



**The National Science Foundation's (NSF)
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)**

Request for Solutions (RFS)

Secure Compute Environment Testbed for a National Secure Data Service

SCET-24

RFS Issue Date: February 7, 2024

Full Proposal Due Date: February 28, 2024, 3PM ET

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) is housed within the National Science Foundation (NSF), an independent federal agency focused on supporting basic research across the science and engineering (S&E) disciplines. NCSES' primary role originated in the National Science Foundation Act of 1950 (42 U.S.C. 1862 (a) (6): To provide a central clearinghouse for the collection, interpretation, and analysis of data on scientific and engineering resources and to provide a source of information for policy formulation by other agencies of the federal government.

NCSES is one of thirteen principal statistical agencies within the U.S. federal government. NCSES provides objective information on the U.S. S&E enterprise in a global context. It serves a vital role in the collection, interpretation, and analysis of S&E data with respect to research and development (R&D), the workforce, U.S. competitiveness in science and technology (S&T), and educational attainment in the STEM fields.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Solution (RFS) is to provide opportunities to America's DataHub Consortium (ADC) members and other interested organizations with projects that will support the strategic objectives of the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), specifically related to Secure Compute Environment Testbed for a National Secure Data Service. See Attachment 1 - Project Topic for more details.

2. Instructions

The Government reserves the right to select for award any, all, part, or none of the proposals received in response to this announcement. This RFS is an expression of interest only and does not commit the Government to pay any proposal preparation costs. ADC's Consortium Management Firm, Advanced Technology International, will receive responses to this RFS and conduct a preliminary screening of submitted full proposals to ensure compliance with the RFS requirements. As part of the preliminary screening process, submissions that do not meet the requirements of the RFS may be eliminated or additional information may be requested to complete a satisfactory screening. The CMF will notify offers of the Government's selection decision and make the resulting project award(s).

2.1 Schedule

The full proposal submission deadline is included on the cover page of the RFS. Final decisions on awards are expected by March 2024. Awarded projects will be expected to commence in April 2024. The period of performance for proposed efforts is through August 9, 2026. For projects requiring data access or other preparatory steps before the primary research activities can begin, we encourage offerors to allow time for this prior to official kick-off.

This RFS and amendments issued thereto will be posted on the ADC website at <https://www.americasdatahub.org/>. It is the responsibility of the offeror and interested parties to be aware of RFS amendments by regularly checking the ADC website.

2.2 Offeror Eligibility

This solicitation is unrestricted. All qualified offerors, including universities, may submit a response. If selected for award, offeror must join ADC if not already a member.

2.3 Project Funding

Funding for this program as appropriated in the Federal budget for projects determined by the Government to be technically consistent with the objectives of this RFS and of interest to the Government. The Government reserves the right to expand the award amount to allow for projects with exceptional merit.

It is anticipated there will be one or more awards estimated at \$8,600,000.

Awards resulting from this RFS will be made based on the evaluation results. Awards are subject to the availability of funds. The Government reserves the right to fund all, some, one, or none of the proposals submitted; may elect to fund only part of a submitted proposal; and may incrementally fund any or all awards under this RFS. Full proposals submitted in response to this RFS that are not initially awarded and not rejected will be held in reserve and may be awarded up to 12-months after the full proposal deadline.

2.4 Project Selection Process

This RFS selection process is structured as a one-step process.

Offerors are invited to submit a detailed technical and cost proposal for award evaluation. Proposals shall be prepared in accordance with Attachment 2.

Proposals must be submitted to the ADC CMF in **Microsoft Word** format using the online form here: https://atisc.formstack.com/forms/adc_scet_rfs

2.5 Intellectual Property Rights

Awards will generally contain detailed provisions concerning patent rights, rights in technical data and computer software, data reporting requirements, and other terms and conditions which may be negotiated as part of the award process.

Offerors must describe any limitations on any intellectual property (patents, inventions, trade secrets, copyrights, or trademarks) that will impact the Offeror's performance of the contract or impact the Government's subsequent use of any deliverable under the contract. The Offeror must describe the intellectual property in sufficient detail to describe the limitations (Data assertions of the Offeror or any subcontractor, potential patent licenses required by the Government, etc.), and to describe why or how the Government can accomplish the stated objectives of this RFS with the limitations described or proposed by the Offeror.

2.5.1 Proprietary Data Restrictions

Offerors are advised that proposals may contain data the offeror does not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the ADC CMF or the Government except for evaluation purposes. If the offeror wishes to restrict such data, the cover page of all submittal documents must be marked with the following legend, and relevant sheets marked as instructed.

This proposal includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the ADC CMF and the Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this proposal. However, if a contract is awarded to this offeror as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of these data, the Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting contract. This restriction does not limit the Government’s right to use information contained in these data if they are obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in Sheets [insert numbers or other identification of sheets].

Each restricted data sheet shall be marked as follows:

Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this document.

To the extent that such restrictions on proprietary data or information would not interfere with the intent of the Government to make the results of the work and projects awarded under the RFS available to all interested parties, and if in conformance with the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended), the Government will honor those desires.

2.6 Other Award Information

It is anticipated that any award will be issued under the ADC Other Arrangement Base Agreement, which can be found on the ADC website. By submitting a proposal in response to this RFS the offeror is agreeing in full to the terms and conditions of the ADC Other Arrangement Base Agreement.

2.7 Agreement Type

It is anticipated the proposed efforts will be funded on a firm-fixed-price and expenditure-based basis (see Attachment 1 for Contract Line Items descriptions).

3. Evaluation and Award

3.1 Full Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated solely on the following evaluation criteria, Technical and Cost. The criteria provided below are listed in order of relative importance:

3.1.1 Technical

3.1.1.1 Approach

The degree to which the proposed project (i) meets the objectives outlined in Attachment 1; (ii) will result in or lead to a replicable framework that can be used to address similar issues; (iii) demonstrates innovativeness; (iv) informs other strategic priorities like the National Secure Data Service; and (v) demonstrates ability to assess, manage and respond to risk areas.

3.1.1.2 Teaming

The degree to which the proposed project includes a diverse team of qualified performers to include use of non-traditional entities. A “non-traditional entity” means an entity (construed in its broadest sense to include qualified large and small businesses, universities, non-profits, philanthropic organizations, partnerships, joint ventures, and other entity forms) that is not currently performing and has not performed, for at least the three-year period preceding the solicitation of sources by NSF for the procurement or arrangement, under any NSF procurement contract or NSF instrument of financial assistance.

3.1.2 Cost

The CMF will perform an analysis of the submitted cost proposal and will provide the results to the Government. This effort may entail the CMF requesting additional information from the Offeror. The Government will determine whether the Offeror’s total evaluated cost/price is fair and reasonable.

3.2 Notifications and Negotiations

All offerors will receive written notification of the final disposition of their proposal. If selected for award, the CMF will contact the offeror with further instructions.

4. Communication

Any questions related to this RFS should be submitted to the ADC CMF in writing at ADC-Contracts@ati.org.