

Consumer Research Pool RFP 2021-01: Questions and Answers

#	Question	Answer
1	Our team would like to know if selected contractors would have access to any databases associated with the project.	Background clearances are required before accessing any confidential information. Successful proposers will not have unfettered access to Covered California databases. Depending on the project, a data extract will be provided as needed. See Exhibit A, B.
2	Is there a Scope of Work template that you would like us to work off of for the proposal?	See Model Contract, Exhibit A - Scope of Work
3	Please confirm whether Covered California currently has a consumer research pool in place. If so, please provide the name of the current contractors in the consumer research pool.	Covered California has not had a consulting pool focusing on consumers including members, potential members, the uninsured and the general public. Covered California does have an existing Consulting Pool which focuses on Health Program Actuarial Services, Health Benefits, Pharmaceutical Benefits, Dental Benefits and Healthcare Marketplace Development.
4	The RFP instructs Proposers to submit the completed proposal via email. Is there a limit on the size of the electronic files you can receive via email (e.g., 30 MBs)? If so, please provide the maximum size limit you are able to receive. (1.11. Format of Proposals)	The maximum file size limit is 40 MBs.
5	If there is a limit on the size of electronic files you can receive, can the Proposer divide its proposal package and send multiple emails with its proposal clearly indicating the order of each in the Subject Line of the email (e.g., Email 1 of 4) to ensure all documents are received? (1.11. Format of Proposals)	See Question #4
6	Section 1.11.2.b.1) instructs the Proposer to "use Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri font at least 12-point side throughout...". Can a smaller font size be used on figures, tables, and charts? (1.11. Format of Proposals)	Yes, but it must be easily readable.
7	Are the items related to the reassignment of personnel for key personnel only, or for all personnel performing work on the contract? (2.2. Reassignment of Personnel)	It is for key personnel or any personnel that would impact the timely completion of the project.
8	Are the page limits of 2 pages for Section 4.3.1 and 3 pages for Section 4.3.2 the limits for each Service Area the Proposer is bidding on, or are these the page limits for all Service Areas combined? (4.3. Stage 2 – Technical Requirements)	The page limits are per Service Area the Proposer is bidding on.
9	Are resumes to be included in an appendix of the proposal? (5.2. Stage 2 - Technical Requirements)	We are not requesting any resumes at this time, but a bio sketch or narrative of the key staff that will take an active role will suffice to meet the 5.2 Stage 2 Technical Requirements. This will be counted towards the page limits.
10	Do resumes count toward the page limits of the narrative sections of the proposal? (5.2. Stage 2 - Technical Requirements)	See Question #9
11	Attachment 6 instructs the Proposer to include "Model Contract with Exhibits" in their response in order to be deemed responsive. Some of the exhibits included in this list do not have signature pages, some have a "Sample" watermark, and others instruct "Only to sign and date when attaching to the final notice". Please confirm that the Proposer does not need to complete the exhibits, and they only need to include them "as is" with its proposal. (Attachment 6: Proposal Checklist)	Yes, this is correct, the Proposer does not need to complete the exhibits, and they only need to include them "as is" with its proposal.
12	What social media platforms will Covered California want monitored for evaluating social media and web-based strategies? (Exhibit A – Scope of Work)	Currently, this would be Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. However, more platforms may be added in the future.
13	Does Covered CA anticipate requiring transcriptions for all qualitative data collection where feasible? (Exhibit A – Scope of Work)	Covered California has not historically request transcriptions for qualitative data but may in the future depending on the project. We have in the past requested video or audio tapes of interviews or focus groups.
14	Are there any required on-site meetings with Covered California, or is video conference sufficient for all contractor meetings? (Exhibit A – Scope of Work)	At this time, we are utilizing video conferencing, but we anticipate having a mix of video and on-site meetings in the future.

