

1) **What are the NIHCATS II Contracts?**

The National Institutes of Health Conference, Administrative, and Travel Services (NIHCATS) II contracts are multiple award Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (ID/IQ) contracts covering a wide range of administrative, meeting, conference, and travel support services. The NIHCATS II support services contracts are available to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other Federal agencies for services performed both in the United States and abroad.

The focus of the NIHCATS II is to provide all the necessary services, qualified personnel, and facilities, not otherwise provided by the Government. All requirements will be fulfilled under task orders (TOs). The NIHCATS II contracts consist of a base year plus four option years.

2) **Who can use the NIHCATS II?**

NIHCATS II may be used by the entire NIH community, but may also be used by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and other Federal agencies.

3) **What types of task orders can be used under NIHCATS II?**

The NIHCATS II are indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (ID/IQ) type contracts utilizing Fixed Price (FP) and/or Time & Materials (T&M) type task orders. The task order will provide detail of the specific services that will be required. T&M task orders should be used only if FP type task orders are not suitable. Use of a T&M task order requires the proper approvals.

4) **What is the geographic scope of the NIHCATS II?**

The geographic scope of the NIHCATS II includes the Continental United States and abroad.

5) **Do you do travel orders under your vehicle?**

No. Travel on this contract is reserved for non-government employees.

6) **What are the benefits of using the NIHCATS II?**

The NIHCATS II contracting program is a flexible means for NIH and other Federal agencies to obtain conference, administrative, and travel associated support.

Created with community input in mind, the NIHCATS II will work to increase effectiveness and usability, as well as endorse the small business goals set forth by NIH. Some other benefits of using the NIHCATS II include, but are not limited to:

- Provides experienced and cost-effective personnel through competition among qualified contractors.
- Is available to the NIH and other Federal agencies for service performed in the United States and abroad.

7) **What is the NIHCATS II period of performance?**

The period of performance of the NIHCATS II contracts is for one (1) base year plus four (4) one-year option periods. The NIHCATS II contracts were awarded on 11/15/2011.

8) What task areas are covered through the NIHCATS II contracts?

Support under the NIHCATS II contracts includes the following task areas. See the Statement of Work (SOW) or the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for more details.

1. Travel Support
2. Meeting and Conference Support
3. Documentation Support
4. Administrative Support
5. Website Design, Development, and Maintenance Support

9) What is the maximum period of performance for a task order issued under the of the NIHCATS II contracts?

Services on a task order may not be performed after the expiration date of the NIHCATS II contracts (base period of performance plus any options exercised to extend the term of the contract). Task orders may utilize option periods, subject to subsequent awards to the contractor, but the total performance period for any task order shall not exceed five years.

10) What are the responsibilities of the Task Order Contracting Officer's Representative (COR)?

When NIH or a Federal agency determines a need exists for a conference, meeting, or travel services, a Task Order (TO) Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) must be identified. The Task Order COR must be FAC-COR certified and is responsible for all technical aspects of the task order.

The Task Order COR will typically be the individual requiring the services offered under the NIHCATS II contracts or may be a designee within the IC or Federal agency requiring the service. The Task Order COR will develop the requirement and will represent the Government as the main interface between his/her Institute and Center (IC)/Federal agency and the contractor during the task order period of performance. The Task Order COR will draft the TORP, prepare the Selection Recommendation Document (SRD), provide technical direction to the contractor's management staff to facilitate task order performance, and monitor performance over the period of performance of the task order.

Additional information can be found in Section 2.2.2 of the SOP.

11) What are the responsibilities of the Task Order Contracting Officer (CO)?

The Task Order CO has the authority to act as an agent of the Government under a particular task order. For NIH customers, the Task Order CO is a warranted CO from their respective Consolidated Operations and Acquisitions Center (COAC). For customers at Federal agencies outside of NIH, the Task Order CO is a warranted CO from their respective procurement office. Additional responsibilities of the Task Order CO include submitting the TORP, overseeing the evaluation of proposals, approving the Selection Recommendation Document (SRD), creating and awarding a task order. The Task Order CO is responsible for all task order post-award administration and closeout activities.

