

UNAIDS RFP-2013-25 Q&A

Thank you for responding to the UNAIDS RFP for communications support. We received quite a few questions so we have put this Q&A together to help provide some answers.

In the interest of time—the answers below are in a very informal format and we have also extended the deadlines by two weeks.

A quick bit of history, right now the Communications and Global Advocacy Department is down six staff members. We are in the middle of the recruitment process which started in January of 2013 and we hope will be completed first quarter of 2014.

So, we expect for the next six months to need a bit more support and then we hope to create a platform for us to work with a number of great folks. We are hoping to have medium-term list of potential providers that have gone through the RFP process. This allows us to contact people on projects as needed. We do not plan to have an “agency of record”.

UNAIDS strives to be innovative with its communication and advocacy efforts—at the same time we are very cost conscious as we deliver creative, technically sound and innovative products.

We are looking for ways to be collaborative in a virtual environment. While there is a quite a bit of daily work – most of the big deliverable are on a project basis often with a big ask and very little time.

Thank again for your interest and we really look forward to hearing from you.

The bidders are strongly recommended to indicate clearly in the technical proposal whether the scope of your proposal covers all six categories of deliverables, otherwise please specify which categories of deliverables the bidders are interested in providing services to UNAIDS.

	Question	Answer
1	Section 1.1 indicates best and most cost-effective solutions required – are there any financial benchmarks you can provide? Either by deliverable or hourly rate?	We are hoping for cost breakdowns. For example, it would be helpful to see what typical projects would cost – writing a 10 page report with two rounds of editing and the cost of each additional round or work. Another example might be a press release 800 words and two rounds of edits.
2	Section 1.1 defines the purpose of the RFP to establish an agreement with up to 6 suppliers who would be contacted on an ad-hoc basis for communications and global advocacy needs – will all suppliers	We are hoping to have medium-term list of potential providers that have gone through the RFP process. This allows us to contact folks on projects as needed. We do not plan to have an “agency of

	<p>be contacted regarding every assignment? Will each task go through a competitive process or does UNAIDS have the ability to select the appropriate supplier without a competitive bid? Per section 1.3.1 is each task assigned to the lowest cost respondent? Additional information on the process would be greatly appreciated.</p>	<p>record” but rather set up a platform for us to work with some great people.</p>
3	<p>Given the potential volume of work per Section 1.3.1, what percentage of time would you estimate the program manager and/or team of experts is available and dedicated to UNAIDS projects?</p>	<p>We are planning to work on a project basis and hope to assemble the best team possible for each project.</p>
4	<p>Section 2.4 mentions a form about RFP completeness. Can you please provide this form?</p>	<p>This form is not required for this RFP. It is a generic paragraph for our RFPs.</p>
5	<p>Under Section 2.7.2, component 1.5.2 within Information of Firm/Organization Submitting Proposals on Page 9 mentions “company certifications”. What do you mean by this?</p>	<p>In general, this refers to certifications on quality management or internal management standard of your firm/organization. For example, ISO 9000 for quality management, ISO 26000 for social responsibility, etc.</p>
6	<p>Under Section 2.7.2, component 1.3 within Information of Firm/Organization Submitting Proposals on Page 9 mentions “audited financial statements”. What information are you referring to, specifically? We are a privately held company and do not publicly report detailed financial information.</p>	<p>In such circumstances, it could be substituted by the firm’s official financial statement(s) certified by Chief Finance Officer or personnel in an equivalent capacity within the firm.</p>
7	<p>In RFP financial proposal form, what does the number in the "estimation of workload" column refer to?</p>	<p>The numbers refer to our estimation of total number of deliverables within a 12-month period.</p>
8	<p>How is “pay for performance” determined?</p>	<p>In the context of the “UNAIDS’ general policy to pay for the performance of contractual services rendered”, it means that UNAIDS will only effect payment against actual deliverable received and</p>

