COMPETITIVE BID
Assessment of a Federal Community Speakers Bureau

I. Summary Information

Purpose: To identify a consultant, who will lead research and produce a written report that explores the value of and process for creating a speakers bureau operated by a federal agency, comprised of community members who have direct lived experience receiving health-related services through federal programs.

Proposal Due Date and Time: Feb. 9, 2024, 5 p.m. ET
Selection Announcement Date: Feb. 23, 2024
Maximum Funding Amount: $70,000
Estimated Period of Performance and Final Report Date: Mar. 1-Sept. 29, 2024
Eligibility: All contractors in good standing with ASTHO are eligible to apply.
ASTHO Point of Contact: Anna Bartels, Director of Access to Care, abartels@astho.org

II. Description of Bid

Purpose
The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), with support from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), is seeking the services of a highly qualified contractor or firm to lead research and produce a written report that details the value and feasibility of creating a community speakers bureau.

Background
The public health community recognizes community engagement as an essential practice to improve population health. The most effective public health and healthcare interventions require deliberate and thoughtful engagement with members of a community and a sustained partnership to address health-related issues. Federal agencies, including HRSA, also recognize the importance of building relationships with and honoring the voices and lived experiences of the people their programs serve. For example, the HRSA HIV/AIDS Bureau has supported community engagement through a range of activities including holding community listening sessions, providing leadership training to people served by their programs, and funding initiatives to engage communities and address community needs.

HRSA seeks to partner with ASTHO to explore the creation of a community speakers bureau that highlights the voices of those who benefit from HRSA programs. The envisioned community speakers bureau would be administered by HRSA and would engage and train people served by HRSA programs to actively participate on local boards, advisory committees, and panel presentations at events, providing insights on their lived experiences accessing HRSA programs.

ASTHO seeks a qualified contractor who can lead research and issue recommendations to HRSA. The contractor will use multiple research methods to determine whether a community speakers bureau can achieve the goals of 1) increasing public awareness of HRSA programming and 2) elevating personal and lived experiences and voices in HRSA or local program planning. The contractor will share findings with HRSA in a virtual presentation describing potential uses of a community speakers bureau.
bureau, stakeholder needs, appropriate program goals, and how to design a new or existing speakers bureau to achieve those goals. The contractor may have demonstrated expertise in research, community engagement, storytelling, or other skillsets related to the goals of this project.

**Project Activities**
The selected applicant will be responsible for completing the following project activities/deliverables:

- Conduct online research and a literature review to 1) document the value of storytelling and communicating from direct lived experience, 2) identify current HRSA programs that have a community engagement component, and 3) identify any existing federal community speakers' bureaus. ASTHO will advise on research questions and possible data sources.
- Prepare for, facilitate, and develop a summary of up to three focus group interviews to document potential users of a federal speakers’ bureau, the processes for speaker recruitment and training, and existing methods of soliciting community engagement. The contractor will share the focus group discussion guide(s) with ASTHO for feedback and approval at least two weeks in advance of the discussion. ASTHO will lead scheduling and communication with federal partner(s).
- Synthesize learnings from literature review and focus groups into a written report: The contractor will share an outline of the report with ASTHO for approval and incorporate ASTHO feedback throughout the writing process.
- Create a slide deck and deliver a virtual presentation to federal partners on the value and potential creation of a federal community speakers’ bureau: ASTHO will schedule and manage communications with federal partner(s). The contractor will prepare and deliver the presentation independently, with all meeting materials shared with ASTHO for feedback and approval at least two weeks prior to the virtual meeting.
- Participation in monthly project check-in calls with ASTHO programmatic team: The contractor will provide status updates and questions for discussion/decision-points to ASTHO at least two business days in advance of each call.

**Inclusion of Health Equity**
ASTHO is committed to the promotion of health equity and the elimination of health inequities. Health inequities are reflected by disproportionately high rates of disease, premature death, and a lower quality of life. Health inequities are avoidable and state, federal, and locally funded activities play a key role in helping to solve this problem. ASTHO encourages applicants to address health inequities within the context of proposed activities.

**Funding**
The maximum award amount is $70,000. Only one award will be given to the selected contractor or contracting firm.

**Evaluators**
The ASTHO Population Health team will review each proposal.

**III. Requirements for Financial Award**

**Allowable Expenses**
Funds may not be used for equipment purchases. Per HHS requirements, funds awarded under this Competitive Bid are prohibited from being used to pay the direct salary of an individual at a rate over the federal Executive Schedule Level II (currently $221,900).

