Socio-cultural Content in Language (SCIL) Program - BAA Questions

#	Question	Answer	Date Posted
001	We are in the process of preparing a proposal for IARPA-BAA-09-01 and were wondering if you might have available a Microsoft Word version of the proposal cover sheets, etc., that we can incorporate within our submission. The distribution page for the SCIL program, at http://www.fbo.gov, currently provides a PDF version of the BAA, but not a Microsoft Word version.	The Technical and Management Volume Cover Sheet template (in Appendix 2) and the Cost Volume Cover Sheet (in Appendix 3) template are posted in Word (.doc) format. The remainder of the BAA will remain in the .pdf format.	12-05-08
002	I have read through solicitation IARPA-BAA-09-01 and I'm wondering if there is a master list of interested vendors that I can get a hold of. [Our company] is not capable of providing primary contractor services on this project, but it does appear that there might be a need for top notch multilingual translation and interpreting services.	IARPA does not have a master list of interested vendors. It is up to potential proposers to identify their teaming partners.	12-05-08
003	We are an Israeli company and are interested in submitting a project in response to the SCIL BAA. Can a foreign-owned company submit a project? What rights does a commercial company have to the results of the work? Is our idea for a project a good one? How do we submit a proposal?	See Section 3 (Eligibility Information) of the BAA for information about participant eligibility and Sections 4.A.1 (Proposal Information) and 6.B (Administrative and National Policy Requirements) of the BAA for details on rights. Please note that the SCIL Program will not respond to requests for feedback regarding a proposal idea; the BAA has sufficient information for interested proposers to understand the range of problems and solutions that are of interest. All information regarding proposal submission is contained in Section 4 (Application and Submission Information) of the BAA.	12-05-08

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004	Would it be possible to discuss with you a project we are working on that might have a direct correlation to this BAA? My goal would be to give you a 5 minute synopsis of the project and then have you tell me if it sounds like a potential match with your BAA.	The SCIL Program will not respond to requests for feedback regarding a proposal idea; the BAA has sufficient information for interested proposers to understand the range of problems and solutions that are of interest.	12-09-08
005	What is the expected start date for SCIL projects?	The SCIL Program is expected to begin early in the third quarter of FY2009.	12-11-08
006	We are in the process of writing a proposal toward solicitation number IARPA-BAA-09-01 and we had a couple questions: 1. What would interest the BAA Program in terms of generalizing the social phenomena? 2. What kind of specific social theories are you alluding to? 3. Are you looking for ways to isolate socio-cultural indicators in the proposal? Can you suggest some specifics?	As reflected in Section 1. (Funding Opportunity Description) of the BAA, proposers are expected to identify the social goals of members of groups and the social theory that motivates these goals and to specify clearly what technical approaches they will use to correlate these goals with their realization in language. The social goals must be explored across languages and generalized to reveal similarities and differences.	12-11-08
007	I see that a Government team will be responsible for publishing a set of SOA standards for use in this project, but there seems to be some expectation that participants in the program will contribute to the design of these standards, as well. In preparing a realistic proposal budget, we would like to be clear on the responsibilities of participants in this program with respect to developing the shared platform and integrating with it. Is there currently any dedicated integration leader charged with managing the integration process? If not, is there any contract open for an integrator under this program? How much responsibility for integration will fall to individual participants? We are considering whether to include additional personnel with expertise in SOAs to our	As stated in Section 1.A.8 Results, a Government team will develop a simple SOA platform for use in Phase 1 of the Program. Performers will be expected to develop their components as services that conform to the SOA platform standards. These standards will be developed early in the Base Period of the Program. As specified in Section 1.A.9 Additional Guidelines, the SCIL Program will not entertain proposals for development of a Program system.	12-16-08