		work performed, no advance payments will be granted.
9	Paragraph 1.3.1. (3) – With regards to the Advocacy Campaign support requested, is it anticipated that the upcoming United Nations General Assembly would influence the existing global strategy(ies) currently in place for UNAIDS?	<p>We have a mandate through 2015. UNAIDS and countries organized the 2011 United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS and from that the 2011 Political Declaration was adopted and through that we have the “10 targets for 2015”.</p> <p>These 10 target areas will continue to drive our work through 2015. We also have MDG6 and the previous political declarations from 2001 and 2006. And we have several initiatives that are helping to inform the post-2015 debate. Science of course also drives innovation as do regional declarations such as the AU road map and Abuja +12 plan.</p> <p>Our job is to help countries meet these targets and ultimately reach our vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. We try to create the global environment and offer country support that will help reach these goals.</p> <p>Check out the UNAIDS website under our goals and the ten targets section.</p>
10	Paragraph 1.3.1 (3) – Based on our experience, we believe development of plans and supporting materials for the global advocacy campaign would exceed four hours (outlined in the RFP Financial Proposal Form); should we include our suggested estimate for number of hours or do you prefer that we only submit the hours requested in the Financial Proposal?	<p>The number represents numbers of deliverables produced by the department in 2012.</p> <p>Hence in this aspect it represents four advocacy campaigns.</p>
11	Paragraph 1.3.1. (4) – Are there specific publications and media outlets, or media in specific geographies, with which UNAIDS is looking to build or strengthen	We have very good relationships with the well-known global health reporters – we are especially interested in expanding our global reach to include political outreach, global TV, French media and other

	relationships?	regional opportunities
12	What extent will the team selected be expected or able to engage directly with policy leads within UNAIDS to confirm TPs and lines to take, or will this all be directed through the communications team?	It will likely be a mix.
13	An estimated 92 country visits are included in the ToR - at this stage are you able to indicate in which countries/region they may be taking place?	We don't always have a lot of advanced warning but typically the visits include countries that are heavily affected by the epidemic.
14	Is it expected that the communications team would interact with the UNAIDS Country Offices as well as the Geneva office?	Likely a mix
15	Does the work involve providing 'on the ground' media liaison in the determined countries?	Potentially, if there is opportunity to leverage contacts
16	Do the parameters of the work also include potentially supporting events such as World AIDS Day and Annual Report launches involving the Executive Director?	Potentially yes.
17	Please clarify if the technical proposal will receive 60% or 70% of the score? (The ToR has both numbers in it)	The points allocated to the technical proposal correspond to 60% of the total obtainable points.
18	In addition to preparing plans and materials, would there be an opportunity to execute projects? (section 1.3.1, items 1-6)	Yes
19	Can UNAIDS provide an estimate of the proposed workload? (sections 1.3.1, items 1-6)	Project based depending on need.
20	How many senior professional team members shall we propose? (section 2.7.3, item c)	Perhaps list anyone you think would be could be a good fit and we could have access to depending on the situation.

		For example there may be a crisis situation where we would like high-level advice and then there may be times where more support needed for implementation.
21	May we include cost ranges in our price quote? (since parameters such as amount of original research and breadth and depth of materials may vary as well as the number of deliverables undertaken) (section 2.7.4, items a-e)	Yes it would be helpful to see a range for different kinds of work. We usually find examples very helpful.
22	Should the proposal document follow the exact structure laid out in the rfp ?	<p>The Technical Proposal must include the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Understanding of the Requirements for Services, including Assumptions b) Proposed Approach, Methodology, Timing and Outputs c) Proposed Project Team Members <p>The Technical Proposal should provide sufficient information for UNAIDS to evaluate against the criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the quality and appropriateness of the overall proposal; ▪ the quality of the technical solution and approach proposed; ▪ the management strategy/plan detailed in the document; ▪ the experience of the firm in carrying out related projects; the qualifications, relevant experiences and competence of the personnel proposed for the assignment.
23	Should the company information and case studies be provided as a composite document, separate to the technical proposal?	The information of the bidding individual or business entity, as well as the case studies should be part of the technical proposal.
24	Please clarify what might be considered a conflict of interest	In the contest of RFP clause 5.31.4 it means the contractor is required to comply with UNAIDS provisions to prevent the conduction of any work where

