

SECTION C – Description/ Specifications/ Work Statement

PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION SERVICES CONTRACT III (PICS III)

C.1 Activities

Purpose

This master contract will enable the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Operating Divisions (OPDIVS) and on a case-by-case basis, other Federal agencies to achieve and maintain high quality performance in the areas of media, communication, and information dissemination and technology by purchasing superior communication goods and services, especially where this expertise does not exist in-house. This solicitation will result in multiple Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts with task orders issued against the IDIQ contracts. Most task orders will be for goods and services related to medicine, health, and science and will originate from the NIH and its component Institutes and Centers.

C.2 Background Information

The NIH is the U.S. Federal Government's primary medical research agency and is one of several health agencies within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The NIH is now one of the world's foremost biomedical research agencies and serves as the focal point for American biomedical research within the Federal Government. NIH began in 1887 as a one-room Laboratory of Hygiene and today is comprised of 27 separate Institutes and Centers (ICs), most of which are located on a 322-acre campus located in Bethesda, Maryland. The annual NIH budget is now more than \$45 billion. The NIH mission is to uncover new knowledge that will lead to better health for everyone. NIH works toward that mission by conducting research in its own laboratories; supporting non-Federal scientists at universities, teaching hospitals, and other academic institutions around the world; sponsoring training programs for research investigators; and fostering the communication of research-based health information.

C.3 Scope of the Contract

HHS, the NIH, and NIH component ICs are engaged in diverse communications activities that reflect profound shifts in American demographics and a continuously changing communication landscape. This landscape primarily reflects an important trend: the increasingly prevalent link between health, science, and medical communications and the digital world. It also reflects a number of communications imperatives. Health, scientific, and medical agencies must: a) continue to address the question of how various audiences prefer to obtain information; b) pursue integrative strategies that appeal to agency audiences; and c) make health and science information more accessible and reliable to the widest audiences possible. Communications activities include consumer-oriented information clearinghouses; national exhibit programs; comprehensive public awareness, education, prevention campaigns; and more.

NIH and its partner agencies at HHS will use this contract to purchase comprehensive communication, evaluation, and social marketing services.

Federal Acquisitions Regulations (FAR) Subpart 17.5 (“*Interagency Acquisitions*”) provides the authority for placement of orders for needed supplies and services between major organizational units within an agency and authorizes agencies to enter into mutual agreements to obtain supplies or services by inter-agency acquisition. Task orders require for a number of contract types and terms, including firm fixed-price, time and material, and labor hour.

This solicitation will allow the NIH and its partner agencies at HHS to minimize delay and administrative burden; fulfill their public affairs missions by purchasing a full range of comprehensive communication, evaluation, and social marketing goods and services; and improve efficiency and speed in both Federal acquisitions and work performed. The procurement requirements of Offices utilizing the acquisition will vary. Contracted firms and individuals should well understand the mission, mandate, and vision of HHS, the NIH, and NIH component Institutes and centers, and shall be able to work with a wide variety of media, including but not limited to audiovisual, print, display, and computer-based media. The NIH has created a number of service categories listed below.

C.4 Contract Environment

C.4.1 General

Contracted firms shall provide all management, administration, staffing, planning, scheduling, procuring, assembling, tracking and reporting for all items or services required under this master contract and/or individual task order(s). This shall include but is not limited to the following:

- a) All activities associated with recruiting and hiring qualified staff members; such as, advertising, screening applicants, conducting interviews, checking references, and ensuring the completion of any mandatory training.
- b) Maintaining “in-house” skills, teaming and/or subcontracting arrangements to ensure that staff members meet required minimum experience, skills, and knowledge and are available on short notice.
- c) Screening and processing prospective contract staff to ensure that all contractor employees used under this contract meet personnel hiring and security requirements.
- d) All activities associated with management of contractor facilities that may be utilized in the execution of work outlined under this master contract, including required space, equipment, furniture, supplies, property, and requisite maintenance.
- e) Utilizing electronic means to conduct business transactions under this master contract to the maximum extent feasible. This will include, but is not limited to the following: contractor receipt of Performance Work Statement (PWS), contractor submission of proposals in response to such requests, Government/contractor electronic mail exchanges to support administration of active task orders, contractor invoicing, and electronic funds transfer for payment of approved invoices.
- f) Ensuring that any facilities used for contractor performance meet all physical security and safety requirements of this contract.

g) Planning, scheduling, and procuring any airfare, accommodations, and ground transportation for all approved travel by contractor personnel. Contractors must ensure that invoiced travel costs are itemized in accordance with Government travel guidelines in effect at the time of travel.

h) Making all necessary arrangements to ensure that contractor personnel performing field work have all necessary supplies and equipment by the time they arrive at the site.

i) Procuring items/services on behalf of the Government. Such purchases are only allowed for those hardware or software items determined to be integral to the performance of a task order and approved by the Contracting Officer. A competitive price analysis will be performed and properly documented to prove price competition was obtained or justification for not obtaining competition. If use of GSA Schedules is authorized, contractors shall follow the requirements outlined in FAR 8.4 (“*Misconduct*”) before placing the order.

j) Tracking and reporting on Government-furnished property (GFP). The contractor is responsible for adequate care and safekeeping of all Government-furnished materials, including, but not limited to inventory tracking and reporting. Contractors shall reimburse the Government for any Government-furnished materials lost or stolen while in the contractors’ safekeeping. Contractors shall also provide all management, administration and staffing for all activities associated with preparing proposals in response to a request for proposal and/or PWS, submitting the proposals, and negotiating task order requirements.

