Quote Instructions and Evaluation Criteria

I. Contact Information

Contract Specialist (CS): Jacob Balenson, jacob.balenson@nih.gov
Contracting Officer (CO): Shirley Ruiz-Lundgren, shirley.ruiz-lundgren@nih.gov

II. General Information

Contract Opportunity Type: Combined Synopsis/Solicitation (Original)

Quote Intent: Contractors are asked to review this RFQ and provide the information below via email to the CS and CO no later than **5:00 PM ET on 08/14/2026.** Include the following in your email response:

a. RFQ Number
b. Title
c. Contractor Legal Business Name
d. Contractor Point of Contact
e. Choose one of the following options:
    - Do intend to submit a quote.
    - Do **not** intend to submit a quote.
        - If you do not intend to submit a quote, please state your reason(s).

Your expression of intent is not binding but will greatly assist us in planning for quote evaluation. Failure to provide quote intent will not prevent consideration of a timely quote response.

Requests for Clarification: Requests for clarification may be submitted via email to the CS and CO no later than **5:00 PM ET on 08/19/2026.** When submitting requests for clarification, contractors must cite the relevant section, paragraph, and page number.

Questions should be written in a way that enables clear understanding of the contractors' issues or concerns. Statements expressing opinions, sentiments, or conjectures are not considered valid inquiries and will not be provided with a response. The Contracting Officer will not address hypothetical questions aimed at receiving a potential "evaluation decision."

- Contractors may submit no more than **ten (10) questions** for clarification.

Responses to Requests for Clarification: The Government anticipates providing responses to questions via Amendment within **3 business days** from the Requests for Clarification due date. Responses will not disclose proprietary information of the contractors.

Quote Submission: Quotes are due via email to both the CS and CO on **2:00 PM ET on 08/27/2026**. Please provide searchable electronic copies only.

Late Quote Provisions

1. Any quote, modification, or revision that is after the exact date and time specified in SAM.gov is "**late**" and will not be evaluated or considered for award.
2. Acceptable evidence to establish the time of receipt will be based on the Government's time/date stamp through email. It is recommended that offerors follow-up with the assigned Contracting Officer to confirm Government receipt of the quote.
3. In instances of technical delays, the Contracting Officer has the discretion to provide fair consideration for quotes where evidence exists that the quote was submitted prior to the submission deadline.
4. If an emergency or unanticipated event interrupts normal Government processes, so that quotes cannot be received via email by the exact time specified in the solicitation, and urgent Government requirements preclude amendment of the solicitation closing date, the time specified for receipt of quotes will be deemed to be extended to the same time of day specified in the solicitation on the first work day on which normal Government processes resume.

INSTRUCTIONS, CONDITIONS, AND NOTICES TO QUOTERS

PACKAGING AND DELIVERY OF QUOTE		
Volume	**Format**	**Page Limitation**
Volume I – Technical Submission	MS Word 2007 or higher	40 Page Limit total
Volume II – Past Performance	MS Word 2007 or higher	10 Page Limit total: 1-page reference matrix, 3 page narrative section, plus 2 page per reference (3 references)
Volume III – Price Submission	MS Word 2007/MS Excel 2007 or higher	15 Page Limit total

Additional format requirements for quotes to Volumes I, II and III must be as follows:

- Elaborate formats, bindings or color presentations are not desired or required.
- Key Personnel Resumes, Performance and Risk Assessment Surveys, Charts, Graphs, Tabs, Diagrams, Tables, Photographs, Drawings, Title Page, Table of Contents, Covers for Volumes, Glossary of Terms/Abbreviations and Acronyms, Indices, section dividers, Volume I, (b) Tab 2 – Technical Approach, Subcontracting Plans, and section dividers <u>are excluded from the page limitation</u>.