		a conflict of interest due to the nature of the work (or other work of the contractor) might affect the deliverables and their quality and/or credibility. Any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest must be stated before the commencing of any work.
25	Are you interested in a summary overview of expertise in areas other than 6 areas indicated in the key requirements section?	Whatever you think could be helpful we are happy to have. We know the RFP process is quite long and detailed so we try not to require too much more than the absolute necessary under the UNAIDS rules.
26	In the financial proposal, to what do the figures in column 2 relate? Is this the total number of projects undertaken?	The number represents numbers of deliverables, e.g. there were 60 press releases/statements produced by the department in 2012.
27	How many agencies do you see the workload being undertaken by?	We hope to create a platform to work with a number of providers.
28	Do you require a breakdown of the cost per deliverable?	It would be helpful to have a few examples so we can see what typical projects would cost. For example, writing a 10 page report with two rounds of editing and the cost of each additional round or work. Another example might be a press release 800 words and two rounds of edits.
29	Paragraph 2.7.4: Can UNAIDS provide us direction on the approximate rates within their budget?	We are hoping for cost breakdowns. For example, it would be helpful to see what typical projects would cost – writing a 10 page report with two rounds of editing and the cost of each additional round or work. Another example might be a press release 800 words and two rounds of edits.
30	Paragraph 2.7.2: Under the “Information of Organization” submitting the proposal, do the Roles and Responsibilities in 2.1.4. refer to the roles and responsibilities of the team in the case studies or of the	If your bidding entity is a consortium, please clearly list and identify the roles and responsibilities for each participating individual or company.

	current project?	
31	Paragraph 1.3.1: We understand that UNAIDS would like the agencies to support English-language communications – what markets would these communications be targeted towards? Donor markets, or recipient markets or both?	All the above. We have an Executive Director who speaks French so there is some interest to do outreach with French media and to also look for French speaking opportunities.
32	1.2.4 Should the proposed core team be drawn from across the complete range of time zones specified or is a core team in one location, with support from across this range of time zones, also acceptable?	We are happy to work across time zones. It would be nice to have a contact in the Central European time zone or close to it but not a requirement.
33	1.2.5 Staffing: please confirm if each individual team member is required to hold all the expertise and experience listed at 1.23 and 1.25	It would be ideal but of course we can work across teams as needed.
34	1.2.5 Staffing: please confirm the optimal team size for this assignment	We typically work with small teams and add as needed.
35	1.3.1 (1) In terms of press releases/statements, what balance between general news/information releases and scientific releases do you foresee within the 60 units specified in the estimation of workload form	Almost everything we do has some data element and a political message.
36	1.3.1 (3) In terms of advocacy campaigns, can you provide fuller guidance on how many countries you foresee being involved and provide a prioritised list of these (e.g. tier 1 vs. tier 2)? Can you also provide fuller guidance when it comes to stakeholders (e.g. general public, doctors, corporations and donors, government officials) and again prioritise these?	It really will depend on the issue, desired outcome and budget of the project.
37	1.3.1 (5) In terms of country visits, can you provide fuller guidance on how many countries you foresee being involved and provide a prioritised list of these (e.g. tier 1 vs. tier 2)? Would you expect one or more team members to travel along the	We don't always have a lot of advanced warning but typically the visits include countries that are heavily affected by the epidemic. Also major AIDS and global health