C.4.2 Access to Training and Materials for Persons with Impairments

Contractors shall be responsible for making all training courses and training materials accessible to persons with visual and hearing impairments as specified in task orders. This requirement includes but is not limited to provision of sign language or oral interpreters for individuals with hearing impairments; providing access to transcripts and summaries, captioned media files, Braille, or large print materials for the visually impaired; preparing documents in text accessible formats (e.g., as RFT files); or employing use of an amplification system (e.g., FM systems) upon request. Contractors may also be required to prepare all online or computerized documents in a manner accessible to screen readers. In addition, task orders may require copies of deliverables to be submitted in Braille or in enlarged print hard copy. Without exception, any and all Federal events require contractors to provide accommodation for mobility-impaired persons.

C.4.3 Restrictions and Equivalencies in Labor Categories

There may be occasions when a contractor believes that an employee is the right person to perform the work under a task order, but the individual does not meet the labor category specifications for the task order. This may occur because the individual possesses special talents, skills, or experience that enables that individual to perform at a level of competency expected for a specific labor category for a particular task. The Government recognizes that such instances may occur and will consider a qualification waiver. The burden of proof to provide evidence of the special talents, skills, or experiences that warrant a qualification waiver is on the contractor. The waiver request shall be submitted in writing to the Task Order Contracting Officer (CO) and Task Order Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR). In such cases,

contractors shall receive written approval from the CO before the substituted individual can work on the task order. The Government shall review the waiver request and respond in writing within five working days of its receipt.

C.4.4 Applicable Substitutions

C.4.4.1 Experience Substitutions:

H.S. Diploma + 4 years applicable experience may be substituted for a Bachelor's degree. Bachelor's Degree + 2 years applicable experience may be substituted for a Master's degree. Master's Degree + 3 years applicable experience may be substituted for a Ph. D degree.

C.5 Corporate Area

Contractors shall institute and maintain a management structure to respond to and negotiate task order request for proposals and/or PWS. Contractors shall also maintain access to resources that can be called upon to fulfill task order requirements under this contract. Contractors shall maintain a management structure with overall task order control and authority for the performance of the work. At a minimum, contractors' management structure shall be responsible for the following throughout the lifecycle of each task order:

- a) Deploying a technically proficient and professionally capable staff;
- b) Keeping personnel turnover to a minimum and ensuring individuals are motivated to achieve excellent performance;
- c) Ensuring problems are minimized and unavoidable problems are resolved with minimal disruption to the activities performed under the task order;
- d) Obtaining continuous feedback on performance from appropriate Government personnel and disseminating feedback to contractor personnel on all areas of task order performance;
- e) Continually monitoring the quality of all products and services provided for purposes of identifying and implementing performance improvements; and
- f) Ensuring that all resources necessary to perform the task order are identified with clearly defined roles and deployed on schedule. A successful effort will be predicated on the management practices applied by the Government and its contractors. The performance of task orders pursuant to this contract shall be in accordance with a contractor's best corporate business practices as set forth in each proposal and as accepted by the Government.

C.6 Labor Category Descriptions/Experience for Principal Task Areas

C.6.1. Program Manager: Responsible for planning, developing, implementing and evaluating overall program policies and directing subordinate managers/staff. Directs and manages the operation of several programs/projects. Administration/ management/ monitoring responsibilities include, but may not be limited to: establishment of goals, objectives, performance requirements, standards, and accountability; administration of program costs and budget; management and operation of programs; project execution; and contract compliance and deliverable schedules for projects including media,

marketing, graphics, website design, video production and other communication activities, outreach, market research, and analysis.

Minimum Education/Experience: M.A. or equivalent professional degree in an associated field, and a minimum of (10) years of related experience or an equivalent combination of experience and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.2. Deputy Program Manager: Serves as the project manager for large, complex task order (or a group of task orders affecting the same common/standard/migration system). Able to assist the Program Manager in working with the Government's CO, the contract-level Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), the task order-level COR(s), government management personnel and customer agency representatives. Under the guidance of the Program Manager, responsible for the overall management of the specific task order(s) and ensuring that the technical solutions and schedules in the task order are implemented in a timely manner.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. /B.S. degree in business or other related discipline. A minimum of (12) years of experience of which at least (7) years must be specialized in project development from inception to deployment and demonstrated capability in managing multi-task contracts and/or subcontracts of various types and complexity.

C.6.3. Project Manager: Provides management of project activities, personnel and administrative functions related to specific tasks and ensures that technical solutions and schedules are implemented in a timely manner. Directs and manages staff assignments and monitors product quality and ensures project milestones meet deliverable schedules, and reports on project status to the project manager.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. /B.S. in communications, journalism, or other related training.

C.6.4. Meeting Planner: Supervises on-site logistical support activities including room set-up, audiovisual requirements, manages logistical activities associated with planning and implementing meetings, conferences, trade show exhibits, and other events. Maintains close contact with the client project officer throughout event planning and implementation. Negotiates site contracts for meetings. Develops status and end-of-event reports for clients. Develops and maintains participant databases using meeting planning software. Verifies and reconciles host hotel and other vendor invoices.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. /B.S. or high school diploma with strong administrative skills and (4) years of relevant experience.

C.6.5. Jr. Meeting Planner: Provides guidance to team members assigns exhibitor space, overseas booth set up, orders booth furniture and required audiovisual and equipment, collects participant and exhibitor registration fees when applicable.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. /B.S. or high school diploma with strong administrative skills and (2) years of relevant experience.

C.6.6. Web Designer: Directs and manages the design, development, and management of client web sites.

Minimum Education/Experience: Must have a diploma or equivalent certification as well as advanced experience in web design, website development, web production management, web-based scripting language, and design standards and file types. Must have working knowledge or Section 508 standards as well as experience with design-related graphics and relevant applications such as Adobe.

C.6.7. Web Developer: Builds web pages using a variety of graphics software applications and web-based scripting language(s), manages and performs website editorial activities, analyzes complex

technical problems, develops and renders solutions, develops site content, aids in all web projects involving desktop publishing and website design and development.

Minimum Education/Experience: Certification in web applications. Must have experience in website development. Must have experience in web page design, web-based scripting language(s), and web graphics files and standards.