12) How do I place an order on the NIHCATS II contract?

Detailed instructions on how to place a task order against the NIHCATS II contracts are provided in Section 3 of the SOP. A brief overview of the acquisition process is described below.

Steps

Step 1	Task Order COR develops TORP and sends it to the Task Order CO for review
Step 2	Task Order CO reviews the TORP and sends it to the NIHCATS II CO and COR
Step 3	NIHCATS II CO receives the TORP and assigns a TORP number
Step 4	NIHCATS II CO and COR review and release the TORP
Step 5	Contractors review TORP and submit questions, if necessary, to the Task Order CO
Step 6	Task Order CO works with the Task Order PO to draft responses to Contractor questions
Step 7	Task Order CO sends questions and answers to NIHCATS II CO and COR
Step 8	NIHCATS II CO releases questions and answers to the contractors
Step 9	Contractors submit proposals in response to the TORP. Proposals are sent to the Task Order CO.
Step 10	Task Order CO and COR evaluate the proposals and select an Awardee by completing the Selection Recommendation Document (SRD)
Step 11	NIHCATS II CO reviews and concurs on the SRD
Step 12	Task Order CO processes the task order award and forwards a signed copy of the award document to the NIHCATS II CO
Step 13	NIHCATS II CO releases award letter to Awardee and Task Order CO/COR announcing the task order award
Step 14	Contractor starts work under the task order
Step 15	Upon TO expiration, the Task Order COR completes a task order performance survey and works with the Task Order CO to close out the task order

Note: The NIHCATS II contracts will eventually operate using the NIHCATS II electronic Government Ordering System (eGOS), when available and implemented. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) will be updated at that time to provide specific, streamlined guidance on how to use eGOS in placing a task order.

Task Order Guidelines are subject to change; please refer to the latest version in effect.

13) What must the Task Order Request Package (TORP) include?

The TORP will include (1) a Statement of Work (SOW), (2) the estimated period of performance, (3) any applicable Government Furnished Property (GFP), (4) evaluation criteria (criteria may include experience with international issues, corporate experience, past performance, and cost/price), (5) Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) (not released to contractors), (6) funding document, (7) all required clearances (if any), and (8) all required conference/meeting approval request forms and waivers (if applicable) with approvals (<http://nihcatsII.olao.od.nih.gov/resources.html>).

NOTE: For Task Orders Involving Conferences/Meetings:

For NIH ICs: All required conference/meeting forms and waivers based upon NIH's most recent policy guidance must be approved and submitted with the TORP.

For Federal Agencies (other than NIH): All required conference/meeting forms and waivers based upon the Agency/OPDIV's most recent policy guidance must be approved and submitted with the TORP.

Additional information can be found in Section 3 of the SOP.

14) If my conference will only take place for two days, what is the period of performance?

The period of performance is from date of task order award to completion of all conference-related services (e.g., the last date that all deliverables will be completed under the task order).

15) What is a "No Response" statement?

A "No Response" statement must be submitted if a contractor is unable or otherwise cannot perform a requirement. This shall be submitted electronically to the NIHCATS II Contracting Officer via e-mail.

For more information refer to Section 3.9.2 of the SOP.

16) Is there a fee?

For all task orders issued for agencies other than NIH, the NIHCATS II contractors shall include a 1% fee as part of their business proposal.

Fees support:

- Establishing and maintaining the website
- Maintaining the task order management system
- Performing task order scope reviews

- Collecting and distributing past performance to NIH community
- Customer relations and addressing issues regarding the NIHCATS II contract vehicle
- Infrastructure and templates
- Contract oversight
- Training

17) If we obligate \$100,000 for a task order but only use \$50,000, can we deobligate the funds? If Yes, would this pertain to fixed price task orders as well?

Yes, you may deobligate, but it only applies to Time and Materials type task orders. Fixed Price task orders may not be deobligated. NIHCATS II does not allow for Fixed Price contracts with economic price adjustments.

18) Who processes invoices?

It is a 3-way match with receiving coordinated by the Task Order COR. Global receivers can do receiving. NIAID talked about NBS asking for the requestor to identify the one who will be doing receiving.