(1) **Quote Content:**

a. <u>Volume I – Technical Capability</u>: The Technical Capability volume shall be clear, concise, and include sufficient detail for effective evaluation and for substantiating the validity of stated claims. Legibility, clarity, and coherence are very important. The Technical volume shall be organized according to the following general outline:

(a) <u>Tab 1 – Management Approach</u>: Provide your detailed management approach to satisfying the requirements of the contract. In addition to your approach, include the following:

- A detailed organizational chart with management roles and responsibilities that clearly identifies the reporting structure of the team;
- Discuss the risks identified with the execution of simultaneous tasks, and the risk mitigation plan/approach proposed;
- Provide a detailed narrative describing your process for managing and controlling team members in multiple functional areas, to include subcontractors; and
- Management Controls: The Quoter shall fully describe the management control system that will be used to:
    - Effectively plan, deploy and control resources
    - Account for and collect costs for the contract
    - Accomplish multiple and complex contract tasks simultaneously

(b) <u>Tab 2 – Technical Approach</u>: Provide your detailed technical approach to satisfying the requirements of the contract. In addition to your approach, include the following:

- Provide a detailed narrative describing your technical approaches and strategies proposed for satisfying all the activities outlined in **Section 3 of the Performance Work Statement (PWS)**.
- Clearly indicate any activities that cannot be supported by your strategy, and why they cannot be supported.

- Identify all assumptions upon which your approach/solution is based, and the rationale supporting the assumption (i.e., why do you believe the assumptions are valid).
- Discuss technical alternatives considered and why the proposed alternative was chosen.
- Provide a detailed narrative of your firm's best-practice data archiving schemes, which must be in place to ensure long-term data integrity.
- Provided a detailed narrative of your proposed website hosting platform to be used in satisfying the requirement.
- Provide any other explanations or supporting data (matrix, charts, or other graphics) determined necessary for the Government to fully understand your methodology and approach.
- Thoroughly describe your firm's physical resources and the facilities available to fulfill the technical requirements of the PWS.

- **System Security Plan (SSP):** Quoters shall provide an SSP appropriate for hosting a scholarly journal and shall ensure the SSP is compliant with all the requirements (the NIST SP 800-18, FIPS) 200, and NIST SP 800-53) under **Solicitation Section H - Article H.4.** The SSP must include the following in addition to what is required above:

  - Information that thoroughly demonstrates your SSP is consistent with the requirements of the NIST SP 800-18, FIPS) 200, and NIST SP 800-53;
  - Information that further details your approach to IT security to be used if awarded this contract.
  - An overview of the system environment and security requirements to protect the information system. Also describe the security controls in place or planned for meeting those requirements.
  - Information that sufficiently describes your structured process for planning adequate, cost-effective security protection for a system.

- **Privacy Plan:** Quoters shall provide a privacy plan appropriate for hosting a scholarly journal and shall ensure the privacy plan is compliant with all the requirements (the HHS IS2P, NIST 800-122, and NIST SP 800-53) under **Solicitation Section H - Article H.4**. The privacy plan must include the following in addition to what is required above:

  - Identify your information categorization and explain how it will ensure the identification of the PII requiring protection.
  - Provide a narrative detailing your existing system risk assessment.
  - Provide a narrative discussing your existing internal corporate policy that addresses the information protection requirements of the PWS.
  - Identify any revisions, or development, of an internal corporate policy to adequately address the information protection requirements of the PWS.
  - Provide a narrative explaining how the security and privacy controls of NIST Special Publication 800-53, latest version, involving the encryption of transported information will be implemented. Your narrative must alleviate any security concerns involved when PII is to be physically transported to or stored at a remote site.
  - Provide a narrative explaining how the NIST Special Publication 800-53, latest version, security and privacy controls requiring authentication, virtual private network (VPN) connections and other technical safeguards will be implemented.
  - Provide a narrative explaining how the NIST Special Publication 800-53, latest version, security controls enforcing allowed downloading of PII will be

implemented.

- Provide a narrative identifying measures that will ensure contractor/subcontractor compliance with safeguarding personally identifiable information (PII) and security and privacy controls in the NIST 800-53.
- Ensure that the responses in your privacy plan are commensurate with the size and complexity of the contract requirements based on the System Categorization specified.
- If any of the security measures required cannot be followed, the Quoter must provide a detailed equivalent security strategy to provide similar protection of the content.