C.6.8. IT Specialist: Provides administrative support for activities pertaining to software applications utilizing commercial database management systems. Includes: user administration, data gathering, data retrieval, and manipulations. Reviews computer systems in terms of machine capabilities and man-machine interface. Prepares reports and studies concerning hardware. Prepares functional requirements and specifications.

Minimum Education/Experience: Must have minimum relevant experience and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.9. Scientific Writer: This interdisciplinary position involves analyzing scientific data and translating the information into writing that can easily be understood by readers. Responsible for composing a variety of documents about physical, medical, chemical, or biological sciences. Write for a variety of media, including periodicals, books, websites and newspapers. Readers of these publications can be experts or laypeople. Science writers are responsible for conveying information to a wide audience successfully.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. in a scientific field and (3) years of relevant experience.

C.6.10. Sr. Writer: Formulates and writes copies for projects including fact sheets, project summaries, monthly progress reports, informational packets, press releases, publications and web content. Provides technical writing, editing and proofreading support for materials such as reports, news releases, fact sheets web content, and scripts. Collaborates with subject matter experts, researchers, and graphic artist to produce documents.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. in Journalism, Communication, English, or related field and (5) years of experience.

C.6.11. Jr. Writer: Provides technical writing support for project deliverables. Conducts research, identifies subject matter experts, and conducts interviews. Gathers data and collates and organizes facts for inclusion in written products. Develops drafts and submits them for review. Proofreads copy written by project team members and client. Plans web and print products.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. in Journalism, Communications, English, or related field and (3) years of technical/editing experience.

C.6.12. Editor: Provides technical writing, editing, and proofreading support for materials such as reports, news releases, fact sheets, web content, and scripts.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A. in Journalism, Communications, English, or related field and (5) years of technical/editing experience.

C.6.13. Subject Matter Expert (SME): SMEs are persons widely considered to be experts in a subject, topic or field and may have a diploma, certification, or equivalent experience in their areas of expertise. Performs a variety of work to evaluate and apply new methodologies for problem-resolution while ensuring that systems are in compliance with organizational requirements. Analyzes agency needs to determine functional requirements, performs functional allocation to identify required tasks and their

interrelationships. Develops recommendations for organizational process changes to include new solutions and new technologies. Identifies resources required for each task.

Minimum Education/Experience: Advanced degree or equivalent training and certification in a relevant field or related discipline and (5) years of relevant, senior-level experience.

C.6.14. Executive Administrative Asst.: Performs a variety of administrative functions for executives and project team members. Familiar with a variety of field concepts, practices, and procedures. Generates reports, handles multiple projects, and prepares and monitors invoices and expense reports. May direct and lead the work of others. A wide degree of creativity and latitude is expected.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. in a related discipline and (5) years' of related experience or an equivalent combination of education and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.15. Clerk: Under supervision performs coding and filing of documents, familiarity with basic office procedures, operates office equipment, e.g., multi-line/voice systems, office machines, and minimal computer programs. Clerical duties often vary in type and sequence depending on task. Customer service skills should be emphasized. Duties include generic clerical skills such as greeting and directing visitors, fielding phone calls, scheduling meetings, responding to callers, taking minutes, composing memos, transcribing, developing presentations, generating reports, and monitoring invoices and expense reports.

Minimum Education/Experience: High School diploma and (2) years of strong administrative support or related field experience.

C.6.16. Production Assistant: Provides document production support by operating computer equipment to compile, type, revise, combine, edit, revise, print, label, organize, and store documents.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. degree or High School diploma and (4) years of strong administrative support or related field experience.

C.6.17. Graphic Artist/Designer: Develops and designs layouts across all mediums (print and electronic) that have a clear focus, theme, and message for intended audiences.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.F.A. in design (e.g., graphics, marketing, or other discipline) with a minimum of (5) years of experience in graphics or advertising

C.6.18. Translators and Interpreters: Provides language translation and interpretation services at the level of a native speaker or as certified to be able to interpret and translate at the level of a native speaker.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. degree in an associated discipline or (2) years of relevant experience and accredited by the American Translators Association or other similar and pertinent accrediting and certification institution (e.g., health interpreters' organizations).

C.6.19. Warehouse Manager: Provides asset management system to monitor and track customer's office furniture and equipment inventory. Provides a physical inventory of furniture and furnishings, bar-coding services, including: developing bar code standards, bar-coding individual office items, and develops a bar code data base. Flow chart current processes and develops recommendations to improve processes. Manages the process for the proper disposition of Federal Government property in accordance with applicable rules and regulations, as required. Organizational skills and customer service shall be emphasized.

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Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. or High School diploma with strong administrative skills and (4) years of relevant experience.

C.6.20. Warehouse/Skilled Labor (Gen): Performs general labor tasks including loading, unloading, lifting, and moving materials, Experience operating heavy machinery in warehouse, i.e. forklifts.

Minimum Education/Experience: H.S. diploma or its equivalent with (3) years of experience in the field or related area.

C.6.21. Unskilled Labor (Gen): Performs general labor tasks.

Minimum Education/Experience: H.S. diploma or its equivalent with (1) year of experience in the field or related area.

C.6.22. Couriers: Provides services related to pick up and delivery of boxes, packages, and mail.

Minimum Education/Experience: H.S. diploma or its equivalent with (2) years of experience in the field or related area.

C.6.23. System Engineer: Provides highly technical expertise in the use of complex applications. Evaluates and recommends available products to support validated user requirements. Defines file organization, indexing methods, and security procedures for specific user applications. Provides direct support to consultants and other senior personnel.

Minimum Education/Experience: Must have relevant experience and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.24. Senior Analyst: Leads design of project solutions and manages project. Provides primary point of contact with client and is the senior technical advisor. Provides strategic guidance in areas of formulating requirements, analyzing project proposals, recommending optimum approaches and developing system design. Formulates specifications for developers to use in producing product deliverables.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. and a minimum of (7) years of experience with (4) years of supervisory responsibility.

