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Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Project
Prepared: October 2010

Request for Proposal (RFP):

Facilitator for a meeting of discussions and tabletop-like exercises on the topic of regional reference testing for the US public health laboratory system

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

APHL Background

The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) is the national nonprofit member organization of public health laboratories in the United States, which encompasses state and local institutions that conduct laboratory testing of public health significance. APHL works to provide these laboratories with the resources and infrastructure to protect the health of US residents and to prevent and control diseases globally. APHL also advances the development of laboratory systems and practices, and promotes policies that support healthy communities. The association's members include state and local public health laboratories, state environmental and agricultural laboratories, other government laboratories that conduct testing of public health significance, and individuals with an interest in public health laboratory science and practice. APHL is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a history of over fifty years.

The stated mission of APHL is to promote the role of public health laboratories in shaping national and global health objectives, and to promote policies, programs, and technologies which assure continuous improvement in the quality of laboratory practice and health outcomes.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD) Project

To address gaps in testing capacity for VPDs, APHL was recently awarded funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to partner with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide training programs and quality improvement activities for VPD testing in public health laboratories. Timely and accurate diagnosis of VPDs is essential to identify and control outbreaks and to provide the information needed to improve vaccines and vaccination programs. However, the capacity and capability of state and local public health laboratories to perform testing for VPDs has become widely varied, with some laboratories being extremely proficient while others lack the training and/or equipment to conduct the appropriate testing and investigate outbreaks.

One of the activities of this project is to evaluate the value of public health laboratory "Centers of Excellence" (COE), i.e. regional reference testing centers, to improve access and efficiency of VPD testing. The probable roles of COEs to be reviewed will include:

- a. Surge testing for outbreak response (e.g. measles, meningococcus, pertussis)
- b. Non-emergency diagnostics for low incidence diseases (e.g. rubella)
- c. Surveillance and advanced characteristics testing for monitoring of vaccine programs (e.g. rotavirus, pneumococcus)
- d. Proficiency testing: coordination of regional external quality assurance programs and/or specimen exchange programs specific for VPDs

- e. Training of laboratory personnel in advanced techniques, such as PCR and genotyping
- f. New test method evaluations, including assay comparison studies

Proposal Summary

APHL is seeking to identify and select an individual or team to perform the activities listed herein as a subcontracting Vendor to APHL. The Vendor will be a person or organization that preferably has experience working with public health laboratories and an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities as diagnostic and reference laboratories. It would be beneficial for staff working on this project to have a strong understanding of microbiology and diagnostic testing for vaccine-preventable diseases.

APHL would like to solicit an offer to develop, facilitate, and summarize a meeting of discussions and tabletop-like exercises focusing on the topic of utilizing regional reference testing “Centers of Excellence” for the US public health laboratory system for the testing of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases.

The remainder of this document provides additional information that will allow a service provider to understand the scope of the effort and develop a proposal in the format desired by APHL.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Contact Information

Any questions concerning technical specifications or Statement of Work (SOW) requirements must be directed to:

Travis Jobe, Senior Specialist
Association of Public Health Laboratories
8515 Georgia Avenue, Suite 700
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(240) 485-2764
Travis.Job@aphl.org

Due Dates

A verbal or emailed confirmation of the Vendor's intent to respond to this RFP is required by 10/27/10. All proposals are due by Close of Business on 11/12/10. Any proposal received at the designated location after the required time and date specified for receipt shall be considered late and non-responsive. Any late proposals will not be evaluated for award.

Schedule of Events

Event	Date
1. RFP Distribution to Vendors	10/14/10
2. Written Confirmation of Vendors with Bid Intention	10/27/10
3. Questions from Vendors about scope or approach due	11/03/10
4. Responses to Vendors about scope or approach due	11/05/10
5. Proposal Due Date	11/12/10
6. Target Date for Review of Proposals	11/19/10
7. Final Vendor Selection Discussion(s)--Week of	11/22/10
8. Anticipated decision and selection of Vendor(s)	11/24/10

GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

Proposal Submission

Award of the contract resulting from this RFP will be based upon the most responsive Vendor whose offer will be the most advantageous to APHL in terms of cost, functionality, and other factors as specified elsewhere in this RFP.

