

Universal Service Administrative Company
RFP AAD-20-108 High Cost Broadband Network/Engineering Audit Services
Questions & Answers

#	Question	Answer
1	<p>In accordance with FAR Part 16.504, “Indefinite-quantity contracts,” A solicitation and contract for an indefinite quantity must-</p> <p>(i) Specify the period of the contract, including the number of options and the period for which the Government may extend the contract under each option;</p> <p>(ii) <i>Specify the total minimum and maximum quantity of supplies or services the Government will acquire under the contract;</i></p> <p>(iii) Include a statement of work, specifications, or other description, that reasonably describes the general scope, nature, complexity, and purpose of the supplies or services the Government will acquire under the contract in a manner that will enable a prospective offeror to decide whether to submit an offer;</p> <p>(iv) <i>State the procedures that the Government will use in issuing orders, including the ordering media, and, if multiple awards may be made, state the procedures and selection criteria that the Government will use to provide awardees a fair opportunity to be considered for each order (see 16.505(b)(1));</i></p> <p>(v) Include a description of the activities authorized to issue orders; and</p> <p>(vi) <i>Include authorization for placing oral orders, if appropriate, provided that the Government has established procedures for obligating funds and that oral orders are confirmed in writing.</i></p> <p>Can the Government please provide clarity regarding plans for Task Order awards under Federal Acquisition Regulations in this area?</p>	<p>USAC is not a government agency and does not follow FAR.</p> <p>See section B.8. Task Order process</p>
2	<p>For the locations selected by USAC, the Contractor shall perform the site visit to confirm that the certified location is real, presence of the necessary construction or equipment to deploy broadband and to measure the Key Performance Indicators (Download speed, Upload speed, Latency) at that specific location.”</p> <p>Will the Contractor participate in or have input in the selection of the USAC locations?</p>	<p>The carrier and locations will be specified in the Task Orders. USAC will make the initial selections of the location samples.</p>
3	<p>How much lead time or advance notice can the Contractor expect to be given to deploy to various Carrier sites? Will the Government allocate time for the Contractor to prepare Site Visit Plans before each visit deployment? What does the Government anticipate this process to entail and how long will the Government allocate to develop, submit, and have approved these plans?</p>	<p>USAC is not a government agency.</p> <p>The Contractor project plan submitted as part of the Task Order will include the timing needed to prepare Site Visit Plans and the approximate timing for each site visit and expected duration.</p>
4	<p>Regarding Site Visits: “Contractor shall develop and submit a proposed site visit plan to USAC for review and approval for each site visit to be</p>	<p>The site visit plan is a formal deliverable as it’s required per the RFP.</p>

	<p>performed. The site visit plan shall include but not be limited to the following...”</p> <p>Can it be assumed the “Site Visit Plan” is also a formal Deliverable, in addition to the actual Site Visit(s)?</p>	
5	<p>In many cases, the commencement and continuation of work under contract will be based on “USAC’s acceptance of draft reports, final reports, work papers, and any data submitted in electronic form, such reports or data may be evaluated by USAC, FCC or by an independent firm of USAC’s choosing.”</p> <p>How does USAC anticipate Contract/Task Order Milestone compliance if the USAC acceptance of the aforementioned documents is adversely impacted or delayed for some reason? Will the Government accept and insert a statement regarding acceptance of contract Deliverables that reads, “Within five (5) business days after USAC acceptance of...” as a fair and reasonable Deliverable acceptance standard?</p>	<p>USAC is not a government agency.</p> <p>The USAC PMO works closely with the contractor PM to manage the project plan. As with any project plan, dependencies are identified and any changes to a milestone will be reflected in a modification to the project plan. All changes will be approved by the USAC PMO.</p>
6	<p>Regarding Standardized Report Template Requirements: “Contractor shall work with USAC to develop a standardized report template to document the engineering study...(ii) The standardized report template shall be used by all Contractors except where the template is in conflict with specific engineering firm standards.”</p> <p>Is the “Standardized Report Template” a Contract Deliverable as it is a stated solicitation requirement? Does the Government anticipate establishing a due date for this requirement?</p>	<p>USAC is not a government agency.</p> <p>The standardized report template is a contract deliverable and is expected in sufficient time to prepare the first draft report. USAC will approve the template and expect the contractor to adhere to the approved template.</p>
7	<p>Regarding Draft and Final Engineering Study Report Requirements: “Contractor shall prepare a draft engineering study report for USAC review and comment.”</p> <p>Are the “Draft and Final Engineering Study Report” Contract Deliverables as they are stated solicitation requirements? Does the Government anticipate establishing due dates for these requirements?</p>	<p>USAC is not a government agency.</p> <p>The standardized report template is a contract deliverable and is expected in sufficient time to prepare the first draft report. USAC will approve the template and expect the contractor to adhere to the approved template.</p>
8	<p>Is there Federal Guidance or are there Federal requirements for compliance regarding “Contractor Systems and Data Handling, Storage and IT Security?” (page 11. Paragraph 5 of the solicitation)</p>	<p>See RFP section C. XVIII. Information Security; and Section C. XX. FISMA Provisions</p>
9	<p>In accordance with 15.304(e): Evaluation factors and significant subfactors. “(e) Unless the exception at paragraph (c)(1)(ii)(A) of this section applies, the solicitation shall also state, at a minimum, whether all evaluation factors other than cost or price, when combined, are—</p> <p>(1) Significantly more important than cost or price;</p> <p>(2) Approximately equal to cost or price; or</p> <p>(3) Significantly less important than cost or price (10 U.S.C.2305(a)(3)(A)(iii) and 41 U.S.C.3306(c)(1)(C)).”</p> <p>Can the Government please indicate which Evaluation factors and/or subfactors are significantly more important than cost or price or are approximately equal to cost or price?</p>	<p>USAC does not follow FAR. However, see section E.7. Evaluation for evaluation factors and sub factors.</p>

