PTSC Webinar Q&A

Question 1: Are our applications expected to follow the traditional Significance, Innovation, Approach format for NIH grants and scored as such?
Response 1: This funding opportunity utilizes the Other Transaction authority meaning this is not a grant and standard grant requirements do not apply. Please refer to the Application Instructions section of the funding opportunity regarding application format, components, and page limits. Applicants should refer to Application Review section of the funding opportunity for details on the review process and evaluation process.

Question 2: Can you submit an application for only certain components, or do you have to apply for all?
Response 2: Please refer to the Application Instructions section of the funding opportunity. Applicants may submit proposals for some or all components based on applicants’ capabilities. Programmatic priority will be given to proposals and teams capable of supporting multiple components.

Question 3: Will there be specific guidance for small businesses (including teaming arrangements) as part of the FOA?
Response 3: No. This funding announcement utilizes the Other Transaction authority meaning this is not a grant or contract. Please refer to the Eligible Applicants details in the Eligibility Information section of the funding opportunity. Small Businesses are eligible to apply or partner on applications.

Question 5: How many awards do you anticipate making for the PTSC?
Response 5: Please refer to the Anticipated Number of Awards details in the Overview Information section of the funding opportunity.

Question 6: Does the multi-PI leadership plan count against the application page limits?
Response 6: The ASSIST system only allows for the submission of two documents, the multi-PI leadership plan and the application. All applicants must include a leadership structure and management plan within the 4 pages of the key personnel component; however, the ASSIST system does allow multi-PI applications to submit a separate multi-PI leadership plan that does not count against the 4-page limit. The multi-PI leadership plan should specifically address how decisions will be made and conflicts resolved between the PIs.

Question 7: Who will be on the review panel evaluating the proposals?
Response 7: A review panel will be convened specifically for the review of the OTA Participant Technology Systems Center funding opportunity. The reviewers will be selected from both NIH staff and extramural research and technical communities based on subject matter expertise specific to this announcement.

Question 8: Is there a more detailed scoring criteria? Is there a component that will be weighed as more or less important than another?
Response 8: Applicants should refer to Application Review section of the funding opportunity for details on review process and evaluation process.

Question 9: Will the current incumbent provide all legacy standard procedures, documentation, open source libraries, data files and other center management information to the new awardee? If yes, how will this transfer of enterprise information take place?
Response 9: In the event of a transition of award partners or platforms, the current platform will be supported by the existing PTSC awardee during the period of transition. Collaboration in the transition will be required between existing and new award partners including all aspects necessary for continuity of operations of existing systems or services support by the current PTSC award for the All of Us Research Program.

Question 10: Is there any more detail on the specific features of software components AoU is looking for proposals on? Are there any components related to wearables you all are seeking proposals on?
Response 10: Applicants should review materials and information provided or linked to within the funding opportunity and program website in order to formulate recommendations and proposed capabilities and innovations to support the program over the five year award period.

Question 11: Is there a preferred development methodology / framework in place at AoU that the winner would follow/adapt itself to such as Agile, DevOps, etc.?
Response 11: Applicants are free to propose their recommend development methodology to support their application approach and milestones for the All of Us Research Program.

Question 12: Who would be considered the owner of the technology that is developed to support the various components? Would it be the company that is granted the funding?
Response 12: Please see the Ownership of Data, Software, and Other Products section of the funding opportunity for a full description. NIH will own all rights in data, software, and other products (collectively “Works”) made or developed under this award.

Question 13: Are there performance expectations / service level agreements (SLAs) for each component area or subcomponent area?
Response 13: Applicants may define performance capability/expectations or SLAs they expect to support as appropriate within their technical approach or past performance descriptions. Final SLAs will be negotiated between NIH and selected awardee(s).

Question 14: Has it been determined that custom development is necessary to achieve the program goals or have platforms - ServiceNow, etc. been considered?
Response 14: Applicants are encouraged to propose their recommended solutions for the components and needs expressed within the funding opportunity.

Question 15: Who are the existing award partners for the All of Us Research Program?
Response 15: The program has information regarding our award partners available on our website at allofus.nih.gov.

Question 16: Will you be answering questions previously submitted to the inquiries email address?
Response 16: Yes. We will respond to questions as received. Please continue to submit any specific questions to the email address provided in the funding opportunity AllofUsFOAInquiries@nih.gov.