(c) Tab 3 – Personnel Qualifications and Experience: Quoter shall demonstrate experience, qualifications, and availability of the staff/personnel/resources necessary for successful performance. In addition to your approach, include the following:

- Provide a sample/example of a Journal website developed and hosted by your team: Include a recent (within six (6) months) sample journal publication to demonstrate the quality, layout, and technical superiority of journal(s) it has produced. The sample should include the name of the client agency or company, period of performance, a brief description of the publication, and relevance to the proposed contract.

- Identify any positions the Quoter considers to be Key Personnel required for successful performance of the PWS and provide detailed resumes/CVs for those individuals identified as Key Personnel.

- For all other proposed personnel, Quoters shall provide a brief narrative describing relevant skills and qualifications sufficient to demonstrate that the proposed team possesses the experience, education, training, and expertise necessary to perform the PWS requirements.

- Describe your organization's or team's experience in the hosting of a continuous publication scientific research journal; familiarity with scientific journal style, structure, format, layout, and design; and experience in website development, maintenance, and security. As part of your technical experience, describe how the production and editorial managers assigned to the journal will work with the JRR staff to ensure timely responses to requests concerning journal operations.

- Describe any utilization of subcontractors, specifying both the work and work area allocated to each team member relative to Section 3.1 of the PWS. Provide a corresponding list of labor categories and hours proposed for this effort. The labor categories and hours must be consistent with those included in the Price Submission. **Do not include pricing in Volume I.**

(d) Tab 4 – Quality Control Plan (QCP): Provide a written QCP (See **PWS Section 4** and **Attachment 1A – Deliverables**) to be used in performance of the contract, include the following:

- A narrative that describes your control system and inspection techniques used to attain the level of performance required by the PWS;
- A narrative that describes your methodology for identifying deficiencies in the quality of service performed before the level of service became unacceptable;
- A narrative that describes your internal processes for documenting, maintaining records and reporting quality related problems for performance improvement.

b. <u>Volume II – Past Performance</u>: The Past Performance volume shall be clear, concise, and include sufficient detail to demonstrate the Quoter possesses the relevant technical experience required to successfully perform the contract requirements. The Quoter shall submit the following information:

(a) <u>Tab 1 – References</u>: The Quoter shall provide three (3) references.

- Provide a list of three (3) references for which the Quoter has performed like or similar services within the past three (3) years. Each reference must include the contract number, contract value, point of contact, telephone number, and email address. References may include contracts with the Federal Government, state or local governments, or commercial entities.

- Quoter may also submit past performance information regarding predecessor companies, key personnel who have relevant experience or subcontractors that will perform major or critical aspects of the requirement when such information is relevant to the instant acquisition. For the purposes of this solicitation, a "major subcontract" is defined as supplier, distributor, vendor, or firm that furnishes supplies or services to or for a prime contractor.

- Quoter shall submit sufficient past performance information to demonstrate the depth and breadth to successfully satisfy all PWS Section 3.1 Task Areas. It is incumbent upon the contractor to present the past performance information in such a manner and in sufficient detail to ensure the Government clearly understands the information provided.

- Submissions should explain the aspects of the contracts/references that are deemed relevant to the effort. Include a discussion of significant achievements or explain past problems considered to be relevant to the efforts, as well as past efforts to identify and manage program/project risk. In describing contractual effort and the past performance, include specific details of performance as follows and as applicable:

  - Actual measured quality or reliability versus specified levels or standards;
  - Management performance in meeting schedules and milestones;
  - Cost control;
  - Organizational conflict of interest;
  - Responses to technical direction; and
  - Customer satisfaction.

(b) <u>Tab 2 – Reference Information</u>: The Quoter shall include for each reference:

- Project Title
- Description of the project
- Contract/task order number and, if applicable
- Total contract value and type of contract
- Government Agency/Organization
- Contracting Officer’s name and telephone number.
- Current status, e.g. completed and/or if in progress start and estimated completion dates.
- Name of company being referenced
- PWS paragraphs that the reference applies to Key personnel (please highlight those individuals who worked on the relevant project (s) and are being proposed for this effort).
- A brief narrative of why you deem the reference to be relevant to this effort

c. **Volume III – Price Submission:** The price submission must be clearly marked **"Volume III, Price Submission".** The price volume shall be organized according to the following general outline:

(a) Tab 1 - RFQ Documents. The contractor must submit the following documents as part of the RFQ Document:

1. Point of Contact: The Quoter shall provide the name, title and telephone number of the company/division point of contact regarding decisions made with respect to your quote and who can bind your company contractually.