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	proposal. The answers to these questions will help us greatly in determining the amount of integration/compliance effort we should plan for, in order to deliver successfully under this program.		
008	The initial announcement on this topic, for BAAs due in March of 2008, listed a target scope of $300-500K for the base period. No such figure is listed in this version of the BAA while scope appears, in some ways, to have increased. Should we assume a similar target funding level for this solicitation? Any guidance in terms of dollars or level of work effort would be appreciated.	As stated on the FedBizOpps SCIL page and on the IARPA website, there are important differences between this and an earlier BAA. Interested offerors are expected to define clearly and precisely their research goals, their implementation plan and the cost to carry out that plan. See Section 1. Funding Opportunity Description, Section 4.A Content and Format of Proposal Submission and Section 5.A.5 Cost Realism.	12-16-08
009	The RFP [sic] makes several references to Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Human Language Technology (HLT). Would IARPA provide definitions of NLP and HLT?	Although Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Human Language Technology (HLT) are often used interchangeably, NLP can be understood as the field of computer science that focuses on the development of algorithms that allow computers to process and understand the language that humans use. The technologies that result from the creation of these algorithms are often called Human Language Technologies.	12-19-08
010	1) The tables of milestones in 1.B.2 indicates, at month 3, "performers will supply data to independent evaluator, for use in final Base Period evaluation". Does this mean only the language data itself, with no annotations? 2) Referring to the same point: if a performer would like to use data distributed by the Linguistic Data Consortium, would it be sufficient to submit the name of the LDC corpus and an unambiguous description of the subset to be used for evaluation? This is because I believe that we do not	1) Yes, performers are to supply test data sets with no annotations at the 3-month point. 2) Performers must submit test data sets to NIST. 3) For the Base Period evaluation that begins at the 12-month point, functionality situated at the performer site will be accessed through the SOA platform over the Web. 4) By 14 months, performers must deliver software developed during the Base Period along with supporting documentation and the status of any dependencies on	12-29-08

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	have the right to re-distribute data from the LDC. 3) For the evaluation at the end of the base period, will all the software need to run at a Government site in order to produce results for evaluation? The delivery at month 12 refers to a "demonstration component", and we would like to know if that component would need to be fully packaged and documented and able to run as fully functional standalone software, or if it may be a more limited demonstration. 4) At the end of the base period, must supporting (not core) software tools be provided to the Government, or could access to them be provided as a web service, so that the Government could retrieve their output without having to install the tools locally? 5) Section 1.B.1.b includes the following: "Concrete social concepts are those that are transparent; for example, the identification of member characteristics (e.g. age, gender), status, alignment with the group norms, politeness." as well as "For concrete concepts (i.e., social goals that are more transparent)..." Should this be interpreted to mean that member characteristics, status, politeness, and so on can be taken as examples of social goals?	other software. See Section 6.B.2 Intellectual Property for additional information. 5) Group characteristics are not of independent interest (see Section 1.A.9 Additional Guidelines) but how they may constrain or determine social interactions can be important.	
011	The SCIL BAA (IARPA-BAA-09-01) specifies in Section 4.A.1.d that the cover sheet needs to include a "technical area"; however, this is not included in the cover sheet example, and it's not clear what is desired. Is a "technical area" required on the cover sheet, and, if so, can you clarify what is desired?	In this solicitation, the specification of a "technical area" is not necessary. The "Technical Area" entries in Section 4.A.1.d, (Format of Volume 1, Technical and Management Proposal), Section 4.A.1.e (Format of Volume 2, Cost Proposal), and in the sample cover sheets in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, will all be deleted. Furthermore, an additional entry will be added to the cover sheet information in Section 4.A.1.d to affirm any Organizational Conflicts of Interest (as addressed in	01-05-09

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		Section 3.A.1 and included in the sample cover sheet in Appendix 2). The sample cover sheets in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 will also be reformatted to be consistent with the order of the information specified in the BAA. All changes will be formally made under IARPA-BAA-09-01 Amendment 2 and posted to FedBizOpps as soon as possible. Revised sample cover sheets in .doc format will also be posted.	
012	Could you clarify definitions of "social concepts" and "social goals", and clarify their differences?	In the BAA, the terms "social goals" and "social concepts" refer broadly to the social phenomena associated with language use. In a more narrow sense, the term "social goals" can refer to a subset of "social concepts," including intentions; the development and maintenance of relationships; status; politeness; etc. When dealing with social goals, there may be additional factors that you need to take into account, like gender or age or role. These can be explored separately and interdependently. The Program is interested in discovering and evaluating social phenomena broadly. Some of these phenomena will be social goals; some will be other negotiated social phenomena or concepts (e.g., roles, rifts, power); and some will be complex sets of social concepts.	01-06-09
013	On the Q&A website, the answer to question 010, section (4) posted on 12-29-08 says that software must be delivered by the 14 month point. The BAA says in the table in 1.B.2 that software is to be delivered at 12 months, and in section 2 that the final deliverable for the base period will be made at the 12-month mark. Could you clarify, for our planning purposes?	The deliverable is due at the 12-month point so that the Program can evaluate the component submitted. As stated in Section 2: Award Information of the BAA, however, performers may continue with their research during the 13th and 14th months of the Base Period. During this time, it is expected that they will provide evaluation support, if needed; enhance their component, as appropriate; and	01-08-09