15	4.3.5 Cost Proposal - includes a list of key positions. Should this be mapped to the resumes in the event that the key personnel may have a different role depending on the specific project?	No, the Cost Proposal should be based on key positions and roles. We are not requesting any resumes at this time. A bio sketch or narrative of the key staff that will take an active role will suffice. (See also Question #9.)
16	(RFP Pg. 31) 5.2.1.3 Project Team Qualifications- includes reference to resumes. Is there a page limitation per resume or total pages for all resumes, or limit to number of resumes that may be submitted? Where should they be attached in the proposal?	See Question # 9
17	What type of contract should contractors in the pool anticipate being awarded for work orders? (RFP Section 1.2)	Once the RFP is awarded, each successful proposer will enter into a contract with Covered California. As projects are needed, Covered California will request project proposals from the consumer research pool to perform specific research projects. Covered California will review all requested proposals submitted and choose a contractor based on required expertise, proposed approach, ability to meet proposed timelines, and cost for the work. A Work Order will formalize the terms and conditions of each project assignment per Exhibit A, Section J and Exhibit A, Attachment 1.
18	Could you please clarify what information should be included in the project assumptions for each service area? We ask because there is not yet a specific project, only a statement of capabilities. These instructions: "Proposers must document any assumptions they are making about the Model Contract Exhibit A Scope of Work, the responsibilities of the Contractor and Covered California, and any other issues relevant to proposal submission in response to this RFP and the ability to do the work for the proposed cost."	Assumptions are any premises not expressly stated in the RFP upon which the Proposer makes its decisions about the RFP, the RFP process, SOW or the resulting contract. An example of an incorrect assumption would be that pricing information provided in the RFP process can be adjusted at the work order stage.
19	Can Covered California confirm that when additional rows are added for a position, the fully loaded hourly rate in the Cost Worksheet should correspond to each row, resulting in multiple rates for each position rather than one blended rate per position? (RFP Section: 4.3.5)	There should be a fully loaded hourly rate per position and corresponding row. Please do the same for proposed subcontractor staff. Please add rows and positions as needed.
20	Should the fully loaded hourly rates in Exhibit B Attachment 1, include potential subcontractor staff? (RFP Section: 4.3.5)	See Question #19
21	Can bidders add positions to Exhibit B Attachment 1 for staff that do not fit into the provided positions? (RFP Section: 4.3.5)	See Question #19
22	Can exhibits use a font smaller than 12 point? (RFP Section: 1.11,2,b.1)	For the Exhibits A - F, the font should not be adjusted.
23	Should bidders include client references in Stage 1 (RFP page 19) or Stage 2 (RFP page 18)? (RFP Section: 4 and 4.2.1)	Client References (Attachment 7) should be submitted along with all required attachments in Stage 2. An addendum will be released removing the requirement from Stage 1.
24	Can bidders submit their proposal in PDF format? (RFP Section: 4.4)	Proposal can be submitted in PDF. Model Contract exhibits shall be submitted in Word.
25	Can Covered California please provide a clean copy of Attachment 1. (Attachment 1)	The updated clean copy of Attachment 1 will be uploaded as an addendum.
26	In which order should bidders include the documents for Stage 2 – Technical Requirements – in the order listed in RFP Section 4 Page 18, or the order listed in RFP Section 4.3, pages 23-28? (RFP Section: 4 and 4.3)	The narrative portions - Understanding and Approach, Project Team Qualifications, Corporate/Organization Qualification and Project Assumptions should be provided in the order listed here. The Cost Worksheet and Client reference should be included as separate attachments.
27	The RFP states "Proposers must submit one (1) detailed Attachment 7, Client References and must..." Please confirm that bidders provide 3 references in total, not 3 references per proposed service area. (RFP Section: 4.3.6)	There should be an Attachment 7 for each Service Area the Proposer is bidding on with 3 references per proposed Service Area. A reference may be used more than once if relevant.
28	Should bidders submit Stage 1 and Stage 2 in one combined document or in two separate documents? (RFP Section: 4.4)	Please submit it all into one document.