**Required Grant Activities to be Covered by Award**
Project activities will include:
- Online research and literature review.
- Facilitation and documentation of up to three focus group interviews.
- Creation of one written report and presentation slide deck summarizing learnings.
- Presentation to federal partners.
- Ongoing monthly check-in calls with ASTHO program team.

**Period of Performance**
The contract is scheduled to begin Mar. 1, 2024, and end Sept. 29, 2024.

**Reporting Requirements**
The selected applicant will be required to participate in monthly conference calls to report on project activities, during which they will share progress reports, and produce final deliverables by Sept. 29, 2024.

**IV. Required Proposal Content and Selection Criteria**

A. **Cover Letter (10 points):** Identify points of contact details for the programmatic and financial/contract leads (name, title, mailing address, e-mail, and telephone number). Not to exceed one page.

B. **Proposed Approach (20 points):** Provide a brief outline of the strategy to accomplish the project goal. Confirm commitment to the project activities, timeline, and goals, and identify any applicable milestones to achieve the deliverables.

C. **Prior Experience and Performance (20 points):** Describe experience and quality of performance on recent work completed with similar scope. Include information about familiarity with the topic and experience producing written products or policy analysis. Describe ability to represent ASTHO well in interactions with state/territorial health agency staff and other governmental, private sector, and/or non-profit stakeholders.

D. **Organization Capacity (20 points):** Include information about the company or consultant, including confirmation of the consultant’s or organization’s capacity to perform the services required within the specified timeframe. Describe staff qualifications and provide a CV for key personnel/staff lead.

E. **Budget & Budget Narrative (15 points):** Provide a detailed fixed price budget, including projected costs for the completion of the project. The budget should include a cost breakdown per task and a proposed payment schedule.
   - The maximum award is $70,000.
   - Attachment A outlines the general format in which the budget should be presented. Applicants may use Attachment A as a template or simply as a guide to inform the development of the project budget.
• A budget narrative must accompany the budget and indicate the costs associated with each proposed activity.

F. Response to ASTHO Contract Terms and Conditions (5 points): ASTHO and the contractor will enter into a fixed-price contractual agreement. A copy of ASTHO’s general contract terms and conditions is available in Attachment B. Applicants may review the language to confirm if they will be able to enter into this agreement. Any proposed changes to the terms and conditions must be identified and submitted with your proposal application for negotiations. Proposed changes submitted after the application period has ended and/or submitted during the contracting stage may not be accepted. ASTHO reserves the right to accept or decline any proposed changes to the terms and conditions. Significant proposed changes, which could affect the agreement’s timely execution, may impact your selection as a successful applicant.

G. Inclusion of Health Equity (5 points): Throughout the proposal, incorporate the following: (1) describe the extent to which potential health disparities are evident within the health focus of the application, (2) identify the specific group(s) which could experience a potential disproportionate burden of the health condition, and (3) demonstrate how proposed activities could address health inequities (this also includes identifying social and/or environmental conditions which are the root causes of health disparities). The root causes of health inequities are sometimes referred to as social determinants of health. All information regarding health inequities must be supported with data/citations.

H. Status as Women-, Minority-, Disadvantaged-, Veteran-Owned, and/or Small Business (5 points): Consideration will be given to applicants who demonstrate successful work with historically underserved and underrepresented entities (minority-, women-, disadvantaged-, and veteran-owned businesses or “MWDVBEs” and black, indigenous, people of color or “BIPOC”) in addressing health disparities. Bidders who classify as or partner with these businesses may be strongly considered.

V. Submission Information

Application Procedure
ASTHO must receive applications in response to this Competitive Bid by 5 p.m. ET on Feb. 9, 2024. Please submit an electronic copy of the application and all attachments to Anna Bartels at abartels@astho.org. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

 Applicant Questions and Guidance
ASTHO will support interested applicants and address specific questions about the Competitive Bid. Please contact Anna Bartels at abartels@astho.org.

Disclaimer Notice:
This Competitive Bid is not binding on ASTHO, nor does it constitute a contractual offer. Without limiting the foregoing, ASTHO reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all proposals; to modify, supplement, or cancel the Competitive Bid; to waive any deviation from the Competitive Bid;
to negotiate regarding any proposal, and to negotiate final terms and conditions that may differ from those stated in the Competitive Bid. Under no circumstances shall ASTHO be liable for any costs incurred by any person in connection with the preparation and submission of a response to this Competitive Bid.

Please also note that any ASTHO contractor receiving payment for work on a federally funded project must be registered with SAM.gov.