C.6.25. Strategic Planner: Provides direction and guidance for program, task or event operations. Works closely with customer to develop and implement plan. Works with logistics coordinators and team members to develop and execute work plans.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. and/or (8) years of experience developing agenda for professional conferences and meetings. Experience in developing and implementing marketing plans and building exhibits.

C.6.26. Professional Trainer: Trains personnel by conducting formal classroom courses, workshops and seminars. Prepares instructor materials. Develops and revises courses and prepares appropriate training catalogs. Prepares student materials (training aids, presentations, course outlines, workbooks, handouts, completion certificates, and course critique forms).

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. or specialty accreditation or equivalent certification and (3) years of senior-level experience in the field or related area.

C.6.27. Call Center Staff: Serve as lead points-of-contact at contracted help desk and carries out help desk activities and responsibilities, including preparation, execution, and record-keeping related to

timely response of phone, written, and in-person inquiries. Conduct information dissemination activities. Also serve as points-of-contact for troubleshooting computer equipment.

Minimum Education/Experience: Must have relevant experience and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.28. Call Center Manager: Provides daily supervision and direction of help desk (inquiry response) responsibilities and activities. Oversees help desk and directs contractor-programs related to agency information dissemination. Provides first-point-of-contact troubleshooting computer equipment. Maintains documentation of help desk activities. Prepares reports and participates in planning meetings.

Minimum Education/Experience: Must have relevant experience and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.29. Exhibit Designer: Responsible for lead design, oversight, production, delivery, and installation of exhibits and their accompanying materials. Design responsibilities include but are not limited to conceptualizing, designing, revising, and producing exhibits and their accompanying materials; updating and repairing existing materials; and overseeing transport, installation, and storage of property to and from designated site(s). Provides and/or makes recommendations for design, installation, and maintenance of exhibits and exhibit property for future use. Makes all necessary arrangements for exhibits in venues (tradeshows, Government sites, non-Federal, exhibit venues, et al.).

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. in a relevant discipline and minimum of (2) years of related experience or equivalent combination of education and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.6.30. Exhibit Production Staff: Under supervision of the exhibit designer, prepares facilities for receipt and installation of materials associated with exhibit set-up, Interacts with facility personnel in coordinating booth assignments, and serves as a liaison for transport, lighting, set-up, security, and storage of exhibit materials.

Minimum Education/Experience: B.A./B.S. in an associated discipline and minimum of (6) months of related experience or equivalent combination of education and training that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C.7. Principal Task Areas

C.7.1. Communications Research

Firms, business concerns, sellers of services, and contracted vendors awarded task and service orders under this effort **hereinafter referred to as “Vendor” and/or “Vendors”** will be required to provide the Government the full range of communications research services, including social marketing. Vendors will be required to design, plan, develop, design, execute, and otherwise deliver a wide range of strategic communication programs including but not limited to:

- Review and analysis of health, medical, and scientific literature;
- Completion of environmental scans;
- Development of research strategies, designs, and methods of analysis;
- Development of messages and branding programs;
- Development of shared resources;

- Execution of market segmentation research;
- Focus group and audience testing;
- Design, development, execution, and reporting of approved surveys and polls;
- Organization of events related to agency communication programs, such as retreats and strategic planning sessions;
- Evaluation of agency communication programs; and
- Implementation of program evaluation activities, including best practice reviews.

Vendors shall furnish all requisite professional consulting services, advice, and expertise for developing strategic communications strategies as designated by individual agencies.

C.7.2a. News Media Operations Support

Vendors shall be required to furnish a wide range of professional services, including the provision of advice and expertise for the Government's news media programs and activities. Vendors shall furnish all necessary staff, equipment, and professional expertise to help the agency meet agency media (news) operations goals. Vendor support shall include but will not be limited to analysis, strategic planning, outreach, news writing, events planning, briefings, contact and content development, audiovisual operations, and scientific, health, and medical news promotion and dissemination. Vendors will be required to plan, design, develop, and execute detailed media strategies for reaching desired targets, including but not limited to the following service goals:

- a) Assisting in the identification, segmentation, and analysis of media markets and outlets;
- b) Performing desired media analyses and evaluations to meet agency requirements, including but not limited to environmental scans, review and development of specialized lists of media outlets and contacts, researching potential new outlets and markets, evaluations, and expansion of potential social media efforts, preparing metrics and statistical studies, and development and execution of approved surveys and similar research;
- c) Providing specialized writing, editing, and events support for agency programs directed at the news media (e.g., backgrounders, press releases, press conferences, telebriefings); and
- d) Providing a range of audiovisual and web-based support for agency media-related programs, resources, and activities (e.g., editing news clips and summaries, preparing audiovisual segments and files, and producing web content).

To execute these requirements and thereby minimize the Government's risk, Vendors will be required to have proven capability—reflected in past performance and contracted strategic partnerships or teaming arrangements—to develop, maintain, update, refine, and expand initiatives aimed at reaching desired target audiences. Required expertise shall include proven knowledge of and experience with the principals and practices of journalistic (news) writing and AP and GPO styles of writing and editing. Supplemental style guides, such as those used by the Executive Branch, may be utilized as required and furnished by the Federal Government. The Government shall also require access to contracted staff, expertise, and facilities for audio-visual production, media-related events support, and fast-track, high-impact, high-profile web dissemination for news and media resources and tools.

C.7.2b. Media and Crisis Communication Training

Vendors shall design, plan, conduct, and furnish a wide range of media and crisis communications training programs for designated spokespersons and staff members, including but not limited to agency leadership, advisors, employees, contractors, consultants, and grantees, in both individual and group settings. Vendors shall develop and furnish all required materials. Trainers shall be executive leaders in their field(s). The Government reserves the right to review and approve any persons selected by Vendors to serve as trainers, as well as any associated staff required for training sessions. Vendors, trainers, and associated training staff shall employ complete confidentiality, tact, diplomacy, and discretion in any and all agency training activities.

