



UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CO., LLC

5404 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 800  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-3594  
TEL 301-654-8338  
FAX 301-941-8427  
www.urc-chs.com

## **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**RFA SOLICITATION NUMBER: FY19-RFA-DTB-003**

**Providing SMS Gateway Services for the  
USAID Defeat TB Project  
implemented by University Research Co., LLC**

**Date of Issue: November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018**

**Closing Time and Date for picking terms of reference:**

**17:00 hrs. EAT on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

**Proposals must be emailed to: [proposals@defeat-tb.urc-chs.com](mailto:proposals@defeat-tb.urc-chs.com) by December 7th,  
2018**

**No hard copies of proposals will be accepted**

**Deadline for Questions: 17:00 hrs. EAT on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

**Questions by email ONLY by to: [proposals@defe-tb.urc-chs.com](mailto:proposals@defe-tb.urc-chs.com)**

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute a contractual commitment on the part of URC (the "Client") nor does it commit URC or the US Government to pay for costs incurred in the submission of a proposal. All costs of the Offeror in the preparation and submission of an offer shall be borne by that Offeror. URC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to make no award at all, or to make an award without further discussion or negotiations if it is considered to be in the best interests of the project and URC.

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## **I. CONTEXT**

USAID Defeat TB (Defeat TB) is a five year (September 18, 2017 - September 17, 2022), USAID-funded project implemented by University Research Co., LLC (URC). The goal of the project is to reduce the burden of TB contributing to the United States Government (USG) and World Health Organization's strategy to end TB by 2035.

The following are the objectives of the project:

- Increase screening and detection of all forms of tuberculosis in infants, children, adolescents, and adults at facility and community levels;
- Initiate and complete treatment for all patients diagnosed with all forms of TB;
- Ensure strong community systems to support the continuum of TB prevention, screening, diagnosis, care, and treatment; and
- Enhance leadership and technical capacity of the TB program at national and subnational levels to effectively guide and manage implementation of TB control activities.

These objectives are expected to be achieved through strengthening health systems for service delivery namely: information systems, human resources for health, logistics systems, etc.

Leveraging low cost technologies (LCTs) to track project progress is key to achieving these objectives as the demand for critical data for decision making becomes increasingly important.

Defeat TB works and collaborates with various stakeholders including TB diagnostic and treatment units (DTUs) to achieve its goals. The DTUs are engaged in various activities that contribute to the overall objectives of the project. Data generated from these activities must be reported on a regular basis. Therefore, reliable channels for collecting, aggregating and reporting this data must be maintained regardless of geographical location. Weekly reports will be compiled by community service providers supported by The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) and civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as health facility service providers, and submitted via SMS to the project database to enable routine monitoring and eliminate the stage of data entry for key data elements required on a weekly basis.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE RFA**

Defeat TB proposes to engage a local SMS aggregator firm to provide uninterrupted SMS gateway services to support its reporting processes in a timely and secure manner with 24x7x365 availability. The SMS service will also be used as a direct means of communication to target users.

## **3. SCOPE OF WORK**

To support its reporting activities, the project invites SMS service providers/aggregators to offer their uninterrupted solution for outgoing/incoming SMS using secure systems to support its reporting processes and facilitate communication to various users/stakeholders.

The service should provide the following features;

1. It must support both Mobile Originated (MO) & Mobile Terminated (MT) messaging
2. Seamless integration with any popular health management information systems including and not limited to DHIS2, OpenMRS & GxAlert via API or otherwise.
3. The service should cover Push Service and Pull SMS using short code.
4. The service must support bulk push SMS.

