

**PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES (PICS)  
NIH – TASK ORDER**

RFTOP#94      TITLE:            NIH Strategic Communication Planning and Support Services

PART I – REQUEST FOR TASK ORDER (TO) PROPOSALS

**A. POINT OF CONTACT NAME:** Anthony Revenis  
Phone: 301-402-3073  
Fax: 301-435-6101

Proposal Address:  
6011 Executive Blvd., Rm. 529S  
Rockville, MD 20892-7663

Billing Address:  
Accounts Payable, OFM, NIH  
Bldg. 31, Rm. B1B39  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2045

**B. PROPOSED PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** Approximately 100 days from date of award

**C. PRICING METHOD:** Time and Materials

**D. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS:** Submit an original proposal and 10 hard copies. Proposals should be limited to no more than 20 pages. Information regarding proposed personnel should be submitted as a separate attachment. Only one copy of each sample of work needs to be submitted.

**E. RESPONSE DUE DATE:** September 3, 2002 at 1 p.m. (EDT).

**F. TASK DESCRIPTION:**

**A. Background Information**

**1. Project Description**

The contractor shall provide support to the NIH Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL) to develop a NIH Strategic Communication Plan to increase public understanding of the importance of medical research and recognition of the role of NIH in medical research—in the context of NIH being an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contractor shall also provide support to address immediate communication needs. This will include a variety of services to the OCPL in support of its mission to communicate information on NIH programs and activities to the public, scientific community, medical profession, and public advocacy groups.

The strategic plan is intended to help the NIH take a proactive role in communicating about the research it supports and the health policy issues that affect research. It will engage all of the NIH Institutes and Centers in overarching communications activities that will increase public knowledge of NIH's role in medical research and give people access to the credible, factual health information that they need.

The strategic plan will help ensure that the appropriate messages are developed, that they reach the right audiences, and that the resources are available to support activities. An evaluation component will be key for use in tracking progress and in identifying any needed revisions to the plans and strategies.

Once the strategic plan is developed, NIH will implement activities over the next several years. The strategic plan will provide direction for these activities, prioritizing the audiences, messages, strategies, and tactics to fit current and accommodate future needs.

Please note that implementation of activities under the plan will be supported under a separate task order.

## **2. Need for the Procurement/Background**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the world's foremost medical institution and the lead Federal agency for funding medical research in the United States. The NIH mission is to develop new scientific knowledge that will lead to better health for everyone. An important part of the mission is to translate and communicate research findings to patients and their families, health care providers and the general public.

The NIH and its 27 Institutes and Centers (ICs) communicate regularly about research advances and the latest health and science information through a wide range of activities. Every week, there are hundreds of citations about NIH or its ICs in newspapers, magazines, web sites, and on radio and television programs. In addition, many of the ICs carry out long-term communications programs, and the information they produce is used by thousands of health-related organizations and companies around the world.

The NIH plays a significant role in the health of the Nation as an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is important for the American public to be aware of the NIH's role in furthering medical research. It is also important for the public to have access to the unbiased, authoritative health and medical information that the NIH produces every day. A strategic communications plan will help to ensure that the public is aware of NIH's programs and activities, and its role in medical research.

## **B. Goal and Objectives**

The purpose of this procurement is to obtain services to support the development of strategic and management plans that will guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of NIH communications over the next several years. The objective of these activities will be to increase the public's awareness of NIH's role in medical research and what it means for them.

### NIH Communication Goal

To enhance the public's understanding that knowledge gained through medical research leads to better health for all Americans and that NIH plays a leadership role in the support of medical research.

### Communications Objectives

To increase:

- Understanding that the NIH is the preeminent, authoritative, dispassionate provider and arbiter of scientific information
- Understanding that basic research is essential to achieving health advances
- Understanding of the importance of clinical research and the need for public and professional participation
- Knowledge of research results that could improve health and combat illness
- Public awareness that the NIH is a source of the most up to date, authoritative health and medical information

## **C. Services to be Performed**

The Contractor shall support the OCPL in conducting the following tasks:

### **Task 1: Project Management and Administration**

The Contractor shall provide a principal contact, to be responsible for preparing reports and plans and for supervising project staff and ensuring that all work is completed satisfactorily in timely fashion and within budget. NIH reserves the right to indicate additional consultants, advisors, or reviewers to be included in contractor personnel arrangements.