29	Without a defined Scope of Work, please confirm that we do not need to include a response in the 5 th column "Corresponding % of bid price." (Attachment 5)	Attachment 5 allows Proposers to quantify the percentage of their subcontractors that may qualify them for as a Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise or Small Business Preference. If you are not seeking this preference, complete the form as instructed with 1A as "None" and include it with your submission. If the Proposer does not know if the subcontractor is certified and able to use the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise or Small Business Preference, then Proposer needs to complete the form as instructed with 1B as "No" and include it with your submission. If the Proposer has a subcontractor that is certified and able to use the Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise or Small Business Preference, then Proposer needs to complete the "corresponding percent of bid price" at a maximum of 5%.
30	There is one reference to resumes in section 5.2.1.3, but mostly the RFP seems to suggest that the presentation of qualifications of individual members of the team can be in the form of a narrative or bio sketch. Are formal resumes required? (RFP Section: 5.2.1.3)	See Question #9
31	Can the Covered California please clarify what is meant by "significant consideration" and how will this consideration be reflected in the scoring? (Reference Section 5.2.1)	Proposers that can demonstrate comprehensive experience, capacity and ability to be a successful contractors will receive higher scores than proposals that are unable to demonstrate their likelihood of success. This is further detailed in the Technical Content Evaluation Criteria Chart on RFP page 30.
32	Can Covered California please confirm that the 2 page limit for Project Assumptions does not apply to the Model Contract track changes requested in Section 4.2.3? (Reference Section 4.2.4 Project Assumptions)	Yes, that is correct, the 2 page limit for Project Assumptions does not apply to the Model Contract track changes requested in Section 4.2.3.
33	Can Covered California please confirm how the interviews will be evaluated and scored? (Reference Section 5.2.1.4 Proposer Interviews)	The interviews are optional and will be only utilized if determined to be necessary. This will not count as part of the scoring criteria. See RFP Section 5.2.1.4.
34	Can Covered California confirm that any cover pages, table of contents, and acronyms do not count against the page limits?	Cover pages and Tables of Contents are not requested. Pages are inclusive of all pages addressing the requested topic. Do not assume that reviewers will be aware of the meaning of any acronyms used so they should be spelled out in full the first time they are used.
35	Can Covered California please confirm that subsequent task order(s) released under this vehicle can be priced as firm fixed price/deliverable based contracts?	Project cost implemented and completed under this RFP may vary based on the needs of the project. Regardless, payment must still tie back to the Cost Worksheet submitted with the Proposal.
36	I am a sole proprietor. On some projects with extensive data analysis needs, I make arrangements with statisticians or programmers and pay them on an hourly basis as independent contractors. I have not, in the past, had formal subcontract arrangements with these independent contractors. Given the uncertainty about what work Covered California might ask me to do, I do not know whether I would be using any independent contractors in work for Covered California. In response to the question on Attachment 5 about whether subcontractors will be used for this project, should I respond 'yes' or 'no'?	If subcontractors cannot be identify at this stage, you may respond "no" on Attachment 5. However, for specific projects assigned via the Work Orders detailed in Exhibit A, Section J specific subcontractors must be identified if used.
37	One of the required items on the proposal check list is 'Proof of Worker's Compensation Liability Insurance'. Unlike the Certificate of Liability Insurance and Proof of Automobile Liability Insurance, there is not a parenthetical to allow a letter explaining why it is not included at this time. Is such a letter allowed for this item?	Yes, however, please keep in mind that compliance with all insurance requirements is necessary to execute an agreement with Covered California. These requirements must be satisfied throughout the duration of the agreement.