	UNAIDS officials or will support in this area be provided remotely only? And are some of the country visits related to a UNAIDS presence at International Congresses and meetings? If so, can you provide a list of any main events and a calendar of these?	conferences and political summits. No travel would be envisaged for the day-to-day work.
38	2.4 What is the preferred format for responses (e.g. Word vs. PowerPoint)?	Either is fine
39	2.7.2 Please confirm if the 'Information of Firm' table should be answered on a global level, rather than for the agency's hub office for UNAIDS	The information of the firm should be answered on a global level.
40	2.7.3 a) Does 'Understanding of the Requirements for Services' refer to a critique of the brief provided or bidders' advice on the best approach? Either way, should this relate to the requirements for services overall or to each item on the list at 1.3.1?	This criteria applies towards understanding the service requirements in general and as well as each item that the bidding proposal covers.
41	2.7.3 a) Please advise what specific information should be provided under 'Assumptions'	Please include any assumptions as well as comments on the services as indicated in the Technical Specifications, or as the bidder may otherwise believe to be necessary.
42	2.7.3 b) Under 'Proposed Methodology, Methodology, Timing and Outputs', please advise what specific information and degree of detail you require. Should bidders' responses be provided for each of the six deliverables and are you seeking proposals on each element of each deliverable? Can bidders provide recommendations on digital content and social media activities if viewed as appropriate?	The bidder should include in this section all relevant information for UNAIDS to evaluate the proposal, including information relating to coverage of UNAIDS needs and requirements, as specified in section 1, proposed timeline, resources dedicated partially or fully to the project. We welcome bidders to provide recommendations on digital content and social media activities.
43	2.7.3 b) Should bidders' 'detailed description' be provided for each of the six deliverables included in the list at 1.3.1 and are you seeking proposals on each	Yes, and it is applicable for the deliverable(s) you are interested in being our service provider for. If you are interested in providing multiple

	element of each deliverable?	deliverables to UNAIDS and intend to submit one proposal, you should ensure the proposal provides sufficient information for us to evaluate your capacity and competitiveness in delivering the services you are bidding for.
44	2.7.3 c) Should bidders provide examples of similar work in the past under 'relevant experience?'	For the bidding entity as a whole, please list under section of "Information of Firm/Organization submitting Proposal. For proposed project team members, please list under relevant experiences as the mandatory section C of your technical proposal.
45	2.7.4 Are bidders expected to provide an overall cost-inclusive quotation for all of the deliverables together in total or for each of the deliverables individually?	The financial proposal MUST provide the cost per deliverable. We welcome the overall cost-inclusive quotation for all of deliverables you are interested in offering UNAIDS.
46	2.7.4 Please advise on how bidders should arrive at a single cost-inclusive overall quotation (either for the six deliverables in total or for each individual deliverable), when there are so many entirely unknown variables in play (e.g. for corporate reports, length, design values, paper quality/size, number of copies and editing vs. researching and writing)? In other words, how can bidders be expected to provide a binding fee and cost quotation when the details, work volumes and duration of each assignment will be specified on a project-by-project basis?	We hope you will find the previous press releases/statements, feature stories, Op-eds and corporate reports on our web site can be helpful to you. Resources: http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/
47	Financial Proposal Form: Please confirm what the unit of measurement is being used under the 'estimation of workload' for each of the deliverables listed	Yes, this is confirmed.
48	Financial proposal form; Under the six areas included in the list of deliverables, please provide a breakdown of what level of activity would be required per activity	We hope you will find the previous press releases/statements, feature stories, Op-eds and corporate reports on our web site

	<p>within each of the deliverable areas (e.g. press releases vs. statements vs. articles vs. other media materials) under deliverable No.1)and over what duration of time</p>	<p>can be helpful to you.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/</p> <p>Regarding duration of time for deliverable No.1, each assignment could be requested to produce a single deliverable from one of the areas or any combination with an expected duration of two to ten working days each.</p> <p>The duration of each assignment is expected to be between three to ten working days and the expected turn-around timeframe is usually 24 hours unless it is otherwise communicated to the contractor(s).</p>
49	<p>Financial proposal form: In light of our question related to how bidders should arrive at a single cost-inclusive overall quotation above, please provide fuller details of the key variables anticipated for each deliverable that will allow bidders to provide an accurate estimate of fees and costs</p>	<p>We hope you will find the previous press releases/statements, feature stories, Op-eds and corporate reports on our web site can be helpful to you.</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p>http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/</p>
50	<p>3.4 Please confirm what is required in the 'management strategy/plan' as this does not seem to be referred to elsewhere in the document</p>	<p>The purpose of a management strategy/plan is to operate the business, as well as to ensure quality of deliverables, including but not limited to quality assurance mechanism, resources utilization strategy when serving different clients in addition to UNAIDS at the same time, etc.</p>
51	<p>3.6 Please advise on procurement timings following the 16th September deadline. When will agencies be informed of the shortlist, when are bidders' presentations likely to take place and what is the proposed month of commencement?</p>	<p>The deadline has been extended for two weeks until 30th September due to vast interests in this RFP received.</p> <p>We aim to finalize the contract awarding process in October/November.</p>
52	<p>4.1 a) and b): Under what circumstances might UNAIDS award contracted work to a bidder when theirs is not the lowest bid -</p>	<p>We will look for the best combination for UNAIDS but yes, cost is a primary</p>