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		complete supporting documentation and description of dependencies. At the end of the Base Period, the Program expects that any changes, enhancements and documentation developed during the 2 months would be provided to the Government.	
014	Is it permissible for us to include a researcher from an FFRDC in our proposal if they serve as an independent contractor?	FFRDCs, to include their employees, are not eligible to submit proposals under this BAA or participate as team members under proposals submitted by eligible entities. See Section 3.A Eligible Applicants of the BAA.	01-12-09
015	We are small and traditionally work via large prime contractors, which is why we are unknown. Is there anything precluding a small company from pursuing this solicitation as a small business directly?	As stated in Section 3.A Eligible Applicants, "All responsible sources capable of satisfying the Government's needs may submit a proposal."	01-12-09
016	We have a set of questions about the software-related work to be done. 1. For the Base Period evaluation, what security requirements are envisioned for accessing performer components over the Web? 2. Are there any restrictions on the selection of open source products that will be used in the final software deliverable, such as license restrictions on integration? 3. Will the SOA platform standards address format as well as message content? 4. Are there any more detailed guidelines on the type of SOA standards performer components must comply with? 5. Will the Government SOA platform use an Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) or a simple messaging platform? If an ESB, will there be any specific orchestration requirements? When will guidelines for service description definition be	As stated in BAA Section 1.A.8 (page 9), "All program participants will be required to develop their tools and technologies in compliance with publicly available and externally developed standards for Web-based services (such as XML, SOAP, etc.)." Interested bidders are encouraged to propose tools/technologies which they believe will most effectively meet the goals of the SCIL program within these top-level constraints. During the Base Period, individual program participants will be asked to assist in the development of additional standards that will allow for common representation of knowledge and evidence.	01-13-09

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	available to performers? 6. Are performer components expected to discover and use infrastructure services provided by the SOA platform? If yes, what infrastructure services are performer components expected to use? 7. Are performers expected to provide a query/display functionality, in addition to access to raw output?		
017	Please clarify what activities you take to comprise "data collection" as opposed to "data selection", and to what extent these activities may be funded in this program? Specifically, where you say "The Program is not interested in proposals that focus on data collection", does this mean that no data collection activities will be funded, or that the percentage of the project devoted to such activities must be below some threshold? And where you say "data collection for the Program", does this refer to all data collection activities, or only to the collection of data for the purpose of being used in the Program more generally, e.g., by parties other than the proposers?	As stated in Section 1.A.7 of the BAA, the Program will not supply data to the individual performers. Each proposer is responsible for describing what data will be used, how it will be collected and how it is relevant to the proposed work. Bidders may propose those costs associated with collecting/provisioning of data needed to demonstrate the capabilities of their proposed solution. The Program will **not** entertain proposals that propose to collect data for use by all the participants in the Program (Section 1.A.9).	01-13-09
018	Would [the area of work described] be appropriate for the SCIL Program open with a deadline of January 22? And, must the PIs be US citizens? Also, this deadline may be unrealistic for us to make. Do you anticipate having a call for this Program in the future?	The SCIL Program is not responding to requests for feedback regarding a proposal idea; the BAA has sufficient information for interested proposers to understand the range of problems and solutions that are of interest. See Section 3 (Eligibility Information) of the BAA for information about Program participation. See Section 4.A.1.a. (General) of the BAA for information about proposal submission dates.	01-13-09

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019	Does the funding designated for a potential contract include any funds from "Budget Activity 1, Basic Research."	Contract vehicles awarded as a result of the IARPA SCIL BAA will be funded using Research and Development (R&D) appropriations.	01-13-09
020	Could you clarify the meaning of "proposal validity period" requested on the cover sheet for the Cost Proposal?	Proposers should indicate on the Cost Proposal cover sheet the period of time during which the costs specified in the proposal are valid.	01-13-09