C.7.3a. Audience Outreach and Promotion

Vendors will be required to design and execute the full range of comprehensive communication and recruitment efforts targeted to specific audiences in support of agency outreach mandate. Vendors shall also have demonstrated technical and overall capability in designing and executing comprehensive national health, medical, or scientific outreach programs. Vendors will be required to furnish all necessary goods and services, including professional consulting services, advice, and expertise required for the production of communication programs and activities, including but not limited to education, prevention, recruitment, and awareness efforts designed to inform the broad public spectrum and reach target audiences.

C.7.3b. Outreach to Target Populations/Health Disparities Programs

Vendors shall be required to design, test, execute, and evaluate communication research awareness efforts, including programs that have a recruitment component and/or are designed to reduce or eliminate health disparities as specified in agency task and service orders. Vendors shall furnish all necessary professional consulting services, expertise, and materials required for the development, execution, and evaluation of Federal communication and research recruitment efforts.

C.7.4. Materials Development

Vendors will be required to provide a full range of writing and editorial services, including but not limited to writing, proofreading, revising, copy editing, technical editing, and senior level editing in support of the development and production of high-quality publications and materials required by the Government. Vendors will be required to design and execute all aspects of electronic, digital and/or Web-based media, including but not limited to digitalized media files, blogs, audiovisual files, infographics, slides, presentations, graphics, and social media products and materials. Vendors will be required to plan, design, develop, execute, duplicate, and furnish—to Government specifications and standards—high-quality, culturally competent health, medical, and scientific information, including but not limited to fact sheets, brochures, information sheets, posters, flyers, exhibits, newsletters, campaign materials, responses to inquiries, and Web content. The quality of work and available resources shall exceed what is routinely furnished with standard workstations (e.g., Word clip art, Windows desktop publishing). With few exceptions The Government shall require vendors to provide a draft concept for approval for each new or revised product and to comply with Federal clearance procedures and guidelines as directed by program office staff. Products and deliverables must be scientifically, technically, and statistically accurate. Materials developed for this purpose will become the property of the Government no later than at the conclusion of the task order.

C.7.5. Graphic Design

Vendors will be required to provide a full range of high-quality, visually attractive graphic design services, including but not limited to planning, designing, developing, revising, executing, and otherwise producing required communications materials and products. Vendors will be required to coordinate product development with the Government to ensure that Federal standards and expectations are met and that any and all products conform to the desired specifications.

C.7.6. Foreign Language Translation and Interpretation

The Government requires access to the full range of interpretation and translation services to support the production of a wide range of timely, accurate, effective, high-quality, culturally-competent products and materials communication products. Deliverables include but will not be limited to printed publications, reports, correspondence, scripts, campaign-related materials, transcriptions, summaries, instructions, articles, web content, correspondence, inquiry responses, and other materials intended for non-English-speaking audiences. Requirements may extend to the provision of linguist support at high-level diplomatic events to members of the broader public. Vendors shall provide access to translation and interpretation support either through in-house capability, subcontracting arrangements, or by entering into novel partnerships. Additionally, and with few if any exceptions, deliverables shall be Section 508 compliant. Required work may be subject to short-turnaround and may require project management and supervision of contracted linguists by prime(s).

C.7.7. Information and Referrals (“Clearinghouses”)

As part of this PWS, the Government requires support for its efforts to disseminate health, medical, and scientific research findings related to advances in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, behavioral response, awareness, and other health improvement opportunities. This goal is accomplished in part through a network of information clearinghouses that serve to ensure and promote greater improvements in health outcomes across all communities and the general public. These clearinghouses are a critical component of the agency’s Congressionally-mandated public education mission. Users of information clearinghouse services include but are not limited to health professionals, patients, caregivers, family members, and at-risk persons, both within the United States and overseas. Vendors shall implement, operate, maintain, and furnish smoothly run, efficient, and fully-operational information centers for the Government, stressing skill, diplomacy, confidence, professionalism, tact, and a working knowledge of required subject matter. Inquiries range from answering simple questions to fulfilling publication orders; addressing complex, technical questions; and participating in ancillary exhibit programs, awareness efforts; and evaluation activities. Required work includes but is not limited to:

- a) Recording, triaging, responding to, and resolving, written, e-mailed, telephoned, Web-based, and in-person inquiries received by agencies, including those received at health fairs and exhibits;
- b) Furnishing to the public current, accurate, research-based information about health, medical, and scientific topics, including but not limited to specific diseases, conditions, treatments, and prevention strategies;

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- c) Implementing and maintaining resources including but not limited to indices of disease topics and synonyms for use by clearinghouse staff members in responding to requests for information;
- d) Designing and implementing procedures for handling inquiries, including but not limited to refining standard and customized responses;
- e) Developing strategies for handling difficult or complex questions while ensuring accountability and successful resolution of questions;
- f) Developing, updating, and disseminating materials related to campaigns; and
- g) Records management required and sufficient enough to ensure efficiency of operations and compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Vendors will be required to furnish all necessary facilities, equipment, supplies, goods, services, and qualified labor required by the Government for the accomplishment of this effort. The procurement requirements of Government agencies utilizing the acquisition will vary but will probably require the following tasks at a minimum:

- a) Providing, equipping, and staffing a fully functional, land-based, technologically advanced center for the Government's call operations;
- b) Logging-in, opening, screening, and answering inquiries received by telephone, e-mail, postal mail, TTY, fax, or by other means, all within specified response times using standard and customized responses developed to Government standards;
- c) Fulfilling and mailing publication orders, including expedited requests and inquiries designated as 'controlled' through agency executive secretariats and other Executive Branch authorities;
- d) Generating and otherwise preparing mailing labels and required postal materials and supplies for mailing, tracking, and fulfilling orders;
- e) Maintaining records and logs of data concerning requests and orders in a fully-functional, automated tracking system;
- f) Responding to Government requests regarding the status of any or all inquiries and compiling, analyzing, and reporting on clearinghouse data and activities; and
- g) Sufficiently managing records to ensure efficiency of operations and compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and standard operating procedures.