The Contractor shall be required to develop, implement, and maintain a project management and administrative plan that can both forecast and report information regarding staff time and resources allocated and used for each phase of the project. Associated costs, both direct and indirect, shall be reported monthly on a routine basis. This information shall be made readily available when requested by the OCPL Project Officer. The contractor shall hold regular meetings and/or conference calls with the OCPL Project Officer, or designee, at the OCPL.

### **Task 2: Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

#### **Task 2a. Needs Assessment**

The Contractor shall conduct a needs assessment to determine the current status of public awareness and understanding of NIH, including opportunities for and barriers to enhancing public understanding. The Contractor shall review available background materials to be provided by NIH, and collect new data via email, phone, and in-person interviews (based on the expressed preference of the interviewee) with key NIH senior staff and key external constituents. A list of up to 70 interviewees will be developed with NIH OCPL. The needs assessment interviews will include up to 5 open-ended questions. The Contractor shall prepare a summary report including findings and implications.

#### **Task 2b. Environmental Scan**

The Contractor shall conduct an assessment of competing and supporting factors in mass media, advertising, and among nonprofit, corporate and other groups to identify the most promising opportunities and approaches and any potential obstacles. Potential messages identified in earlier plans (to be provided by NIH OCPL) will be considered in the context of the current environment. The scan will be conducted via LexisNexis and other comparable databases, Internet searches and follow-up to leads provided in the interviews described in Task 2a. The Contractor shall prepare a report to include an Executive Summary and recommendations.

#### **Task 2c. Communications Review**

The Contractor shall review how messages about NIH, developed by NIH, currently are communicated through newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, and Internet to learn about areas of opportunity or needs for refinement and prepare a synthesis of the review. The scope of the review will include NIH and several of its Institutes.

**Task 2d. Literature Review**

In order to identify key principles to guide development of the strategic communication plan, the Contractor will review journal articles and background materials (to be identified in consultation with OCPL) to learn about what has worked or not worked for other agencies and organizations as they communicate with the public, and what can reasonably be expected to change (e.g., reasonable levels of success). Based on this review, the Contractor shall prepare a set of Guiding Principles to aid in strategic planning.

**Task 2e. Focus Groups**

The Contractor shall conduct a minimum of 3 focus groups with members of the public and a minimum of 3 focus groups with opinion elites/influencers to learn what and how they think about medical research and NIH.

**Task 2f. Public Awareness and Attitudes Survey**

The Contractor shall work with OCPL to place up to 10 questions on an omnibus survey with a national sample of the general public to assess awareness levels and serve as a baseline.

**Task 3: NIH Case Statement Recommendations**

NIH will draft a brief statement that describes the NIH mission and why it is relevant to people's lives. This case statement will serve as the linchpin for all communications activities and all messages in their various forms (e.g., speeches, brochures, press releases, web sites). In consultation with OCPL, the Contractor shall revise this case statement (if needed) based on the developmental work performed under this Task Order, and prepare recommendations for integrating the case statement's core message into NIH and IC communications.

**Task 4: Strategic Communication and Management Planning**

**Task 4a. Strategic Communication Plan**

The Contractor, working closely with NIH staff, shall develop a three-year strategic communication plan. The plan should identify goals and objectives, target audiences, strategies, tactics, proposed partnerships, communication channels and materials, and tracking and evaluation methods. The plan should be based on the task work completed and grounded in sound communications and marketing practices.

As directed by OCPL, the Contractor shall work with a small group of advisors to develop the optimal communications program design.

**Task 4b. Management Plan**

As directed by OCPL, the Contractor shall work with advisors to develop a management plan that will address tasks and timelines, staffing and resource requirements to establish and support the communication and evaluation functions.

**Task 5: Immediate Communication Support**

The Contractor shall provide both on-site and off-site support for office activities that include, but are not limited to, the following categories: writing and editing, public and media outreach, development of multi-media/internet-based communications tools, graphics development, presentation planning and preparation.