10	Regarding the Task Order issuance policy: What is the Task Order issuance policy for USAC regarding the anticipated IDIQ-type Contract? (Please, see Question #1 regarding “Minimum/Maximum” quantity of supplies or services the Government will acquire under the contract, above).	The RFP is not based on FAR requirement and there we do not provide the Minimum/Maximum” quantity of supplies or services required.
11	Regarding Key Personnel: Will the Government accept Years of Work Experience in substitution for Educational requirements? If so, what are these allowances?	Yes, the resumes must communicate the professional expertise, professional certifications, and the value added of this individual to the USAC engagement. USAC will evaluate the work experience of the individual as well as educational accolades.
12	Regarding Weekly Status Meetings: On page 16 of the solicitation under “Weekly Status Meetings,” it reads “Status meetings will be held bi-weekly by teleconference unless USAC expressly requests the physical presence of Contractor personnel at the meeting. Please clarify if the Weekly Status Meetings will be conducted on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.	Status Meetings will be conducted on a biweekly basis via teleconference. If the physical presence it requested, USAC will provide a reasonable amount of time to report on site.
13	Are “Management Presentations” mentioned on page 16 of the solicitation to be considered “Deliverables?” If so, what are requirements associated with these presentations. If not, how are these presentations to be considered by Offerors?	The contractor must make key personnel available to discuss the process and results of testing with USAC Board of Directors and the FCC, if requested.
14	Will the Carriers be involved in the On-Site visits and notified of audits in their territories?	USAC will announce the audit after which the contractor can contact the carrier to coordinate site visits and request documentation. A representative from the carrier will be involved in on-site visits.
15	Will Carriers be expected to facilitate the tests if needed such as hosting servers to measure the KPIs on their network?	Testing (Destination) should be outside of the carrier’s network.
16	Are all tests to measure and report based on the “Customer Experience” inside the router?	The engineering firm to propose in their site visit plan if needed or not.
17	Are tests to be conducted inside the Carrier’s network or can test sites be pinged from any server?	No, tests should be conducted outside the carrier’s networks.
18	Are tests to be conducted simultaneity across the United States and for more than on Carrier at the same time?	The contractor’s test plan will identify when tests should be conducted and for which carriers. This information will be included in the Task Order proposal.
19	How many site-visits are expected on monthly basis?	The number of site visits and when they are conducted will be determined by the contractor based on a Task Order requirements.