19) Is the NIHCATS II contract set up as a total or partial small business set-aside?

The NIHCATS II contracts have been reserved as a Partial Small Business set-aside. Task order proposals for domestic services with an estimated value of \$500,000 and below will receive priority consideration for award to small businesses. If the Task Order CO receives two or more task order offers for domestic services valued at \$500,000 or less, the Task Order CO would first review offers submitted from small business concerns. If the Task Order CO receives no acceptable offers from small business concerns, the set-aside shall be withdrawn and offers from the large business will then be considered.

Furthermore, the Government may solicit task order proposals with an estimated value above \$500,000 for small businesses. The small business reservation does not preclude large business from submitting proposals on any task order (reference FAR 19.502-3).

20) How does the set aside work?

Small companies are given priority if task order is \$500K or less and domestic. If the customer can justify why a small business cannot perform the required work, then the customer can begin evaluating proposals from large companies.

21) Who gets credit for using small businesses?

The ICs will get the credit.

22) Will every contractor receive all Task Order Request Packages (TORPs)?

Yes, all contractors will receive each TORP request in accordance with FAR 16.505(b)(1), Fair Opportunity, unless an exception to fair opportunity has been approved.

23) What support is available regarding the NIHCATS II contract?

The NIHCATS II Program Support Team (NIHCATSII@mail.nih.gov) is available to assist users of the NIHCATS II contract. The Team will prepare and conduct information sessions to assist customers in understanding and using the NIHCATS II contract vehicle. In addition, materials such as the Standard Operating Procedures document and a fact sheet are available on the NIHCATS II Program Support Team's Website (<http://NIHCATSII.olao.od.nih.gov>).

24) Who is responsible for the task order administration?

The Task Order CO and Task Order COR are responsible for all task order activities including initiating, awarding, administering, modifying and closing-out task orders. The NIHCATS II CO and COR will provide support, as needed.

25) We do not think our COAC is aware they need to be involved with the process. Have you communicated this with them?

We plan on presenting to them as well. These updated task order procedures are new but they will help your IC retain control.

26) Can an AO perform a task order COR's role?

Not unless they have completed the COR training and are certified.

27) Does the CO need to be in the COAC

Yes. You must go through your COAC to cut task orders.

28) If we have a meeting under \$25,000, AOs have a warrant for that amount. Can they sign off for that as the CO?

Yes. If it is a legal signature and they are warranted they may sign off.

29) How long does it take to process and award a task order for the NIHCATS II contract?

Task order timelines are largely dependent on the specific requirement. The timeline for the NIHCATS II Program Support Team to review and release the TORP to contractors is targeted to be approximately five (5) business days. Task orders with special or complex requirements may take longer. This processing time begins once a complete, acceptable TORP is received by the NIHCATS II CO. Incomplete or unacceptable TORPs will require additional time for the NIHCATS II CO to advise the Task Order CO on minimum acceptable requirements.

The Task Order CO will establish a TORP response time that will afford contractors a reasonable opportunity to respond to the requirement. When establishing the TORP response time, the Task Order CO shall consider the circumstances of the individual acquisition and account for factors such as the complexity, availability, and value of the requirement.

Overall, it should take no longer than 45 days from the time a complete TORP package is submitted for review. The time needed for review depends on the complexity of the task order.

30) How long should a TORP be open for?

Generally, 2 weeks is an appropriate length of time to allow vendors to submit questions and proposals, but this depends on complexity of the requirement.

31) Is it possible to have multiple meetings or different types of meetings on one task order?

Yes, but you must have a signed conference approval form and approved funds for each conference requested. You can have a TORP with a request for meetings you know of with the proper documentation and then have a option for additional meetings. As long as the meetings are within the base contract period of performance you can procure meetings ahead of time.

32) Is there any part of the task order process that cannot be done online?

The entire process can be done electronically. Eventually, it will all be done through the web-based eGOS system.

33) Is it possible to see the status of the task order?

To see the status of a task order, please contact your Task Order CO. Alternatively, you can send a question to the NIHCATS II email account.