APHL reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential Vendor,
- Accept other than the lowest priced offer,
- Award a contract on the basis of initial offers received, without discussions or requests for best and final offers, and
- Award more than one contract.

Vendor's proposal shall be submitted in several parts as set forth below. The Vendor will confine its submission to those matters sufficient to define its proposal and to provide an adequate basis for APHL's evaluation of the Vendor's proposal.

Vendor's proposal in response to this RFP will be incorporated into the final contract agreement between APHL and the selected Vendor(s). The submitted proposals are suggested to include each of the following sections, and be no longer than ten pages total, with the exception of the itemized budget and appendices:

1. Executive Summary
2. Scope, Approach, and Methodology
3. Project Management Approach
4. Project Deliverables
5. Detailed and Itemized Budget (not included in page count)
6. Appendix: References (not included in page count)
7. Appendix: Company Overview (not included in page count)

The detailed requirements for each of the above-mentioned sections are outlined below.

Detailed Response Requirements

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- a. This section will present a synopsis of the Vendor's response to the RFP. The Executive Summary should be a brief overview of the engagement, and should identify the main features and benefits of the proposed work.

2. SCOPE, APPROACH, AND METHODOLOGY

- a. Include planning and implementation procedures, and technical expertise, by phase. This section should include a description of each major type of work being requested of the vendor. All information that is provided will be held in strict confidence. The proposal should reflect each of the sections listed below:
 - i. Planning of scenarios and other discussion sessions for the exercise, in conjunction with the activity steering group comprised of APHL staff and CDC subject matter experts.
 - ii. Executing the exercise as an on-site facilitator for a meeting of approximately 20 individuals with a cross-section of experience working with the US public health laboratory system. The date of this meeting is scheduled for January 25-26, 2011, in Atlanta, GA.
 - iii. Executive summary report of the findings of the exercise for each objective listed below in the Project Deliverables.

3. PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- a. Include the method and approach used to manage the overall project and client correspondence.
- b. Briefly describe how the engagement proceeds from beginning to end.

4. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- a. Include a description of the type of report to be used to summarize the activity objectives, which include:
 - i. Gather information on the advantages, disadvantages, and other barriers to having COEs for surge testing, surveillance testing, proficiency testing programs, laboratory training, and test method evaluations for VPD testing.
 - ii. Propose possible solutions, including alternatives to COEs, to address the above stated issues related to utilization of COE for VPD testing.
 - iii. Outline a plan for future activities, addressing the needs identified, to implement COE or other identified solutions.
- b. Include sample reports as attachments to the proposal to provide an example of the types of reports that will be provided for this engagement.

5. DETAILED AND ITEMIZED BUDGET

- a. Include a fee breakdown by project phase and estimates of any travel expenses.

- b. Include estimates of pricing for any other material needs to successfully implement the outlined activities.
- c. The total compensation which may be authorized under the response to this proposal is a sum not to exceed twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000).

6. APPENDIX: REFERENCES

- a. Provide three current corporate references for which you have performed similar work.

7. APPENDIX: COMPANY OVERVIEW

Provide the following for your company/organization:

- a. Official registered name, address, main telephone number, and facsimile numbers.
- b. Key contact name, title, address (if different from above address), direct telephone and fax numbers, and email address.
- c. Name of person authorized to contractually bind the company/organization for any proposal against this RFP, including title, address (if different from above address), direct telephone and fax numbers, and email address.
- d. Brief history, including year established and number of years your company or organization has been offering the services stated in your proposal response.

EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

Criteria

Any award to be made pursuant to this RFP will be based upon the proposal with appropriate consideration given to operational, technical, cost, and management requirements. Evaluation of offers will be based upon the Vendor's responsiveness to the RFP and the total price quoted for all items covered by the RFP.

