



National Coalition of STD Directors

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS NATIONAL STD/HIV PARTNER SERVICES COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Submission Deadline: June 28, 2023

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) seeks two academic institutions to join with the University of Kansas School of Medicine in the design and implementation of a community assessment of STD & HIV partner services in collaboration with CDC-funded STD prevention programs in seven state health departments and NCSD. Academic institutions will work jointly to create a rigorous assessment to learn from diverse individuals and communities most impacted by STDs and will use findings to issue a series of recommendations to individual state health departments, NCSD, and other interested stakeholders which will influence future programmatic and policy decisions related to the provision of partner services. Estimated awards will be issued in the amount of \$232,000 per academic institution with an expected project completion date of December 2024.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Founded in 1996, the National Coalition of STD Directors is a national organization representing health department STD directors, their support staff, and community-based organizations across 50 states, seven large cities, and eight US territories. NCSD advances effective STD prevention programs and services in every community across the country.

NCSD's vision is a nation without sexually transmitted diseases and its mission is to advance effective STD prevention programs and services in every community across the country. NCSD does this as the voice of its membership by providing leadership, building capacity, convening partners, and advocating. NCSD values integrity, transparency, collaboration, health equity, and innovation.

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

1029 Vermont Ave, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
www.ncsddc.org

RFP Point of Contact:
Josh Ferrer
Consultant, Community Assessment
Jferrer@ncsddc.org
503-308-2096

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) reached a new record high in 2021 for an eighth year in a row. CDC data show a 74% increase in syphilis over five years, as well as more than 2,800 congenital syphilis cases in 2021, including 220 that resulted in stillbirths and infant deaths. A key public health tool to interrupt STD transmission is partner services, in which trained health department staff (who may be Disease Intervention Specialists or DIS, public health nurses, or epidemiologists) contact newly diagnosed individuals to connect with the person's social/sexual network. However, this core public health activity has declined in effectiveness during the same period as the increases in STDs. Beginning in 2021, under the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan, the federal government made an unprecedented five-year investment in state/local public health to expand the DIS workforce. This funding expects health departments to use assessments to identify programmatic strengths and gaps, prioritization of DIS hiring needs, and goals, and a demonstrated focus on diversity, health equity, and inclusion for the workforce to serve local communities more effectively.

GOALS OF PROJECT

- Better understand the current landscape of partner services as currently delivered in the US, particularly in participating states, and synthesize the previous research on individual and community perceptions of partner services in the US.
- Gain greater insight into individual and community attitudes and perceptions regarding partner services including the way in which it is delivered and by whom, among priority population groups specified by participating states.
- Identify opportunities for quality improvement to increase utilization of partner services and improve the quality of services provided.
- Issue evidence-based recommendations and promising practices which can be used to inform future programming and policy decisions related to the provision of HIV/STD partner services at local, state, and national levels.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

Selected academic institutions will work in collaboration with one another along with a third already contracted academic institution (University of Kansas School of Medicine) with project management support provided by NCSD. Each academic institution will be assigned three states in which to conduct the assessment. Selected academic institutions will be expected to provide updates on work progress and solicit input through a project advisory group made up of participating state health departments and NCSD staff.

Currently NCSD has contractual agreements in place with the following state health departments to participate in the project: Washington, Iowa, Nevada, Utah, Kansas. Final negotiations are taking place with Virginia and New Hampshire to secure contracts and negotiations have begun with Texas.

SCOPE OF WORK

- Participate in a kick-off meeting with participating states, NCSD, and other contracted academic institutions.

- Conduct review of literature to identify: 1) Previous research on individual and community-level attitudes, perceptions of, and prior experience receiving partner services. 2) Evidence-based strategies and promising practices for partner services.
- Meet with applicable state health department and review STD surveillance data to identify populations disproportionately impacted by STDs and other populations of interest.
- Participate in regular meetings between NCSA and other contracted academic institutions to develop:
 - Research goals and methodology
 - Data collection practices
 - Mechanisms for community input and involvement in research design and implementation
 - Recruitment strategies (including use of incentives for participants)
- Obtain final approval from participating states on the above prior to participant recruitment and data collection.
- If applicable, development of data sharing agreements with participating states.
- Obtain institutional review board approval as needed.
- Collect data using agreed upon design and methods.
- Participate in regular meetings between NCSA and other contracted academic institutions to provide updates, troubleshoot issues, and ensure timeliness of project deliverables.
- Analyze data and draft reports with findings and recommendations. Contractors will be expected to issue an individual state-level report for the states they have been assigned and will be expected to collaborate on a national report that encompasses the entire project and all participating states.
- Incorporate feedback from NCSA and participating states on draft reports.
- Release final reports and participate in disseminating findings. This may include presentations to states and other interested stakeholders (e.g. CDC), as well as presentations at national conferences and submission of articles to scientific journals.

BUDGET

At this time, NCSA estimates two awards will be issued in the amount of \$232,000 each. Funding is subject to final execution of contracts with state health departments and is subject to increase or decrease based on participation of state health departments.

Applicants should budget for a project period of approximately eighteen months (July 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024).

Applicants should prepare a budget fully reflective of all costs to execute work outlined in the scope of work section. In addition to staffing costs, the budget should include costs such as participant recruitment, participant incentives, transcription services, and other relevant expenses. Applicants should also budget for travel to one in-person meeting of 3-4 days attended by two project staff (principal investigator(s), project director).

For fringe benefits provide the rate at which fringe benefits are calculated for staffing costs. For indirect costs, please note that the maximum indirect rate we will accept for proposals is 20%.