20	How many site-visits per state are expected?	The number of site visits expected per state depends on the size of the sampled entity.
21	Will Task Orders have multiple sites for planning purposes on the Contractors side?	Task Orders will include the carrier and the number of locations where a site visit is required.
22	<p>Page 2, Section A, Subsection 2 Overview of the Project:</p> <p>Pursuant to the 47 C.F.R. § 54.702, USAC conducts audits of the beneficiaries of the Universal Service Fund, contributors to the Universal Service Fund, or any other providers of services under the universal service support mechanisms and must conduct such audits in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. USAC is seeking a qualified network engineering firm as a specialist to assist USAC in assessing USF support recipients' compliance of with the FCC rules.</p> <p>While the C.F.R. requires USAC to conduct audits of the beneficiaries, what agreement and level of detail in it exist, that would require a beneficiary of USF High Cost funds, to allow USAC to access their physical network to conduct such specific tests?</p>	<p>ADD back 54.702...54.320(b) states that “[a]ll eligible telecommunications carriers shall retain all records required to demonstrate to auditors that the support received was consistent with the universal service high-cost program rules. This documentation must be maintained for at least ten years from the receipt of funding. All such documents shall be made available upon request to the Commission and any of its Bureaus or Offices, the Administrator, and their respective auditors.” Therefore, the Beneficiaries must comply with the request for documentation by USAC and others hired by USAC.</p>
23	<p>Page 2, Section A, Subsection 2 Overview of the Project: Network engineering study requirements</p> <p>A. Does USAC currently conduct such desktop and field studies, using its internal or contractor resources?</p> <p>B. Can USAC share any insight to the number carriers it intends to audit in a year?</p>	<p>USAC currently conducts reviews of carrier submitted documentation (desktop reviews).</p> <p>The annual audit plan is confidential.</p>
24	<p>Page 9, Section B, Subsection 11.A: Scope of Services</p> <p>Does USAC have established SLA or timeframes for various milestones in the a lifecycle of a network engineering audit? For example, documentation review may reveal imcomplete information. Does USAC have an agreement with the beneficiary to respond in a certain timeframe? Or timeframe from submission of proposed site visit plan to reaching the site?</p>	<p>There is no established SLA or milestone durations in the lifecycle of a network engineering audit. The beneficiary response time for documentation can range from 5 days to 10 days depending on the amount of data requested. The contractor will work with the carrier to agree on a reasonable response period for exceptions.</p>
25	<p>Page 9, Section B, Subsection 11.A.1: Document validation</p> <p>Does USAC require carrier to prepare and submit documentation in standardized format, to ensure consistency and completeness?</p>	<p>No. The contractor can request documentation is a specified format but there is no rule that it must be submitted in a standard format as long as all elements are provided.</p>
26	Page 9, Section B, Subsection 11.A.2: Site visits	USAC acknowledges that there could be an impact based on the COVID-19

	<p>Does USAC anticipate any impact of the Covid pandemic in traveling to and conducting site visits?</p> <p>If yes, has USAC considered any alternate ways to accomplish the goals of the site visits without physically being on carrier or their subscriber premise?</p>	<p>pandemic; however, virtual visits have proven successful when conducting current audits.</p>
27	<p>Page 10, Section B, Subsection 11.A.2.iii.d: Delivery Schedule: Contractor shall provide the site visit plan ten (10) business days after the Task Order Effective Date. The site visit report shall be due ten (10) business days after completion of the Study.</p> <p>The site visit plan and approach will be informed by selected beneficiary's deployment progress, infrastructure being built, progress made, etc. Would USAC provide the beneficiary's documentation to the Contractor on the day the Task Order is effective?</p>	<p>USAC documentation will be provided in sufficient time to complete the site visit plan. The Task Order will include the locations that are part of the study which is a key component of the site visit plan.</p>
28	<p>Page 12, Section B, Subsection 11.A.6: Reporting Requirements. The RFP indicates that vendors should have the ability to conduct field tests to report a range of network specifications including jitter, latency, and packet fragmentation, among others.</p> <p>Has Ping previously been agreed to as the test to be used for latency?</p>	<p>Yes, Ping is one of the agreed upon commands that can be used for latency testing. USAC will consider other effective methods to evaluate latency.</p>
29	<p>Page 12, Section B, Subsection 11.A.6: Reporting Requirements. The RFP indicates that vendors should have the ability to conduct field tests to report a range of network specifications including jitter, latency, and packet fragmentation, among others.</p> <p>Have the specific network locations for the tests been agreed to? For example, nearest aggregation routers to the network edge, etc?</p>	<p>All testing should start at the End User (subscriber location) and end at a destination outside of the carrier's Interface gateway\outside network.</p>
30	<p>Page 15, Section B, Subsection 13.A: Project Kick-off Meeting and Training</p> <p>Presuming, each Task Order will include engineering study for one beneficiary, will USAC plan to conduct a project kick-off and training on award of each Task Order?</p> <p>If not, does it anticipate any gaps between closeout of one Task Order and award of the next Task Order to the Contractor?</p>	<p>USAC will conduct a kick-off meeting and program training to the awardees of the contract. There will be no additional training per Task Order.</p>
31	<p>Regarding Section 11.A.2 Site Visits, page 9, "For the locations selected by USAC, the Contractor shall perform the site visit to confirm that the certified location is real, presence of the necessary construction or equipment to deploy broadband and to measure the Key Performance Indicators (Download speed, Upload speed, Latency) at that specific location," in cases where the selected location does not subscribe to services or the site owner refuses access to the premises, will USAC select alternative locations or will Contractor confirm deployment of broadband infrastructure with ability to meet those KPIs?</p>	<p>Alternate/Replacement selections will be made for circumstances where the subscriber prohibits testing on a case by case basis. For situations where the service is not active, USAC will accept documentation to confirm deployment of broadband infrastructure demonstrating the ability to meet the KPIs.</p>
32	<p>Regarding Section 11.A.1. Document Validation (ii) For PR/USVI, page 9, "Contractor shall perform the documentation review to confirm that equipment and services used to restore communications network are deployed to unique and eligible locations, to confirm service quality</p>	<p>The carriers will be required to provide that corroborates the pre-hurricane subscriber levels reported on the Form 477 as of June 30, 2017.</p>