The following elements will be the primary considerations in evaluating all submitted proposals and in the selection of a Vendor or Vendors. Proposal response elements will be weighted according to the following scale:

	<u>Score</u>
1. Completion of all required responses in the correct format.	10
2. The extent to which Vendor's proposed solution fulfills APHL's stated requirements as set out in this RFP.	25
3. An assessment of the Vendor's ability to deliver the indicated service in accordance with the specifications set out in this RFP.	25
4. The Vendor's stability, experiences, and record of past performance in delivering such services.	20
5. Detailed budget and justification.	20
Total:	100

APHL may, at their discretion and without explanation to the prospective Vendors, at any time choose to discontinue this RFP without obligation to such prospective Vendors. APHL is not responsible for lost or misdirected proposals.

STATEMENT OF WORK

Scope of Work

The following information should be used to determine the scope of this project and provide pricing for this engagement. Outline your plan for preparation, execution, and reporting of the project activities as outlined above in the Detailed Response Requirements. The plan should address the following:

1. Involve relevant participants from laboratory, epidemiology, industry, and government regulatory agencies
2. Develop appropriate content and formats for discussion of topics listed as possible roles for COE
3. Develop a realistic scenario of an outbreak situation that will address laboratory surge response testing
4. Stimulate participant interactions and observe their responses to a simulated event or series of events
5. Evaluate discussion points, including an assessment of the issues discussed
6. Issue final report, to be submitted to APHL for review

Implementation Plan Requirements

The following requirements should be followed and addressed in the RFP Response in relation to the Scope of Work:

- a. Develop discussions on non-outbreak topics (½-1 day), including:
 - i. Non-emergency diagnostics for low incidence diseases (e.g. rubella)
 - ii. Surveillance and advanced characteristics testing for monitoring of vaccine programs (e.g. rotavirus)
 - iii. Proficiency testing: coordination of regional EQA programs and/or specimen exchange programs specific for testing of VPDs
 - iv. Training of laboratory personnel (e.g. advanced PCR or genotyping techniques)
 - v. New test methods evaluations, including assay comparison studies for commercial or laboratory-developed tests
- b. Develop an outbreak/emergency response scenario requiring surge testing, in a narrative outline (½-1 day), to include:
 - i. Detailed Storyline: (e.g. measles or meningitis by returning international travelers)
 - ii. Injects and ongoing story scenarios playing out (e.g. CDC shutdown, commercial assay recall, etc.)
 - iii. Debriefing Discussion

Deliverables

At the conclusion of the exercise, APHL requires written documentation of the findings of the exercise. A formal report of the findings and recommendations to APHL and CDC subject matter experts will be required and due by February 28, 2011. The documentation should consist of the following:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

A document developed to summarize the scope, approach, findings and recommendations, in a manner suitable to APHL and CDC subject matter experts. The discussion points to potentially be addressed in the report include:

1. Identify the pros, cons, barriers, and other alternatives to COE in regard to the issues listed previously in this RFP. The factors to consider could be: funding, staffing, laboratory size, laboratory location, shipping of specimens, reporting specimen results, LIMS, regional political support, etc.
2. Identify gaps in state PHLs' capacity to test and/or send out VPDs
3. Identify gaps in local PHLs' capacity to test and/or send out VPDs
4. Identify gaps in CDC's ability to assist with VPD reference testing for PHLs
5. Identify what other alternatives, besides COEs, there may be to address the various issues (e.g. bi-lateral/state-to-state agreements, CDC as reference laboratory, utilization of commercial laboratories)
6. Identify regional differences in what value COEs would provide for the above topics, and discuss various solutions to these differences (e.g. laboratories in small population states or rural regions, as opposed to large state, county, or city laboratories)
7. Identify and understand any related policy issues (e.g. sharing patient information over state lines)
- 8. Define what the exact role of COEs may be for VPD reference testing**
9. Prioritize what diseases, testing technologies, or other issues and testing topics would be most beneficial to have capability for through COE; as an initial focus if COE implementation is recommended
10. Identify how the implementation of COEs for VPDs could grow over time as a laboratory network
11. Identify additional laboratory training needs for VPD testing.

The report can also include any:

- Recommended corrective actions to be taken in laboratory testing
- Objective evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of the public health laboratory system
- Indicators of how to recommend the utilization and implementation of COE for the various topics discussed
- Identification of any other issues