38	I do not have active status with the California Secretary of State. I have done a search on my last name at the SOS web site and can take a screen shot of a page that shows no active corporations with my full first and last name. Is that what is meant by the 'entity detail page from SOS business search', or is something else contemplated?	See RFP section 1.13.2.a and 4.2.2. If the Proposer organization is incorporated, proof of Active status with the California SOS must be provided in one of the following forms: i. A copy of the Proposer's current Certificate of Status issued by the SOS; or ii. A copy of the Proposer's Entity Detail page from the SOS's Business Search website (https://businesssearch.sos.ca.gov/). This requirement does not apply to sole proprietors and general partnerships.
39	I assume that the 'Sample Work Order' (Exhibit A, Attachment 1) of the Model Contract is to be returned without filling in any of the items. Is that assumption correct?	Yes, this is correct. Exhibit A, Attachment 1 Sample Work Order is only an example and does not require any input.

40	Can you please provide clarification as to how section 4.3.4 Project Assumptions will be scored since it is not listed in the scoring criteria on pages 29-30 in section 5.2.1.? (RFP Section: 5.2.1)	The Covered California RFP Evaluation Team will conduct a qualitative review of the technical content of each responsive proposal to determine how capable each Proposer is by scoring the categories of Understanding and Approach, Project Team Qualifications, Corporate/Organization Qualifications Summary, Cost Proposal, and Client References. Project Assumptions will not be scored but will help provide context to RFP responses. See RFP Section 5.2.
41	What other language groups is Covered California interested in conducting research in beyond English and Spanish? (Referenced: Exhibit A, sections 3.c. and 3.g. page 11)	We have done limited focus groups in the past in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.
42	Is Covered California interested in in-person research or does it prefer limiting research to virtual only options due to COVID-19? (Referenced: Exhibit A, Section 3 "Qualitative Research and Analytics" pages 10-12)	As of now, we are utilizing virtual options, but we want return to in-person research as soon as feasible.
43	The Project Team Minimum Qualifications sections specify that offerors should refer to Attachment 8 for minimum staff qualifications, but Attachment 8 states that minimum requirements are at the organizational level. Please clarify what proposed team member minimum qualifications are or if organizational and team minimum qualifications are one and the same. (Referenced: Attachment 8 "Minimum Qualifications" and RFP page 15, section 2.1 "Project Team Minimum Qualifications")	Attachment 8 should be completed based on the qualifications of either the proposer as the organization, the proposer's team members, or both.
44	Do we need to provide rates for all labor categories listed? For example, do we need to bid a Financial Analyst. (Referenced: RFP 2021-01, 4.3.5 Cost Proposal, page 27 and Exhibit B, Attachment 1)	Proposers need to provide rates for all staff categories they anticipate billing for.
45	In terms of the name for the header or footer, is a logo accepted or does it need to be a written name. (Reference: 1.11, sub-section 2b.)	The written name is preferred. You can use a logo if it includes the name of the organization.
46	Can you clarify what would be considered conditional cost information? (Reference: 1.13, sub-section 1, VI.)	Costs included in the Cost Worksheet will be incorporated into the Contract for successful proposers so they should reflect reasonable, and accurate costs/position. Statements like "hourly costs will be determined at the work order stage" would be considered conditional and not responsive to the requested costs.
47	For Service Areas 1 and 3, the last bullet ends in "and". Please confirm there is no missing information. (Reference: 4.2.1)	There is nothing else missing. In the Addendum to come, the "ands" will be removed.
48	In terms of the suggested changes to the model contract, would comments in the document (in addition to tracked changes) be accepted for any additional context that is needed? (Reference: 4.2.3)	Yes, only if they clarify the track changes.
49	The RFP mentions a written cost estimate bid (work order pursuant to Exhibit A, Section J). Our assumption is that would be needed for individual proposals after the contract is awarded but please confirm. (Reference: 4.3.5)	Yes, this is correct. Once the RFP is awarded, each successful proposer will enter into a contract with Covered California. As projects are needed, Covered California will request project proposals from the consumer research pool to perform specific research projects. Covered California will review all requested proposals submitted and choose a contractor based on required expertise, proposed approach, ability to meet proposed timelines, and cost for the work. A Work Order will formalize the terms and conditions of each project assignment per Exhibit A, Section J and Exhibit A, Attachment 1. (See Question 17).