	given that 1.3.1. states that contractors will be selected based on the lowest cost response available? What criteria would be applied in the case of such exceptions?	consideration.
53	4.1 d) Under what circumstances might UNAIDS abandon the selection criteria clearly laid out at 3.4 and what criteria would be applied for deciding on which bidder's proposal is the most responsive to the needs of the organization?	<p>The criteria used to evaluate technical proposals are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the quality and appropriateness of the overall proposal; ▪ the quality of the technical solution and approach proposed; ▪ the management strategy/plan detailed in the document; ▪ the experience of the firm in carrying out related projects, the qualifications, relevant experiences and competence of the personnel proposed for the assignment.
54	4.1 What other reasons might lead to a bid being eliminated?	For example: A technical proposal should never include financial proposal.
55	5.1 Could work with healthcare providers or pharmaceutical companies be viewed as a conflict and under what circumstances?	It is could be an issue. We would be interested to know what kind of firewalls in place and the nature of the work.
56	<p>Paragraph 2.8: Format and Signing of Proposals : Please confirm that we are to send our Technical Proposal directly to the email address:</p> <p>TechnicalBids@unaids.org and our Financial Proposal directly to FinancialBids@unaids.org no later than the 16 September 2013. Should the document 'Information of Firm/Organisation Submitting Proposal', accompany the Technical Proposal to the address: TechnicalBids@unaids.org or be sent separately to Bids@UNAIDS.org?</p>	<p>The deadline has been changed from 16-September to 30-September but the email accounts are correct.</p> <p>The information of the Firm/Organization submitting a proposal is part of the technical proposal.</p>
57	Paragraph 3.1 Opening of Proposals: Please confirm that the sentence 'There will be no public bid opening' for this RFP means that we are unable to attend the UNAIDS Headquarters in Geneva for the	Yes that is correct. There will not be a public bid opening for this RFP. Thank you for your understanding.

	opening of proposals and that all documentation needs to be submitted electronically. The Cover Letter for the RFP suggests that 'Bidders may wish to attend the session at their own cost'.	
58	RFP Financial Proposal Form: In relation to the RFP Financial Proposal Form, please confirm that the numbers in the grid column entitled: 'Estimation of workload during the period', relate to the quantity of related projects and not hours.	Yes. The 'Estimation of workload during the period', relates to the quantity of related projects and not hours.
59	Approximately what percentage of the data needed to produce the press releases, statements, media strategy documents and country visit briefing books will be supplied by UNAIDS? And how much secondary research do you expect your agency partner to do to produce these materials?	We typically have about 70% of the data and other 30% might be secondary research.
60	Can you please break down the number of op-eds, commentaries and story ideas make up the 232 requested in the RFP Financial Proposal?	<p>The majority of writing we do is web-related, then press releases and statements, then op-eds and reports.</p> <p>The web site archives all the web stories, press releases and documents. We have in the past delivered about 70% of the corporate documents.</p>
61	UNAIDS requests four draft "advocacy campaigns". Can you describe what is meant by "draft"? Can you share a previous "draft advocacy campaign"? When you request "materials" do you want the estimate to include production costs?	Typically we look at ideas and then move to drafts. Yes we would be interested in a break-down of total costs.
62	To complete the corporate reports, are you anticipating primary research will be needed?	UNAIDS should be able to provide quite a bit of research but additional interviews, data searches and environment scans will be needed.
63	What is UNAIDS' ideal supplier relationship and what does success with your suppliers look like?	We are looking for ways to be as collaborative in a virtual environment. While there is a quite a bit of daily work –