5. The provider shall be responsible for 24x7x365 days after-sales support/ service for the complaints relating to the SMS gateway service.
6. The provider must give commitment to service levels with guaranteed delivery times preferably not more than 1 day
7. The aggregator should have tie up/arrangements with multiple service providers. They should support subscribers of all major telecom service providers in Uganda such as MTN, Airtel, Africell, SMART, etc.
8. The provider should offer a configurable retry mechanism for messages that cannot be delivered immediately.
9. The SMS services should be scalable to meet any additional requirements of the project that might arise.
10. The provider will be required to create the necessary setup at their end to carry out the tests. Defeat TB will connect to their system and carry out the functionality tests on live environment.
11. The provider should support both GSM and CDMA mobiles including low-end handsets.
12. The provider must have a ticketing mechanism for logging and tracking all complaints raised by Defeat TB.
13. The provider should provide a Tracking Mechanism to track the Push/Pull messages flowing through the SMS gateway.
14. The service must allow Defeat TB to send SMS on a pre-defined schedule basis
15. The service must allow SMSs to be automatically sent when a certain event happens
16. Allow users to send SMS to a single toll-free code regardless of subscriber.
17. The service must support acknowledgement base mobile messaging with guaranteed message delivery information.
18. It must be hosted on a secure & trusted environment.

#### **4. DELIVERABLES**

The following deliverables will be required throughout the engagement;

1. The provider should be able to provide monthly statistics to Defeat TB. The statistics should contain the following fields:
  - a. Total SMSs received
  - b. Category of SMSs
  - c. Total success
  - d. Total failed/expired
  - e. Total of delivery report not received
  - f. Total DND
2. Weekly summaries of phone numbers and message list where SMS could not be delivered for each transmission with reason for failure.

#### **5. TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

##### **I. Single Point of Contact**

The firm shall be the single point of contact to provide and implement the SMS Gateway Solution for Defeat TB. It shall be the responsibility of the successful candidate to provide all services including technology services. Defeat TB shall be informed of any parties and technology partners as a part of the technical proposal and shall obtain approval of Defeat TB if and when there is a change.

## **2. Contract Period of 1 year:**

Subject to the compliance to the stipulations/ conditions mentioned in the RFA and purchase order, the purchase contract shall be valid up to one (1) year from the date of signing the purchase order.

## **3. Support Personnel**

The firm should provide at least one contact person who will be charged with providing technical support and assistance should any queries arise in the utilization of services offered. This person is expected to be responsive in a timely manner while resolving or providing feedback on queries raised throughout the duration of the contract.

## **4. Technical Inspection and Performance Evaluation**

Defeat TB shall have the right to inspect and test the system at any time. The successful candidate shall carry out such tests in appropriate manner in the presence of Defeat TB's representatives and free of charge.

The firm shall make available all necessary and relevant records, facilities' access to the system and access to personnel for audit by Defeat TB or any representative authorized by Defeat TB.

Further, the following conditions are to be adhered to and complied with by the successful candidate.

- I. Successful candidate **MUST** always maintain confidentiality.
- II. Successful candidate **MUST** obtain prior approval of Defeat TB for use of subcontractors.
- III. Successful candidate shall isolate and clearly identify Defeat TB's information, documents, records and assets to protect the confidentiality of the information, while acting as an outsourcing agent for multiple clients.

## **5. Payment Terms**

Defeat TB will make payment as follows:

1. No payment will be made in advance.
2. Payment will be made monthly upon Defeat TB's receipt of reports and will be as follows:
  - a. Successfully delivered SMSs will be paid in Full.
  - b. Rejected/DND/Invalid SMSs will not be paid.

## **6. Completion Period:**

The services are to be delivered and operationalized within 14 days from the date of issue of LPO from Defeat TB. Time allowed for implementation shall be firm and binding. Time shall be the essence of the contract.

If the successful candidate fails to operationalize the service within the stipulated time schedule or by the date extended by Defeat TB, it will be a breach of contract.

## **7. Order Cancellation**

Defeat TB reserves the right to discontinue the services at any time before completion of the contract period if the services are found to be unsatisfactory, for any valid reason

## **8. Publicity**

Any publicity by the successful candidate in which the name of URC is used, shall be done only with the explicit written permission of URC.