Clearinghouse source materials will include at a minimum the Internet, libraries and library systems, databases, and Government-vetted textbooks, journals, and professional resources. Vendors will be required to procure all requisite supplies and services, including but not limited to software programs and subscriptions to journals, magazines, newspapers and other media for support of Government communication programs.

Vendors will be required to apply Government standards, clearly-established Federal Plain Language guidelines, and widely-accepted Best Practices for customer service in the requirements of specific task orders.

C.7.8. Exhibit Development, Design, Production, Storage, and Transport

Vendors will be required to plan, design, develop, execute, duplicate, and furnish meeting and campaign-related exhibits and displays as specified in agency task orders. Vendors will be required to provide a full range of services required for production of meeting and exhibit related materials, including but not limited to newsletter and presentation design and production. Vendors will be required to assemble, prepare, pack, and ship exhibit materials for display and distribution at health, medical, and scientific meetings and events as required by specific task orders. The procurement requirements of Government agencies utilizing the acquisition will vary but will probably require the following tasks at a minimum:

- a) Coordinating the shipping, set-up, and return of exhibits and exhibit materials;
- b) Inventorying exhibit cases and shipped materials; and
- c) Coordinating repair, storage, and future shipment of exhibits and exhibit-related materials.

Some individual task orders may require vendors to update text and graphics on exhibits and to arrange travel supply and staffing for IC-related exhibit programs.

C.7.9. Meeting, Conference, and Event Support

Federal agencies require a full range of virtual and in-person meeting-related services, including but not limited to initial concept development, early planning (e.g., agenda development, venue selection, reservations, budgeting, event file establishment and maintenance); graphic design support (e.g., signage and materials production); participant correspondence; registration; travel and guest services; audiovisual requirements; meals and hospitality (in accordance with the latest HHS Efficient Spending Policy or other relevant policies and guidelines); message center operation; and post-event services. Vendors shall fulfill the following event needs of Federal agencies to ensure execution of successful meetings:

- a) Planning, site selection, and meeting contract negotiation and coordination;
- b) Registration and logistics, including hospitality;
- c) Message center operations, registration support, and event business services;
- d) Contractor graphic support;
- e) Travel and transportation for agency-designated participants and materials;
- f) Government-authorized and allowable consulting fees, honoraria, and expense reimbursements;
- g) Design, production, and on-time delivery of high-quality ancillary materials;
- h) Duplication services;

- i) Event promotion and marketing;
- j) Event set-up, including site requirements and audiovisual, electronic, and Web support;
- k) Exhibit signage and display production;
- l) Secretarial and clerical support, including transcription and records management;
- m) Production of books, reports, presentations, and interactive media;
- n) Supply services, equipment, parts, accessories, staffing, labor, climate control, and power needs required for installation of non-permanent and temporary exposition and exhibition space, including but not limited to rental and installation of canopies and tents; and
- o) File maintenance, records management, and event archiving.
- p) Propose virtual event strategies with capabilities for live meetings, breakout rooms of any size indicated, and combination of live broadcast and pre-recorded sessions.
- q) Expertise working with various virtual platforms (e.g., MS Teams, Webex, Zoom, etc.)
- r) Propose and oversee best technology platform based on requirement needs, ensuring quality and functionality.
- s) Coordinate planning for virtual meetings ensuring participants have access to electronic agendas, program schedules, and online registration.
- t) Assist participants with technology difficulties as it pertains to any meeting platform and virtual meeting environment (e.g., websites, mobile applications, etc.)
- u) Coordinate and set up virtual round table discussions.
- v) Develop mobile web application that may serve as a hub for presentations, registrations, meeting content, and any other relevant information.
- w) Maintain the mobile application and ensure functionality.

C.7.10a. IT Requirements

Given the increasing popularity and utility of the web as the preferred environment for many Federal communications efforts, the Government anticipates that it will require a wide range of IT-related goods and services required under task order contracts awarded in this effort. At the NIH, most if not all IT-based deliverables are slated for publication and production on the principal NIH website, nih.gov, and on contractor-designed and–developed Websites, such as those used for events and educational campaigns. Others will be developed, maintained, and hosted on campus. Websites, such as those provided by the NIH Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the agency’s Center for Information Technology (CIT). Some may require ongoing support (e.g., development and/or hosting) on contractor-provided servers. In general, the Government requires services in a wide variety of areas, including but not limited to development of innovative, high-quality content, applications, and programs that meet and exceed the needs of users and Web-enabled communications applications and enhancements for use in Congressionally mandated health information efforts and agency reporting, public outreach and engagement, and public trust and transparency programs and activities. Vendors shall plan, design, refine, and executive high-quality, visually attractive, audience-appropriate, and fully functional products and content for publication in a state-of-the art, Web-based/digital environment. For the overall project, Vendors shall also furnish all staffing, equipment, materials, and expertise sufficient for

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accomplishing the Government's requirements, ranging from early-phase development, (e.g., identifying, researching, designing, developing, refining, revising, and testing), to final production (e.g., enhancing, monitoring, maintaining, and inventorying).