		<p>most of the big deliverable are on a project basis often with a big ask and very little time.</p> <p>We are looking to work with positive, knowledgeable partners who are willing to try new things, work within UN constructs and if things go wrong to accountable and to learn from it and try better the next time. We strive for the best product and look for partners who have that same goal.</p>
64	How are the services referenced in the RFP currently provided to UNAIDS? Is this work currently done in-house, outsourced to suppliers, or a combination of both? If so, will there be a transition of activities and materials as part of the onboarding/planning process?	<p>We are down six staff members so right now we have a combination of support. The internal team is extremely motivated and high-performing so we are interested in continuing to strive for innovation.</p>
65	Is a global network preferred? And if so, are there any regions or countries that are a priority for UNAIDS?	<p>Not necessarily and we are happy to find the best partners for each project.</p>
66	Why is UNAIDS embarking on this procurement process at this specific time and what are the main drivers and motivations behind doing so? Any context that can be provided for the background to this search would be welcome	<p>UNAIDS has strict contracting rules. The RFP allows us to do detailed vetting and due diligence. Our hope is to create a platform that allows us to work with different partners often on a moment's notice. The internal team is extremely motivated and high-performing so we are interested in continuing to strive for innovation, so we are really hoping to add to that.</p>
67	What would success look like for UNAIDS over the life of the contract period, both overall and in terms of qualitative and quantitative metrics for each of the deliverables? What measurement system do you have in place in relation to the deliverables and do you have in mind a specific percentage improvement in each of this in working with one or more agencies?	<p>For big projects there will be a process for set up, implementation and evaluation – and each will depend in part by the type of project outcome UNAIDS hopes to achieve.</p>

68	<p>From past experience, what does a successful agency relationship look and feel like for UNAIDS? Have there been any particular successes or disappointments you feel bidders should know about from your past work with agencies?</p>	<p>As the history has been to do most communications internally—it really depends on the project.</p> <p>For example, we have worked on reports with external partners where research and writing was done externally and a strong draft was shared then the internal team took over to finalize with reports back to the external partners.</p> <p>We tend to look for expediency of who can do it the best-fastest.</p> <p>That said we have had quite a few long-term (8+years) relationships where all sides are still excited about the next thing.</p>
69	<p>Do you have a preference for working with a limited number of, say, 2-3 agencies maximum to ensure consistency of strategy and advice or is this exercise driven predominantly by cost considerations - militating towards a fuller list of suppliers?</p>	<p>The team is looking for opportunities to introduce new ideas and work with the best partners for the project. We like to mix things up.</p>
70	<p>Are there any specific UNAIDS campaigns or initiatives - or calendar milestones - that are likely to be the focal point of your work with the agency roster?</p>	<p>The 2015 deadline will be a big milestone.</p>
71	<p>What person or governing body will work directly with the agency or agencies selected for this work?</p>	<p>The contracts sit within the Communications and Advocacy Department. The Director of the department reports to the Executive Director.</p>
72	<p>Can you describe the approval process for work (e.g., the number of people, departments, agencies involved)?</p>	<p>It depends on the project and partners involved.</p> <p>If needed UNAIDS can deliver a press release -- from idea to publishing -- in under 60 minutes.</p> <p>Typically review comes in three areas, technical, political and branding. The Communications and Advocacy team is responsible for the latter two.</p>

73	What was the budget incurred for communications and global advocacy support services in the last fiscal year?	Communications and global advocacy works to a tight budget.
74	What previous agency or agencies did UNAIDS contract with for these services?	We have had the good luck to work with a variety of individuals and agencies.
75	Can you please share the list of agencies and individuals who received this RFP?	A fairly large number of agencies and individuals received the RFP.
76	Will staff biographies for key personnel be accepted in lieu of individual curriculum vitae?	Yes that should be fine.
77	We have financial statements generated by an independent certified public accountant using yearly U.S. tax statements can those be submitted in lieu of audited financial statements?	Yes this is fine.
78	In a joint proposal, do all agencies in the proposal need to submit financial and legal requirements in the RFP, or joint the lead agency?	No, only the lead agency who will be signing the contract with UNAIDS needs to provide the information.
79	Can you share the last global communications and advocacy plan created?	We would prefer to start with a clean slate.

[END]