## **9. Non-Disclosure Agreement**

The SMS aggregator shall hold all information about this tender and/or information gathered about Defeat TB through this process in strict confidence with the same degree of care with which the aggregator protects its own confidential and proprietary information. The aggregator shall restrict disclosure of the information solely to its employees, agents and contractors on a need to know basis and advise those persons of their obligations hereunder with respect to such information.

To use the information only as needed for the purpose of executing tasks solely related to this project as per the terms of reference.

The aggregator shall not disclose any information to parties not involved in supply of the products and services forming part of this order and disclosure of information to parties not involved in supply of the products and services forming part of this order will be treated as breach of trust and invite legal action. This will also mean termination of the contract and disqualification of aggregator in any future tendering process of Defeat TB.

## **6. AWARD**

An agreement will be entered, at URC's discretion, with the Offeror whose technical and financial offer demonstrates the most responsive and cost-effective approach and methodology to meet the RFA requirements, and whose offer represents the best value to Defeat TB and clearly outlines plans for implementation of this activity.

## **7. ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES**

Firms that are interested in participating in this RFA should meet the following requirements:

- Firms submitting the offers should be a Registered Company in Uganda under the Companies Act, 2012. Copy of the certificate of incorporation should be enclosed as documentary proof.
- The Firm should have made profits in the last three financial years. A copy of last three financial years' relevant audited balance sheets should be submitted with the offer. If the audit of 2017/2018 is not yet completed, then the provisional balance sheet for the year 2017/2018 should be submitted.
- The firm should not have been blacklisted by any government or Non-government organization. Self-declaration to that effect should be submitted along with the technical proposal.
- Must have experience in providing SMS gateway services for the last Five years in Uganda.
- The firm should have provided SMS gateway services to a minimum of five organizations of which at least three entities should be involved in the Health services delivery industry (Copies of three past reports of similar work or three verifiable references will be required)
- The firm should have a support office/ representative to provide onsite support immediately on call.

- The firm should use their own "SMS Gateway Services". The Re-sellers of SMS Gateway Services are not eligible to participate in the RFA
- A verifiable reputation of integrity and competence
- Experience serving USAID-funded projects and/ Health services providers preferred

## 8. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR OFFERORS

Only electronic submission of responses to this RFA will be permitted. All responses should be submitted to [proposals@defeat-tb.unc-chs.com](mailto:proposals@defeat-tb.unc-chs.com) by the deadline mentioned in this RFA.

## 9. INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFERORS

Offerors are encouraged to review in detail the following eligibility requirements, preparation and submission instructions. Offerors requiring clarification should send their written questions in English to [proposals@defeat-tb.unc-chs.com](mailto:proposals@defeat-tb.unc-chs.com) by 17:00 hrs. on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 referencing the RFA Solicitation Number (FY18-RFA-DTB-003) in the subject line of the email.

### 9.1 TECHNICAL PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Technical Proposal shall be a maximum of 10 pages containing the following sections in the order shown, using clear and concise language.

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** (1 Page Maximum)
- CONTEXT** (1 Page Maximum)

This section should include a general overview of the proposed approach to this activity.

- TECHNICAL APPROACH** (10 Pages Maximum)

This section should include a brief description of the Offeror's technical and strategic approach to providing the services requested herein as well as a tracking and reporting plan.

- INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY** (3 Pages Maximum)

This section should briefly describe the capacity of the Offeror with respect to:

- **Previous experience** in providing SMS gateway services of similar size and scope, highlighting USAID or other donor-funded experience, as applicable;
- **Support Personnel.** Names of at least one Key contact persons, either an employee or through franchisee proposed must be provided. In addition, a team lead with experience in API integration, SMS technology and Data communication.

### 9.2 ANNEX TO THE TECHNICAL PROPOSAL.

**Annex I: In a separate annex,** the Offeror should provide CVs (limit of 3 pages **in total**) of proposed key contact personnel.

