

RFP 32220  
Vendor Questions and Government Responses #1a  
1/6/04

1. Au on Carbon sample provided by NIST – has been previously requested but we have not rec'd it yet.

For preliminary evaluation purposes, offerors are permitted to submit images and data demonstrating instrument performance using gold-on-carbon test specimens of their own choosing. The individual test specimens used may be chosen by the offeror (obtained from any third party or manufactured on-site by the offeror), but should be substantially identical to common test specimens available from microscopy supply houses. Examples include (but are not limited to):

1. SPI Gold-on-carbon Test Specimens (gold size: large) SPI# 1510GS-AB
2. SPI Gold-on-carbon Test Specimens (gold size: small) SPI# 1510GL-AB
3. Ted Pella Resolution Test Specimens, Gold-on-carbon 1 Pella# 617-E
4. Ted Pella Resolution Test Specimens, Gold-on-carbon 2 Pella# 617-2E
5. Ted Pella Resolution Test Specimens, Gold-on-carbon 3 Pella# 617-3E
6. Ted Pella Resolution Test Specimens, Gold-on-carbon 1 Pella# 617-4E

{Certain commercial materials are identified in this response for the convenience of the offerors. Such identification does not imply endorsement or recommendation by NIST and does not imply that the materials listed are necessarily the best available for the purpose.}

NIST recognizes that individual gold-on-carbon test specimens can vary significantly in their quality and suitability for resolution testing and reserves the right to request test images from NIST-supplied test specimens as specified in the contract.

2. Section 2.8.3 - is NIST asking for quotations for all EDX vendors (ie EDAX , Noran, Oxford, etc)
3. Section 2.9.3 – is NIST asking for quotations for all EBSD vendors? 8.

The SOW calls out for EDX / EBSD. Does the Government have a vendor preference (we will be quoting this as a third party option) for this?

Answers to 2 and 3:

"As standalone products, EDS and EBSD analysis systems vary significantly in capability, flexibility, extensibility, and past performance. When installing both an EDS and an EBSD system on the same instrument, the interoperability of the two systems and the level of integration between the two tools becomes a new, significant factor in the evaluation of the pair. NIST feels vendors who can offer both systems as one company or vendor pairs that have partnered to offer bundled packages may be better positioned to provide a more integrated solution to the research requirement that NIST described in the contract. Because both systems must be mated to the FIB or SEM, new factors related to the integration of the EDS/EBSD with the electron beam instrument also play an important role. For example, can the EDS/EBSD system "drive" both the ion beam and electron beam to allow for repeated, interleaved milling and EDS spectrum imaging or phase ID? If a stage tilt or rotation is needed will the EDS/EBSD system direct the scope to perform these stage operations? For these reasons, NIST is requesting that the prime instrument vendors choose EDS/EBSD sub-contractors that provide the best solution when installed on the base instrument. The complete package will be judged as a whole based on its ability to meet the published research need described by NIST in the statement of work. If an offeror feels that more than one EDS/EBSD vendor or vendor pair should be considered, NIST welcomes multiple offers (or options)

from each prime vendor with different configurations."

4. Section 2.11.2 – Can you clarify the statement concerning “computer control system adjacent to the instrument for purposes of necessary alignment and service operations. Does this mean an additional PC alongside the system control PC?

The exact physical placement of the computer is not important; a system control PC embedded in the instrument will be considered on equal ground with a separate PC "adjacent" to the tool. In both cases the offeror should address the issues in section 2.11.2, including the functionality of the computer and its ability to be upgraded as operating systems evolve.

5. References to wiring diagrams – we can provide but an NDA should be generated – is this correct?

This is acceptable. Wiring diagrams will not likely be considered during technical evaluation but will be expected upon instrument delivery, and an NDA covering proprietary content can be generated or the withholding of specific drawings can be negotiated.

6. Section 10.1.6 – is this a standalone optical microscope or a chamber mounted microscope

A long-working-distance, chamber-mounted microscope was intended -- for imaging the sample at low to medium magnification while inserting gas injection needles, manipulating surface features with an in-situ micromanipulator, or locating regions of interest.

7. Section 11.2 (Weighting of Factors other than price) – can you expand on what NIST is looking for with respect to past performance (quality / experience)? We'd like to have a better understanding of this request as it is weighted so heavily in the decision making process.

Answer: As stated in the RFP, the Government is looking for the Offeror to identify at least three (3) contracts/task orders with the Federal Government and/or commercial customers that demonstrate recent and relevant past performance. Recent is defined as within the last three years. Relevant is defined as successfully designing, installing, and maintaining instruments similar in capability, complexity and magnitude of the work described in this Statement of Work.

Section 11.2 is intended to provide offerors with the information needed to prepare competitive offers and to understand the selection process that will be used to compare and evaluate the bids that are received. This section does not contain a request and no action is required by the vendors. The inclusion of past performance as a factor reflects NIST's view that offers made by a vendor describing future performance should be considered in light of the vendor's track record and prior behavior in purchases of this nature, and in light of the performance of that vendor's equipment in existing installations. For example, if a vendor promises an aggressive and optimistic delivery schedule, the credibility of that offer will be judged in part based on past performance.