Vendors shall coordinate any and all product development with the Government to ensure that Federal standards and expectations are met and that any and all products conform to desired specifications. Deliverables shall be compatible with and shall interface with the Government's own computers, systems, and platforms. Features and applications include but are not limited to the following:

- a) Digital repositories/depositories and other systems for storage of images and audiovisual files;
- b) Web pages and Web content, including Section 508 compliant deliverables;
- c) Training materials and Web applications for printing out completion and award certificates;
- d) Searchable full-text documents;
- e) Adobe files/PDFs;
- f) Streaming media and edited or complete audiovisual clips and files;
- g) Alternative formats for documents;
- h) Feature boxes and slides;
- i) Approved URLs and links;
- j) PowerPoint slides and other presentation materials;
- k) Reports, summaries, captions, and transcriptions;
- l) Animation and interactive multimedia;
- m) Distribution lists, RSS feeds, and/or other subscription or subscriber options and approaches;
- n) Online technical requisites, including forms, licenses, permissions, survey materials, and certificates;
- o) Content Management (CMS) applications;
- p) New media and social media content and applications;
- q) Event-related requirements, including event Websites, registration applications, and event broadcasts; and
- r) Other content, materials, applications, and programs, including health, scientific, and medical information in all media formats.

In executing this task area at the NIH, Vendors shall work with the OD Online Information Branch (OLIB), OIT, and CIT in the development of any project as required and appropriate. Vendors will be integrally involved in the development of information, content, applications, programs, systems, and databases. Vendors shall employ and incorporate existing templates and design approaches for consistency and for purposes of minimizing confusion on the part of users. All deliverables shall be subject to Government clearance and approval prior to launch and/or public site production.

The Government anticipates that Vendors shall also provide consulting services, advice, and counsel aimed at improving upon or building upon Federal IT approaches, products, and materials. Vendors shall provide technical expertise and feedback as may be required. Input shall include researching new

tools and emerging technologies; analyzing implementation strategies; assessing the applicability of new technologies, assisting with the planning and implementation of novel approaches and methodologies; and providing additional guidance to Program Office staff related to emerging technologies, effective Web analytics, accessibility, usability, and appropriateness.

C.7.10b. Web Design, Development, and Management

Vendors will be required to consult with and coordinate efforts with Federal IT and program office staff to design, develop, analyze, troubleshoot, evaluate, refine, redesign, revise, test, and execute Web content, Websites and ancillary Web-based products. Examples of deliverables include but are not limited to Internet/Intranet Websites, technologies, applications, products, and systems, all designed to interface with the Government's computers. Examples of specific deliverables include but are not limited to those items outlined above under **10**. Additionally, Vendors will be required to assist agencies with design, operation, management, and maintenance of a number of Federal Websites and will perform a range of responsibilities related to ongoing planning, development, management, and maintenance of Federal Websites, specifically:

- a) Reviewing and updating Websites regularly for problems, errors, inaccuracies, non-functionality and compliance with applicable standards, guidelines, and regulations;
- b) Producing accurate, well-written and designed, error-free Web content and ensuring that Federal Websites remain accurate, up-to-date, and accessible at all times;
- c) Remaining current on new and emerging technologies and approaches that may apply to Federal Websites and the virtual environment;
- d) Proactively proposing and implementing forward-thinking improvements and enhancements for the Federal Government's Websites;
- e) Protecting all information used, gathered, or developed in the execution of task orders awarded under this effort;
- f) Complying with IT systems security and privacy specifications set forth by the Government; and
- g) Establishing and implementing appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to ensure the security and confidentiality of sensitive Government information, data, and equipment.

C.7.10c. Preservation, Cataloging, and Storage of Web-based and Other Digital Content

An additional area of required support focuses on the collection and preservation of Federal Websites, images, and other digital content. The Government may require the assistance of a multidisciplinary team of staff capable of providing advice and supporting Federal efforts to evaluate, select, collect, catalog, preserve, and establish access to Web-based materials for future use by the public. Vendor staff, subcontractors, partners, teaming members, and consultants shall support agency goals of systematically organizing, archiving, managing, and sustaining digital content for future access. Deliverables may include but will not be limited to images and graphics, Websites, and audiovisual content. The Government anticipates a need for a wide range of support for images and graphics, extending to tagging, modifying, organizing, cataloging, and preparing files for number of uses (e.g., on the web, as framed art, and in presentations). Task orders may require Vendors to expand agency

understanding and work with the Government to build infrastructure and tools for capturing and preserving digital content and identifying challenges and best practices.

C.7.10d. Web Site Usability Testing

Section 508, the 1998 Amendment to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, requires that all Websites and associated content be equally accessible to people with disabilities. This applies to Websites, Web applications, and requisite related files. Section 508 currently applies to intranet as well as public-facing Web pages and extends to all HHS Websites, internal or external, owned, managed or funded by Operating and Staff Divisions, whether developed by staff or acquired through contracts, cooperative agreements, grants and/or formally established partnerships with other government entities and/or the private sector. For comprehensive guidance, the Government will require Vendors to refer to [hhs.gov/web](https://www.hhs.gov/web). Vendors shall provide Web usability evaluation and testing to ensure that Government- and Government-supported Websites are (1) well-engineered and accessible to the Government's many diverse audiences and (2) comply with required accessibility and usability standards.

C.7.10e. Database Design, Development, and Management

Vendors will be required to plan, design construct, develop, manage, maintain, improve, troubleshoot, refine, evaluate, test, and implement databases, technologies, applications, products, and systems for communicating information and compiling, storing, analyzing, and managing data. Types of data include but are not limited to bibliographies, catalogs, events, customers, outreach materials, events-related materials, survey results, reports, contacts, calendars, archives, publications, training modules, public input and inquiry responses, fulfillment statistics, slides, PDFs, certificates of completion, budget information, and inventories. Vendors shall be required to provide strategies/implementation plans to improve and build upon existing databases, technologies, applications, products, and systems; investigate and price potential new approaches; and provide technical expertise and feedback to Government staff.

C.7.10f. Information Tracking and Referral

Vendors will be required to plan, design construct, develop, manage, and maintain fully-functional, state-of-the-art mechanisms, procedures, and systems for use in tracking mentions of each agency or in reporting specific issues and topics that appear in the media or elsewhere as required. Items that merit attention will be forwarded to Government personnel for action and approval as specified in task orders. Information tracking may be required as part of individual tasks outlined in this PWS.