Once the eGOS system is active, you will be able to view task order status via the system.

34) How and where will awards be made and announced?

After the task order award is signed by the Task Order CO, a copy of the signed task order must be sent to the NIHCATS II CO. The NIHCATS II CO will release the signed task order along with an award letter to the Awardee, Task Order CO, and Task Order COR announcing the task order award. An award tracker is available on the NIHCATS II website and will be updated regularly.

35) Is it the same process for any dollar limit?

Yes. All we require is the appropriate documentation.

36) Early TORPs were sent directly from the Task Order COR to NIHCATS II team without approval from the Task Order CO. Has that been corrected?

Yes. The task order process has been updated and now requires approval from the Task Order CO throughout the process.

37) Once our CO makes an award, can we contact the vendor right away?

You must have the award document in order to contact the vendor.

38) What if I had a bad experience with one of the NIHCATS II vendors?

Document past performance as evaluation criteria and then provide a justification for not using the vendor.

39) Can pricing data be made available to customers to help them develop IGCEs and to complete the Conference Approval Form?

Yes. We can provide a redacted IGCE from another task order.

40) We are having difficulties estimating the contractor cost to obtain the correct approvals. We want to stay under \$100k and we are trying to look at historical data, but it has been a struggle. Do you have any suggestions?

Yes. Please contact us at NIHCATSII@mail.nih.gov. We have historical data to help estimate contractor prices.

41) Are customers allowed to sole source to a particular vendor?

Typically this will not occur unless there is a valid justification. All vendors will receive all requirements.

42) If a meeting or conference does not require a Conference Approval Form, what does the CO need from the customer?

The customer should submit a memo from the Task Order CO which explains why the approval form is not needed.

43) Can we submit a TORP as we wait for Conference approval?

Yes, you can submit a TORP package for review. After that, we can initiate the review, but cannot release the award to the vendors until approval is received.

44) What is the funding document?

It is a memo stating that funds are available. It is signed by the EO or budget officer.

45) Are the Task Order COs allowed to define the evaluation criteria?

Yes, the TORP form provides the possible evaluation criteria but it is up to the Task Order CO and COR as to what is chosen and the weight of each factor.

46) Can we get a list of vendors from you?

Yes, they are posted on our Website on the "Vendors" page.

47) Is the use of the NIHCATS II contracts mandatory?

Use of the NIHCATS II contracts is not mandatory; however, its use is highly encouraged. The NIHCATS II contracts are aligned with NIH's corporate goal to consolidate contracts. Since the NIHCATS II contracts are a Partial Small Business set-aside, use of the NIHCATS II contracts may help NIH and other Federal agencies meet small business contracting goals. NIHCATS II may become a preferred contract vehicle in FY 15. Until then, you can use your current vehicles. Once NIHCATS II is established as the preferred vehicle, it should be considered as the first choice to use.

48) What is the NIHCATS II electronic Government Ordering System (eGOS)?

The NIHCATS II **electronic Government Ordering System (eGOS)** is being developed to streamline the Task Order Procedures outlined in Section 3 of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). eGOS will be a web-based system accessible via **the Internet** and will be the starting point for any NIHCATS II task order. Please note that eGOS will be a standalone system developed and customized for NIHCATS II and will not be linked with other NIH acquisition systems, such as NBS, at this time.

The current task order procedures will operate using a manual, paper-based process. Please refer to the NIHCATS II website for additional information on submitting a Task Order Request Package (TORP) under these guidelines.

The NIHCATS II contracts will operate using the NIHCATS II eGOS, when available and implemented. The SOP will also be updated at that time to provide specific, streamlined guidance on how to use eGOS in placing a task order.

49) What are the benefits of using NIHCATS II?

NIHCATS II performs reviews that confirm all activity is within scope and steps are properly processed. These reviews help to protect both the NIHCATS II team and the task order customer team from going outside scope. Current discussions trend towards making NIHCATS II the preferred contract vehicle, which would require customers to justify why they cannot use it before using another contract. Additionally, there are no fees for NIH ICs to use the contract.