2. Cover Letter: This page shall include the following information:

    a. Company Name/Address:
    b. UEI #:
    c. Cage Code:
    d. Federal Tax ID:
    e. Point of Contact (POC):
    f. POC Phone/Fax/E-mail:

3. Representations and Certifications: In accordance with RFO FAR 52.204-7, System for Award Management—Registration, Quoters shall have an active Federal Government contracts registration in SAM.gov when submitting a quotation and at the time of award. In accordance with RFO FAR 52.204-19, Incorporation by Reference of Representations and Certifications, the Quoter's representations and certifications completed electronically in SAM.gov will be incorporated by reference into the resulting contract. Quoters shall ensure that all applicable representations and certifications in SAM.gov are fully completed, current, accurate, and complete at the time of quotation submission and at the time of award.

4. Subcontracting Plan: ***THIS PART IS NOT APPLICABLE TO SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS.*** The Quoter shall submit a written Subcontracting Plan that separately addresses subcontracting with small business concerns, IAW RFO FAR 52.219-9. The written response shall address the extent; complexity and variety of the work small businesses are to perform in support of this requirement.

(b) Tab 2 – Price Quote. The contractor shall submit the following documents as part of the Price Quote:

1. **Contract Price Summary & Breakout**: Quoters shall complete the tables below for evaluation purposes. The labor categories shall include all anticipated labor categories proposed for performance of the contract and shall be consistent with the Technical Submission. This is a **Firm-Fixed-Price requirement**, the labor categories, hours, and rates are requested for price evaluation purposes only and do not establish a labor-hour or time-and-materials pricing arrangement. Proposed hourly rates shall be **fully burdened** and include any applicable fringe, overhead, G&A, and fee/profit.

Table 1 – Hours, Hourly Rate, and Materials

LABOR CATEGORIES PLUS	HOURS, HOURLY RATE, AND MATERIALS	
	Base Period	
	Hours	Rate/Price
1. Project Manager		$

2. Software Engr/Developer		$
3. Software Test Engr		$
4. *{Add Categories if needed}*		$
5. Hardware, internet access, etc.	N/A	$

*The labor categories listed in the table are cited as examples only.

Table 1 – Totals

LABOR CATEGORIES PLUS	TOTALS (HOURLY RATE * HOURS)
	Base Period (Total)
1. Project Manager	$
2. Software Engr/Developer	$
3.Software Test Engr	$
4. *{Add Categories if needed}*	$
5. Hardware, internet access, etc.	$
GRAND TOTAL	**$**

*The labor categories listed in the table are cited as examples only.

2. **Pricing Methodology:** The Quoter shall provide background information, other than the pricing data that is required concerning its pricing methodology. This information might include details of the methodology applicable to your quote. The data would be used by the government to better understand their pricing, labor mix, and proposed level of effort.

   Note: Quote shall include costs and reasoning associated with:

   - Upload and storage of content.

EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD

BASIS FOR AWARD.

In accordance with RFO FAR 12.203 Evaluation and RFO FAR 52.212-2 Evaluation—Commercial Products and Commercial Services (DEVIATION - APR 2026):

(a) Evaluation factors. The Government will award one (1) firm-fixed-price purchase order resulting from this solicitation to the responsible Quoter whose quote conforming to the solicitation will be most advantageous to the Government, price and other factors considered. The following factors will be used to evaluate quotes (listed in relative order of importance):

Factor 1: Technical Capability
Factor 2: Past Performance
Factor 3: Price

The Government will use a **best-value tradeoff** to determine the quotation that is most advantageous to the Government. The evaluation will be based on the demonstrated capabilities of the responsible Quoter in relation to the needs of the project as set forth in the solicitation. Quoters must submit information sufficient for the Government to evaluate based on the detailed factors listed below:

1. **FACTOR 1 - TECHNICAL CAPABILITY:** The Government will evaluate the technical submission to ensure it is acceptable or higher. Each submission will be rated utilizing the ratings defined below (price excluded). Technical Factor evaluation provides an assessment of the Quoter's capability to satisfy the Government's minimum requirements.

   a. Management Approach: The Quoter's submission shall be evaluated to ensure they demonstrate:

   - Management's ability to meet the objectives of the contract;
   - A comprehensive organizational structure that clearly demonstrates how the requirement will be managed to successfully execute the contract requirements; and
   - An efficient and effective approach for managing and controlling team members in multiple functional areas, to include subcontractors that demonstrate a low risk to the Government in executing the contract requirements.

   b. Technical Approach: The Quoter's submission shall be evaluated to ensure they demonstrate:

   - Approaches/solutions, strategies, alternatives, and assumptions which are considered feasible and practical and are compatible with technologies described in the PWS;
   - Approaches/solutions, strategies, alternatives, and assumptions that are clear and precise and are considered to reflect low risk and demonstrate an understanding of the requirements;
   - The ability to support multiple, complex tasks simultaneously; and
   - The ability to successfully execute the approach proposed.
   - An SSP that is appropriate for hosting scholarly journals and complies with all the requirements (the NIST SP 800-18, FIPS) 200, and NIST SP 800-53) under **Solicitation Section H - Article H.4**.
   - A Privacy Plan that is appropriate for hosting scholarly journals and complies with all the requirements (the HHS IS2P, NIST 800-122, and NIST SP 800-53) under **Solicitation Section H - Article H.4**.

c. Personnel Qualifications and Experience: In order to be considered acceptable the Quoter's responses must at a minimum demonstrate:

- An acceptable teaming arrangement which included the work/work area allocated to each team member.
- Their ability to provide the services that comply with the technical requirements of the PWS.
- Experience that demonstrates they possess a clear understanding and familiarity with the work needed to successfully execute the requirements of the PWS;
- Appropriate utilization of non-labor resources and work flow prioritization of effort;
- Ability developing and hosting a Journal website; and
- Ability to consistently develop and publish a scientific research journal.
- Qualified personnel that demonstrate the Quoter's ability to successfully execute the requirements in the PWS based on qualifications, education levels, experience, knowledge and expertise of proposed labor categories. Appropriate labor categories and hours that demonstrate the Quoter's ability to successfully execute the requirements in the PWS;

d. Quality Control Plan: The Quoter's submission shall be evaluated to ensure they demonstrate and effective and efficient:

- Control system and inspection techniques for program compliance;
- Corrective actions and preventative measures;
- Methods of direct and indirect communications with the Government regarding contract performance, addressed routine and formal meetings;
- Methodologies for identifying deficiencies in the quality of service performed before the level of service became unacceptable; and
- Internal process for documenting, maintaining records and reporting quality related problems for performance improvement.

Evaluation of Technical Capability
Based on the Government's assessment of Technical Capability as a whole, including consideration of the technical elements identified under the Technical Capability Factor, the Government will assign one overall Technical Capability confidence rating of High Confidence, Some Confidence, or Low Confidence. Individual technical elements will not receive separate ratings.

RATING	DEFINITION
High Confidence	The Government has high confidence that the Quoter understands the requirement, proposes a sound approach, and will be successful in performing the contract with little or no Government intervention.
Some Confidence	The Government has some confidence that the Quoter understands the requirement, proposes a sound approach, and will be successful in performing the contract with some Government intervention.
Low Confidence	The Government has low confidence that the Quoter understands the requirement, proposes a sound approach, or will be successful in performing the contract even with Government intervention.

*A **Low Confidence** rating for the Technical Capability Factor will be considered **technically unacceptable** and will render the quotation **ineligible for award** due to the level of risk it presents.