**D. Reporting Requirements**

1. Within two business days of each meeting or conference call, the Contractor shall deliver a *brief* report of the meeting, to include action steps and assigned tasks, and completion dates.
2. The Contractor is responsible for identifying any problems that may impede performance and for identifying proposed corrective action.
3. Within two weeks of contract award the Contractor shall deliver a task-specific work plan, with timeline.
4. At the close of the contract, the contractor shall deliver a final report (two hard copies and an electronic version) summarizing accomplishments and listing all deliverables provided.

**E. Deliverables**

The Contractor will be expected to deliver an initial draft and up to 2 revisions of the following reports. The Contractor shall deliver two hard copies and an electronic copy of the final versions.

- Description
- Work Plan
- Needs Assessment Report
- Environmental Scan Report
- Communications Review Report
- Literature Review Report
- Focus Group Report
- Public Awareness/Attitudes Baseline Report
- Case Statement Recommendations
- Conference Call/Meeting Reports
- Final Strategic Plan/Operational Plan Report

Deliverables shall be delivered to the OCPL Project Officer at:  
Office of Communications and Public Liaison

1 Center Drive  
Bldg. 1, Rm. 344 – MSC 0188  
Bethesda, MD 20892-0188

**G. EVALUATION FACTORS:**

The technical proposal will receive paramount consideration in the selection of the Contractor for this Task Order. All evaluation factors, other than cost or price, when combined are significantly more important than cost or price. However, cost/price may become a critical factor in source selection in the event that two or more offers are determined to be essentially equal following the evaluation of all factors other than cost or price. The Government reserves the right to make an award to that offer whose proposal provides the best overall value to the Government.

The Contractor shall provide a line-item budget with a narrative justification for each line. Each line item will be evaluated on its consistency with the purpose and objectives of the Task Order and the extent to which it is economically reasonable.

**Technical Approach (30 points)**

The Offeror should submit sufficient information with the technical proposal to demonstrate how they will accomplish the tasks in the Statement of Work. NIH will evaluate the quality, feasibility, practicality, creativity, and completeness of the proposed approaches. Clarity, style, and format as an indication of capability in plan development, presentation of information, and clarity of expression are key elements to be considered in evaluation. Lengthy or elaborate proposals are not desirable and will not be viewed favorably.

**Expertise and Experience (30 points)**

The Offeror will be evaluated on demonstrated expertise and experience in: communications planning, social marketing, strategic planning and evaluation, media and outreach activities, health communication (especially mass media) activities, and understanding the needs of opinion leaders and decision makers.

**Competence and Experience of Personnel (30 points)**

The Offeror's staffing for tasks will be evaluated for experience, education, training, and availability, and role in performing task work. NIH is particularly interested in expertise in health communications, social marketing, and understanding the needs of the public and opinion leaders.

**Quality of Previous Work (10 points)**

The Offeror is requested to submit, as attachments, one copy each of pertinent products that the Offeror believes demonstrates capability to perform the tasks required under this Task Order. The Offeror also should provide 3-5 references; to include contact name, address and phone number, and a brief description of relevant work performed for the referenced contact.

**TO # NICS-#94 TITLE: NIH Strategic Communication Planning and Support Services**

PART II - CONTRACTOR'S REPLY: CONTRACT #263-01-D-0\_\_\_\_\_

Contractor:  
Points of Contact:  
Phone- Fax-  
Address:

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST: Pricing Method T&M  
TOTAL ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOURS:  
PROPOSED COMPLETION DATE:

FOR THE CONTRACTOR: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**SOURCE SELECTION:**

WE HAVE REVIEWED ALL SUBMITTED PROPOSALS HAVE DETERMINED THIS FIRM SUBMITTED THE BEST OVERALL PROPOSAL AND THE PRICE/COST IS REASONABLE.

Billing Reference # \_\_\_\_\_  
Appropriations Data: \_\_\_\_\_

**RECOMMENDED:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
FAX # Signature - Project Officer Date

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
FAX # Signature - Contracting Officer Date