Question 17: Is there a deadline for questions and a final date when answers will be posted?
Response 17: We do not have a deadline for questions to be submitted via AllofUsFOAInquiries@nih.gov. We will continue responding to request until the application submission deadline. We encourage prospective applicants to submit questions as early as possible to ensure response from the All of Us Research Program.
Question 18: Page 7 of the FOA describes the responsibilities of the HPOs and the PTC in recruiting and engaging with participants. Does this suggest that the role of the PTSC in developing “innovative technology solutions to support engagement, enrollment, and retention of diverse participants” is confined to technical implementation of the strategies developed by the HPOs and PTC? Or is the government expecting a more collaborative interaction between the groups with the ability of the PTSC to also contribute non-technical engagement and retention expertise and solutions?

Response 18: The PTSC awardee(s) will collaborate with consortium partners in the development of protocols and strategies to support engagement, enrollment, and retention. Ultimately the PTSC will support the technical implementation of systems necessary to enable these strategies. The PTSC will not be engaged in outreach and enrollment efforts directly but will support all system requirements needed for partner success.

Question 19: Does the current platform include commercial off the shelf software packages already licensed to the All of Us Research Program at large or the PTSC in particular? If yes, could we obtain a list of such?

Response 19: The current platform uses a combination of licensed services or products and custom coded software to meet the requirements of the program and implement our research protocol linked within the funding opportunity. Applicants should consider the needs or requests for innovation expressed within the funding opportunity as they develop their proposals including technical approach, past performance, and cost proposals. We anticipate an opportunity to explore and collaboratively revise technical approach with partners at the time of award.

Question 20: Are there artifacts and documentation available that describe the technology and architecture of the current platform, including dependencies of third-party software? This information would assist us in deciding whether to “extend and enhance current All of Us PTSC systems or to replace them with alternative systems”

Response 20: The current platform uses a combination of licensed services or products and custom coded software to meet the requirements of the program and implement our research protocol linked within the funding opportunity. Applicants should consider the needs or requests for innovation expressed within the funding opportunity as they develop their proposals including technical approach, past performance and cost proposals. We anticipate an opportunity to explore and collaboratively revise technical approach with partners at the time of award.

Question 21: In the FOA the government cites two types of software: “customized open source” and “off-the-shelf”. Will alternative software licensing modalities be considered? For example, customized software for which the source code is not open source?

Response 21: Alternative software licensing modalities, either in-whole or in-part, will be considered and should be documented within the proposal. Please also see the Ownership of Data, Software, and Other Products section of the funding opportunity for a full description. NIH will own all rights in data, software, and other products (collectively “Works”) made or developed under this award.

Question 22: To support the requirement in the FOA for O&M of the current platform for as long as 12 months, could the Government share high-level labor level of effort metrics for the current platform?

Response 22: In the event of a transition of award partners or platforms, the current platform will be supported by the current PTSC awardee during the transition period for the new PTSC award(s). Collaboration in the transition will be required for any new award partner(s) in the event of a transition of award partners.
Question 23: Could the Government share high-level other direct cost information for the current platform? In particular, the current cost of cloud services and the cost of commercial software licenses current incurred on a yearly basis.

Response 23: Applicants should consider the needs or requests for innovation expressed within the funding opportunity as they develop their cost proposals based on their assumptions and technical proposal. Current costs for cloud services are driven by our research protocol, user population, and operational or security requirements. As indicated during the December 16, 2019 informational webinar, we currently have over 350k individuals who have created an account with the program and over 235k individuals who have completed the core protocol. Enrollment is ongoing with a goal of 1M or more participants over the coming years. The protocol and survey data are linked within the funding opportunity for reference. We anticipate that the study will add an increasing number of data types over the award period. General privacy and security requirements are also documented within the funding opportunity.

Question 24: In the FOA, page 8, Section “Component 1”, it specifies “staffing requirements to support separation of duties for security and privacy operations and compliance”. We understand that the separation of duties is between the personnel in charge of security/privacy operations and the personnel in charge of ensuring compliance with the security/privacy requirements. As opposed to separation of duties between personnel in charge of security and personnel in charge of privacy. Is this correct?

Response 24: Your understanding is correct. Thank you for the question for clarification.

Question 25: Can a non-domestic company apply for this funding announcement?

Response 25: Non-domestic entities are not eligible to apply. Please see the funding opportunity for additional clarifications.

Question 26: Please clarify the yearly direct cost amount.

Response 26: Depending on the availability of funds, the direct costs should not exceed $25 million dollars per year.