responsibility of the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative to ensure that contractors are treated equitably and fairly during this evaluation process.

Based on the results of the evaluation, the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative will recommend the contractor that can provide the best value to the Government and prepare a completed Selection Recommendation Document (SRD) describing the selection process and providing a rationale for selection.

11) How and where will award be made and announced?

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After the task order award is signed and submitted by the Task Order CO to PICSIII@mail.nih.gov, the PICS III support team will announce the task order award by releasing an award letter to the winning contractor. An award notification will be emailed to all PICS III contractors.

12) Once our Task Order CO makes an award, can we contact the contractor right away?

Contractors are instructed not to begin work until they have officially received the task order award and award letter from the PICS III support team. You may contact the contractor once the PICS III support team sends out the award.

13) Prior to the usual steps to exercise an option (either extending the term or additional quantities), are there any additional steps for PICS III Task Orders?

To exercise an option, please process the modification as you normally would, and send a copy of that modification to the PICS III support team (PICSIII@mail.nih.gov).

Services and Task Order Types

1) What contract types are available for the task orders?

The PICS III contract type is an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) contract. Task orders under this contract may be Fixed-Price (FP), Time and Materials (T&M), or Labor Hour type task orders. T&M or Labor Hour task orders should be used only if FP type task order are not suitable. Use of a T&M or Labor Hour task orders require a Determination and Findings (D&F) approval from the Task Order CO for the IC or agency. T&M or Labor Hour task orders beyond three years will require the approval of the Head of Contracting Activity (HCA).

2) What are the services available on the contract?

Communication goods and services, namely media, communications, and information dissemination services and technology, including:

Communications and Outreach Support

- Communications Research

- News Media Operations Support

- Media and Crisis Communication Training

- Audience Outreach and Promotion

- Outreach to Target Populations/Health Disparities Programs

- Foreign Language, Translation, and Interpretation

- Information and Referrals ("Clearinghouses")

Material Development and Distribution Support

- Materials Development

- Inventories / Warehouse / Distribution Services

NIH National Institutes of Health

Graphic Design, Web, and Database Support

- Graphic Design

- IT Requirements

- Web Design, Development, and Management

- Preservation, Cataloging, and Storage of Web-based and Other Digital Content

- Website Usability Testing

- Database Design, Development, and Management

- Information Tracking and Referral

- Security

Exhibit Support

- Exhibit Development, Design, Production, Storage and Transport

- Meeting, Conference, and Event Support

See the PWS for more details.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Support

1) **What are the responsibilities of the PICS III Contracting Officials?**

The PICS III Contracting Officials within OLAO include the PICS III Contracting Officer and the PICS III Contract Specialist. These individuals will have the authority to act as agents of the Government under this contract. The main role of the PICS III Contracting Officer is receiving the task order Request Package (TORP) packages from PICS III customers, reviewing TORPs, releasing TORPs to all contractors, and acting as the point of contact for contractual issues related to the PICS III vehicle.

2) **What are the responsibilities of the PICS III Contracting Officers Representatives (COR)?**

The PICS III COR shall act as the PICS III Contracting Officer's Representative for the purpose of this contract. The main activities the PICS III COR is responsible for are monitoring the contractor's technical progress, interpreting the PWS, and assisting in the resolution of technical issues.

3) **What are the responsibilities of the Task Order Contracting Officer?**

Task Order Contracting Officers must be an appropriately warranted Contracting Officer. These officials will be representatives of an NIH Acquisition Office and will have the authority to act as an agent of the Government under a particular task order. Their main duties include submitting the TORP, aiding in evaluation of proposals, creating and signing the Selection Recommendation Document (SRD), and awarding of the task order.

4) **What are the responsibilities of the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative?**

National Institutes of Health

The Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative will typically be the individual requiring the services offered under the PICS III vehicle or may be a designee within the IC requiring the service. With assistance from the Task Order Contracting Officer, the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative will develop the requirement and will represent the Government as the main interface between NIH and the contractor during the delivery of services. The main activities are working with Task Order Contracting Officers to draft the TORP, assisting in creating and signing the SRD, providing direction to the contractor's management staff to facilitate task order performance, and monitoring performance over the life of the task order.

5) **Can an AO perform a task order COR's role?**

Not unless they have completed the FAC-COR training and are certified.

6) **What support is available regarding the PICS III contract?**

The PICS III support team (PICSIII@mail.nih.gov) is available to consult users of the contract. The team will prepare and conduct information sessions to assist customers in understanding and using the PICS III contract vehicle. In addition, materials such as the Standard Operating Procedures document and a fact sheet are available on the PICS III website (http://pics.olao.od.nih.gov).

7) **Who handles the task order management?**

The Task Order Contracting Officer's Representatives, in coordination with the task order Contracting Officer, will be responsible for the majority of task order activities involving initiating, managing, modifying and closing out task orders but will be supported by the PICS III Contracting Officer.

8) **Who addresses all PICS III contract level issues?**

Contract level issues that arise during task order performance should be referred to the PICS III support team for resolution.

Small Business Aspects

1) **Is the PICS III contract set up as a total or partial small business set-aside?**

The PICS III contracts have been reserved as a total Small Business set-aside.

2) **Who gets credit for using small business?**

The customer will get the credit.

Invoicing

1) **How will the billing process work?**

The PICS III contract requires a three-way match; the contractor must submit invoices through IPP according to the contract. Copies of the invoice must be emailed to the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative for review and approval.

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For additional information regarding invoicing procedures, please ask your Task Order Contracting Officer and Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative.

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