	to pre-hurricane levels,” is the pre-hurricane level quality of service to be based on Form 477 data? If not, what will be the source of this data?	
33	Regarding Section 11.A.6.iii.j.i-iv. KPIs and data such as, page 13, will USAC expect performance tests related to Jitter, Packet Loss, DNS, and Website Load as a standard, minimum reporting requirement or will it be on a case by case basis?	Latency and Down Load/Upload speed are the primary test required; however, USAC will accept additional information regarding Jitter, Packet Loss, DNS, and Website load, etc. as a result of test work completed.
34	Regarding Section 11. A.6.V, page 13, “The draft report shall be submitted via a web-based portal provided by USAC no later than four weeks after completion of a site visit,” how is this study different from the site visit report due ten (10) business days after completion of the Study noted in Section 11. A.2.iii.d. Delivery Schedule?	The draft report due no later than four weeks after the completion of a site visit is the information related to the site visit. The site visit report due ten days after the completion of the study is a compilation of all site visit reports that includes but is not limited to an executive summary, the testing process, and test results.
35	Are there any Carriers today outside of the 50 states, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands receiving High Cost program support? If no, does USAC have a probability of this occurring during the Contract Term?	The funds are available to all entities within the United States and territories, all which could be included under this engagement. The only exception is the Marianna Islands which will not be part of this engagement.
36	Does USAC anticipate keeping the Key Personnel more or less 100% utilized throughout the entirety of the Contract Term?	The contractor will determine whether key personnel are 100% utilized through the entirety of the contract term.
37	How many networks does USAC envision being audited concurrently at any given time during the Contract Term (as a proxy for the potential minimum number of Testing Technicians required)?	The number of networks audited has not been determined but will be specified in each Task Order.
38	Does USAC have any preference for (or prohibition against) any specific tool/software providers or models?	No, USAC does not have a preference or prohibitions of tools/software providers or models at this time.
39	Can USAC provide any statistics for the Carriers including the types of network technologies and (for wireless networks) the frequency bands used?	USAC does not have any statistics on the types of network technologies used by the carriers. Note that the networks to be evaluated are mainly for wireline technologies.
40	In the event a Carrier’s network employs a non-standard technology or uncommon frequency band which cannot be tested with reasonably available test tools, can Contractor engage Carrier for assistance with testing (preferably at no cost, or potentially as pass-through, to USAC)?	No, the contractor cannot engage the carrier for assistance with testing. If carrier assistance is needed, the contractor will first confer with USAC.
41	Are the cost of tools and travel/testing expenses to be include in the Resource Rates, or are these to be identified in each Site Visit Plan which Contractor develops and addressed as a Task Order amendment?	The cost of tools are not reimbursable by USAC. The resource rates should include all direct and indirect costs. However, the travel expense associated with site visits can be submitted as

		separate line during task order process. The estimates for travel/testing expenses should be further explained in the site visit plan.
42	Is the RDOF program (which is an extension of CAF-II) to be considered a High Cost Program that is in scope for this project?	Compliance with RDOF is not in scope for this engagement.
43	What is the expected volume of audits each firm should expect to receive?	Each firm will have the opportunity to bid on future Task Orders. The number of studies in each Task Order is TBD.
44	Does the USAC have guidance as to the % of expected travel for the program?	No, USAC does not have guidance to offer regarding the percentage of expected travel.
45	If, due to workload, staff vacation, or some other reason we are unable to support a specific Task Order request, can we respectfully decline without impacting future opportunities?	Yes, you may respectfully decline without an impact to future opportunities.
46	Is the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund to be audited with this program?	RDOF is not in scope for this engagement.