50	Are there any planned research projects that are expected to be awarded under this MSA?	Two projects in the queue are a Member Survey and a Brand Tracker Survey.
51	Service Area 4, Minimum Qualification #3 requires that the "Proposer has developed and produced a minimum of five (5) reports on any of the following topics related to health care: improving health insurance enrollment or retention, or improving the consumer experience including recommendations on how to improve consumer experiences". Are there requirements on the type of reports needed to meet this qualification?	There is not a specific type of report required. We anticipate Proposers will provide a variety of examples that best demonstrate their capabilities.

52	Section 4.2.1 of "RFP 2021-01 Consumer Research Pool.pdf" lists the following requirement for Service Area 1: <i>1. Proposer has a minimum of five (5) years of experience in research sampling, deployment, and analysis of California residents;</i> If an organization has five years of experience in those areas in other U.S. states outside of California, but has the capacity to do so in California as well, can that organization be eligible, or would this result in disqualification from this Service Area?	Yes. While we prefer example from California, we will accept research examples that have been done in the United States.
53	Can you confirm that (1) Understanding and approach; (2) Team qualifications; (3) Narrative; (4) Project assumptions; (5) cost worksheet; and (6) references are expected for each Service area on which we are bidding?	Yes, all of these items are expected for each service area for which you are bidding.
54	You mentioned that resumes are not requested at this time, but a bio sketch of the key staff that will take an active role will suffice. For the bio sketches, do you have a recommendation/ template for the bio sketches (e.g. NIH template) or would you prefer of a short paragraph/ narrative instead?	We would prefer a short narrative paragraph per staff who will take an active role. However, short is key as there are page limits you must adhere to.
55	Will rates submitted as part of the contract with Covered California be eligible to receive a percentage increase for salary increment or escalation at any point in the life of the contract (annually, at the time of extension), or are rates intended to be held for the entire 5 years of the contract?	Rates would be consistent for first three (3) years of the contract.
56	Can we include a cover and TOC if it helps reviewers know where to find each Service Area section?	Table of contents and cover sheets are not requested and will count toward page limits. Proposals for any combination of the five (5) Service Areas should be organized and in the same order as listed in the RFP. For any Service Area the Proposer is not proposing to provide, the Proposer shall include a single piece of paper stating the number and name of the Service Area and the words - "This is intentionally not addressed."
57	It is acceptable to have staff classifications in the budget plan (e.g., Research Analyst) with a standardized pay rate but not to have the individuals named? This would be for supportive staff, not leading researchers.	Yes, that would be acceptable.
58	Should hard costs such as recruitment, incentives and facility/platform costs be excluded from the cost worksheet, i.e. personnel only?	At this time, it would be difficult to predict hard costs. We are concentrating on personnel costs. We would discuss and quantify the other costs at the project proposal phase.
59	Specific projects may need a subcontractor for an in-language moderator, but that depends on specific project needs. We were planning on mentioning as an assumption that we may need to bring on a sub-contractor - please confirm that will be acceptable.	Yes, that would be acceptable.
60	Does Covered California have an approved indirect cost rate with University of California. If so, what is the rate?	Should a proposer from the University of California be a successful proposer, we would discuss the indirect cost rate during contract negotiations so we would have a clear and mutual understanding of how it would be applied.
61	How many successful proposers does Covered CA intend to award a contract to for each service area?	We are looking for a variety of successful proposers. There is no limit set. We are looking for those that will meet all our research needs.
62	Would Covered California consider extending the due date for responses to give more time to adjust responses based on answers to questions?	At this time, we are not considering extending the deadline.
63	Will Covered California provide a list of participating organizations at today's conference?	Covered California will not be providing a list of Conference participants.
64	Will the slides be posted?	Covered California will not be providing the presentation slides.