Funds are “cost reimbursement” funds. NCSd will not make payments in advance or anticipation of services or supplies provided under the contract. This includes payments of “one-twelfth” of a current fiscal year’s funding.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed and scored using the following selection criteria:

- Demonstrated experience conducting community-based research, preferably in populations disproportionately impacted by STDs.
- Demonstrated experience working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders, particularly those in state and local public health.
- Preference for past research experience in STD program science and partner services.
- Preference for academic institutions with capacity to execute contracts in a timely fashion (within 1-2 months).

NCSd may also consider factors such as geography and participating state STD program contractual preferences in evaluating proposals.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A completed proposal consists of the following items:

- A cover letter that includes the name and contact information of the Principal Investigator and if different the name and contact information of the primary contact for the proposal.
- A project narrative of no more than 10 pages that addresses the ways in which the institution meets the minimum and preferred qualifications listed under “Selection Criteria.”
- A detailed line-item budget, not-to-exceed \$232,000 accompanied by a budget narrative.
- CV or professional resume for all key project staff including the principal investigator(s).
- (Optional) Any additional information or supporting documentation as deemed relevant by the applicant (references, letter of support, etc.)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Requested proposals are due no later than 11:59pm PST on June 28, 2023. Proposals should be sent to jferrer@ncsd.org.

QUESTIONS

Questions may be submitted to Josh Ferrer (jferrer@ncsd.org) at any time prior to the submission deadline.

APPENDIX 1: TERMS and CONDITIONS OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

THE CONTRACT

The contract awarded shall be for the supply of goods and/or services, subject to NCSD's Terms and Conditions of Purchase (attached to final contract). NCSD reserves the right to undertake a formal review of the contract after twelve (12) months.

LATE PROPOSALS

Proposals received after the Submission Closing Date will not be considered, unless they are in NCSD's sole discretion exceptional circumstances which have caused the delay.

CORRESPONDENCE

All communications from potential candidates to NCSD relating to the RFP must be in writing and addressed to the person identified as the RFP Contact. Any request for information should be received before the Closing Date. Responses to questions submitted by any candidate may be circulated by NCSD to all other candidates to ensure fairness in the process.

ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSALS

NCSD may, unless the candidate expressly stipulates to the contrary in the RFP, accept whatever part of a proposal that NCSD so wishes. NCSD is under no obligation to accept the lowest rate of any proposal.

ALTERNATIVE OFFERS

If the candidate wishes to propose modifications to the proposal (which may provide a better way to achieve NCSD's Specification or Criteria) they may, at NCSD's discretion, be considered as an Alternative Offer. The candidate must make an Alternative Offer in a separate letter to accompany the RFP. NCSD is under no obligation to accept Alternative Offers.

PRICES

Prices must be shown as both inclusive of and exclusive of any sales tax or any similar tax (if applicable).

NO REIMBURSEMENT OF PROPOSAL EXPENSES

Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of the proposal will not be reimbursed.

NON-DISCLOSURE & CONFIDENTIALITY

Candidates must treat the RFP, contract and all associated documentation (including the Specification) and any other information relating to NCSD's employees, officers, partners or its business or affairs (the "**Confidential Information**") as confidential. All candidates shall:

- recognize the confidential nature of the Confidential Information;
- respect the confidence placed in the candidate by NCSD by maintaining the secrecy of the Confidential Information;
- not employ any part of the Confidential Information without NCSD's prior consent, for any purpose except that of tendering for business from NCSD.

- not disclose the Confidential Information to third parties without NCSD's prior written consent;
- not employ their knowledge of the Confidential Information in any way that would be detrimental or harmful to NCSD;
- use all reasonable efforts to prevent the disclosure of the Confidential Information to third parties;
- notify NCSD immediately of any possible breach of the provisions of this Condition 9 and acknowledge that damages may not be an adequate remedy for such a breach.

AWARD PROCEDURE

NCSD will review the proposals of each candidate to determine, in accordance with the Selection Criteria, whether they will award the contract to any one of them.

INFORMATION & RECORD KEEPING

NCSD shall consider any reasonable request from any unsuccessful candidate for feedback on its proposal and, where it is appropriate and proportionate to do so, provide the unsuccessful candidate with reasons why its proposal was rejected. Where applicable, this information shall be provided within 30 business days from (but not including) the date on which NCSD receives the request.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Any candidate is required to confirm in writing that:

- Neither it nor any related company to which it regularly subcontracts is insolvent or being wound up, is having its affairs administered by the courts, has entered into an arrangement with creditors, has suspended business activities, is the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations;
- Neither it nor a company to which it regularly subcontracts has been convicted of fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization, any money laundering offence, any offence concerning professional conduct, breaches of applicable labor law or labor tax legislation or any other illegal activity by a judgment in any court of law whether national or international;
- Neither it nor a company to which it regularly subcontracts has failed to comply with its obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the relevant country in which it the candidate operates.

Any candidate will automatically be excluded from the RFP process if it is found that they are guilty of misrepresentation in supplying the required information within their proposal or fail to supply the required information.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST / NON- COLLUSION

Candidates may be required to confirm in writing:

- That it is not aware of any personal connection between it or any of its directors or senior managers and the directors and staff of NCSD which may affect the outcome of the selection process. If there are such connections the candidate is required to disclose them.
- That it has not communicated to anyone other than NCSD the amount or approximate amount of the tender.
- That it has not and will not offer pay or give any sum of money commission, gift, inducement or other financial benefit directly or indirectly to any person for doing or omitting to do any act in relation to the selection process.

ASSIGNMENT & NOVATION

All candidates will be required to confirm that they will not sell or transfer this contract to another company independently. Both parties may agree on a process of novation, if required.