C.7.10g. Security

IT-related tasks in service orders awarded under this effort will require a Federal security clearance and background check. The Government requires Vendors to (1) have in place a number of safeguards and procedures in support of agency operations and assets and (2) to develop, document, implement and otherwise contribute to agency-wide information security programs designed to safeguard information and information systems. This requirement will pertain to systems provided or managed by Federal agencies, Vendors and their subcontractors, consultants, partners, and other personnel.

The Government may also require additional security controls such as but not limited to: Federal Desktop Configuration Controls, Security Awareness Training, access to contractors' worksites, and or logical access to any hosting facility and the Certification and Accreditation of any and all government

systems regardless of location. Vendors are subject to Federal law and HHS policies, including those of the NIH, governing information security in the creation, processing, storage and or transmission of information belonging to the government without exception.

The Government may require Vendors to submit to and undergo background investigations for their personnel, including any and all Vendor personnel, subcontractors, and others who have (1) access to sensitive information, (2) access to Federal information systems, (3) regular or prolonged physical access to Federally-controlled facilities, or (4) any combination thereof.

C.7.11. Inventories/Warehouse/Distribution/Services

Vendors will be required to manage a full range of inventory control services, including but not limited to receiving, cataloging, storing, tracking, maintaining, and shipping communication materials. The Government will require preparation of routine tracking and inventory reports as outlined in specific task orders to assist in planning future production needs. Requirements will vary according to specific agency procurement needs. If required by specific task orders, agencies will require Vendors to negotiate, establish, procure, and maintain postal boxes for receipt of official Government mail. Vendors should note that the Government permits publications, exhibits, and other items not considered to be Federal records to be stored in Vendor warehouses.

Vendors will be required to furnish the full range of mailing services, including but not limited to generating mailing labels; preparing publications for bulk or mass mailings; fulfilling individual piece mailings; and labeling and preparing mailing materials for the timely, accurate, complete, and successful accomplishment of the Government's mailing and transport requirements.

Vendors shall provide clean, safe, climate-controlled, and organized warehouse space and staff to organize, store, and large quantities of inventory items as specified in task orders. Examples of items to be inventoried, stored, and transported includes but are not limited to current and archived publications, exhibits, tapes, archived materials, artwork, and exhibits. Agencies will require Vendors to undertake and complete physical inventory counts as directed in specific task orders.

Unless otherwise stated in individual task orders, Vendors will be required to transport materials by courier between agency facilities and other venues in the consolidated Greater Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area and will be required to arrange and handle overnight delivery through one or more firms specializing in such services. Vendors will be required to provide all necessary machinery, equipment, and staffing, including but not limited to handcarts, electric pallet jacks, forklifts, and currently licensed staff for operating machinery as required for the execution of this task.

Vendors will be required to provide a wide range of duplication services to the Government, including high-speed, high volume, and color output equipment for timely, accurate, high-quality duplication, production, and mailing of materials. All deliverables shall be clear and readable and will meet widely accepted standards of uniformity and accuracy as specified in task orders. Vendors shall furnish all necessary staffing, labor, and services required to accomplish large-scale reproduction, including but not limited to duplicating, collating, assembling, mailing, and distributing agency materials and products.

C.8. HHS Force Majeure Clause

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HHS Conference hosts and contract service providers acting on HHS's behalf must use the approved, required Force Majeure clause below in venue contract to limit HHS's liability for cancellation and other damages.

- Responsibility of the Contractor:

Prior to entering into a third-party contract (the hotel) for venues, the prime contractor shall submit the proposed contract to the contracting officer for review. The prime contractor, on its own, cannot obligate the Government.

- Cancellation Matrix:

The prime contractor shall include terms and conditions in the third-party venue (hotel) contract that reduce or eliminate the Government's liability in the event of cancellation. The cancellation fees shall not exceed the following percentages:

- Up to 30 days prior to the event: Cancellation permitted with no (0%) penalty.
- 15 to 29 days prior to the event: Contractor (and therefore the government) will be liable for: no more than 75% of the total costs (meeting rooms and audiovisual equipment).
- 14 days prior to the event: Contractor (and therefore the government) will be liable for no more than 100% of the total costs (meeting rooms and audiovisual equipment).

When a Government cancellation results in penalty, the contractor shall promptly contact the third-party venue (hotel) to ensure every effort is made to offer the cancelled space to other parties to reduce the Government's penalty. The contractor shall only be reimbursed for actual penalties paid by the contractor.

The Government shall not be charged for cancellations of room blocks. All third-party contracts for lodging (hotel room blocks) shall cancel automatically within 48 hours of the check-in-date for rooms that are not guaranteed by the task order/contract order or the individual federal employee's government travel card.

- Excusable Delays:

The performance of this contract is subject to cancellation without penalty or fee upon the occurrence of any circumstance beyond the control of either party, excusable delays include, but not are limited to: acts of God, war, weather driven, acts of terrorism, government shut down, U.S. congress, government regulations, natural disasters, strikes, civil disorder, or curtailment of transportation facilities – to the extent that such circumstances make it illegal or impossible for the hotel to provide, or for groups in general to use the hotel facilities.

- Good Faith Effort

In the event of cancellation, less than 29 days prior to the event by the government, under the provisions of this contract, if the third party (hotel) resells the sleeping rooms, function space or any portion thereof, the charges will be applied against the cancellation fee. The contractor agrees to ensure the third party (hotel) accepts the responsibility to minimize any actual monetary harm or damages it may otherwise incur or suffer from unused sleeping rooms, or related revenue. Therefore, the contractor will ensure the third party (hotel) will make a good faith effort to book additional groups or organized business meetings or otherwise sell the sleeping rooms and related accommodations made available by the cancellation. Should the third party (hotel) replace the group with another group, all or a portion of the cancellation fee

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will be refunded based upon the replacement value to the mutual agreement of the government and the contractor.