## 10. COST PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Cost Proposal must be submitted in a separate document in Microsoft Excel format (with formulas) at the same time the technical proposal is submitted. The Cost Proposal shall consist of all costs and proposed prices/rates and narrative describing them.

The costs shall be firm and binding without any escalation whatsoever inclusive of any other charges of whatever nature, current or future.

The rates quoted by the candidates in the Cost Proposal should be Net Charges for sending/receiving per SMS.

URC will not pay any other charges incurred by the successful candidate including but not limited to set up charges or customization fees at the candidate's end.

This list is not all-inclusive, and additional questions on eligibility of items and costs should be addressed to [proposals@defeat-tb.urc-chs.com](mailto:proposals@defeat-tb.urc-chs.com) prior to the deadline for questions noted on the cover page of this RFA.

\* If the Offeror includes indirect costs (i.e., overhead, G&A) in its budget, it should clearly describe the basis for the claim of indirect costs (e.g., financial statement, audit report) or simply list only direct charges in the budget (i.e., no indirect costs as a percentage of direct costs).

The Client will consider the best value for money from Offerors. The Cost Proposal should be submitted in Ugandan Shillings (UGX).

## **II. EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR APPLICATION**

The complete technical proposal will be reviewed by a technical review panel, convened by URC and evaluated against the following criteria:

1. **Technical Approach (40 points)**
  - Technical approach reflects knowledge and expertise in SMS gateway technology and data communication systems including API integration.
  - Delivery timeline is realistic and reflects a good comprehension of the scope of work presented in this RFA
2. **Qualifications of Team Leader and Key Personnel (20 points)**
  - Team leader has demonstrated experience in SMS technology, API integration and programming.
  - Experience and qualifications of personnel are appropriate relative to the task.
3. **Organizational Capacity/Past Performance (10 points)**
  - Strong capability of the Offeror to successfully provide SMS gateway services as determined by past/current successful implementation of the same.
  - Clear description of the roles and responsibilities of key contact persons.
  - Proposed team leader has the qualifications and experience necessary to successfully complete the work detailed in the RFA
4. **Evaluation of Cost Proposal (30 points)**

After the Technical Proposal is evaluated by the technical review panel, Defeat TB will review the Cost Proposal. Defeat TB will assess whether the proposed budget is realistic and feasible given the items and activities described. Defeat TB may contact Offerors to revise budgets if any issues or questions are identified.

## **II. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

Proposals must be submitted in English to [proposals@defeat-tb.urc-chs.com](mailto:proposals@defeat-tb.urc-chs.com) on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 by 17:00 hrs. The proposal must be divided into two parts, the Technical Proposal and the Cost Proposal. The two parts should be electronically submitted at the same time.

1. The Technical Proposal should be typed in a 12-point font and not exceed 10 pages (not including Cover Page, Table of Contents, List of Acronyms or Appendices).
2. The Technical Proposal should be submitted in the below order.
  - I. Cover Page



- II. Table of Contents
- III. List of Acronyms
- IV. Executive Summary
- V. Context
- VI. Technical Approach (10 pages maximum)
- VII. Institutional Capacity (3 Pages Maximum)
- VIII. Annex with CVs (limit of 3 pages in total) and biodata forms of proposed staff

Note that the Cover Page, Table of Contents, List of Acronyms, and annexes do not count toward the 10-page maximum for the Technical Proposal.

- 3. The Cost Proposal should be sent as a Microsoft Excel document.
- 4. A Budget Narrative should be typed in a 12-point font, not to exceed 1 page, and submitted in Microsoft Word or searchable PDF format.
- 5. Modifications to the RFA may be made at any time prior to the Proposal submission deadline. Deadline for submission may be extended depending on the scope of a modification. Modifications after the deadline for proposals will be communicated only to those Offerors who submitted proposals.