2. FACTOR 2 - PAST PERFORMANCE: The Government will assess the Quoter's recent and relevant past performance as a measure of the Government's confidence in the likelihood of the Quoter to

successfully perform based on previous and current contract efforts. Recent past performance is defined as not more than three years from the RFQ release date; relevant past performance will be considered in terms of size, scope, and complexity. The quote will be evaluated on the following:

(a) Relevancy of information obtained from references provided by the Quoter, other relevant past performance information obtained from other sources known to the Government, and any information supplied by the Quoter concerning problems encountered on the identified contracts and corrective action taken.
(b) Relevancy of past performance to the PWS in quality of services; timeliness of performance and record of meeting schedules; ability to understand and resolve deficiencies in a timely manner with no adverse impact on the mission, general responsiveness to contract requirements and to technical direction; and, customer satisfaction.

Evaluation of Past Performance
Based on the Government's assessment of the recency, relevancy, and quality of the Quoter's past performance, the Government will assign one overall Past Performance confidence rating of High Confidence, Some Confidence, or Low Confidence.

RATING	DEFINITION
High Confidence	Based on the Quoter's recent and relevant past performance, the Government has **high confidence** that the Quoter will successfully perform the requirements of the contract **with little or no** Government intervention.
Some Confidence	Based on the Quoter's recent and relevant past performance, the Government has **some confidence** that the Quoter will successfully perform the requirements of the contract **with some** Government intervention.
Low Confidence	Based on the Quoter's recent and relevant past performance, the Government has **low confidence** that the Quoter will successfully perform the requirements of the contract **even with** Government intervention.

3. **FACTOR 3 - PRICE:** Price will not be assigned a rating. The Government will establish the total evaluated price based on the Quoter's total proposed firm-fixed price for the requirement. The Contracting Officer will determine whether the Quoter's proposed price is fair and reasonable in accordance with RFO FAR 12.204(a). The Government may evaluate price using one or more price analysis techniques, including comparison of quotations received in response to the solicitation to one another, comparison to the Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE), or other relevant information available to the Government.

   The Government may also consider individual price elements or supporting information when necessary, including the labor rates, labor categories, labor mix, level of effort, CLIN structure, and the consistency/alignment of the pricing information with the Quoter's Volume I – Technical Submission and scope of services proposed, as applicable to understand and evaluate the proposed price.

   Price will be considered when determining the quotation that represents the best value. The Government is not required to select the lowest-priced quotation.

(b) ***Options.*** Not applicable. This solicitation does not include options.

(c) Notice of Award. The Government will award a firm-fixed-price purchase order to the successful Quoter. A quotation is not an offer and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract. The purchase order constitutes the Government's offer to purchase the specified services upon the terms and conditions stated therein. A binding contract is formed when the Contractor accepts the Government's offer, either by written acceptance of the purchase order or by substantial performance.

The Contracting Officer may request written acceptance of the purchase order. The Government intends to provide written notification of the award decision to unsuccessful Quoters within three (3) business days after award. Consistent with RFO FAR 12.301, **upon request**, an unsuccessful Quoter will be provided a brief explanation of the award decision explaining why its quotation was not selected.

(d) Exchanges with Quoters. The Government intends to make award based on initial quotations. However, after receipt and evaluation of quotations, the Government reserves the right to communicate with one or more Quoters, request clarification or amplification of any aspect of a quotation, or solicit revised quotations, as determined necessary by the Contracting Officer and consistent with RFO FAR 12.203(c)(2). Simplified evaluation procedures are not subject to FAR Part 15 or Part 14, and the Government is not required to establish a competitive range before communicating with Quoters or soliciting revised quotations. Once the Government identifies the **best-suited** or apparent successful Quoter, the Government reserves the right to communicate with that Quoter to address any remaining issues. If the parties are unable to successfully resolve those issues, the Government may discontinue exchanges with that Quoter and communicate with the next best-suited Quoter.

(e) Communicating Innovative Techniques with Industry. This solicitation encompasses use or potential use of several innovative procurement techniques. To increase transparency of them with industry, they are listed in the bullets below. The Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations (PTAI) PDF Playbook (as well as the website – The Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations (PTAI)! | Acquisition Gateway), includes a full tile sharing the description, problems solved, benefits of use, small business benefit, and real sample documents, which may include training aids, for each.

- **Confidence Rating**
- **Brief Decision Documents**
- **Select Best-Suited, Then Negotiate**

(End of provision)