



PACIFIC ISLAND HEALTH OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP Title	Retrospective After-Action Review of the Regional COVID-19 Pandemic Response in the USAPIs
Required Registration of Interest	All prospective respondents are required to register their interest in applying for this RFP via email to Janet Camacho at janetc@pihoa.org , Cerina Mariano at cerinam@pihoa.org , and Keleise Reid at keleiser@pihoa.org . Changes or clarifications made on this RFP will be communicated with all prospective respondents through the registered point of contact.

I. PROPOSED TIMEFRAME	
ACTIVITY	DATES
Release of RFP	January 15, 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline	January 24, 2025
Period of Performance	Upon contract execution and to be completed on or before July 31, 2025

II. BACKGROUND
<p>The US-Affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPIs) include American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP). The Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) is a 501(c)3 headquartered in Honolulu, Hawaii. PIHOA's membership is comprised of the ministers/directors/secretaries of health (executive governing board) of the five USAPIs (not including the CNMI), their deputies and Chief Executive Officers of local public hospitals (associates), and Pacific regional professional associations (affiliates). PIHOA's Secretariat is made up of executive, administrative, and technical staff and consultants. The Secretariat is tasked with providing technical assistance to the five USAPI health ministries and departments in the following areas: 1) health workforce development/human resources for health; 2) health information systems, epidemiology, and surveillance; 3) performance improvement; 4) laboratory services; 5) regional health policy and advocacy; 6) health security; 7) leadership development; and 8) partnership engagement.</p> <p>A recent paper about COVID-19 in the USAPIs concludes that regional partnerships, information sharing, trust in health leadership, and timely actions such as the early closure of borders mitigated the impact of the pandemic on the islands.¹ However, it is also noted that the preparedness and response efforts need to be improved, including in the areas of laboratory and clinical services and</p>

¹ Cash McGinley HL, Hancock WT, Kern-Allely S, Jenssen M, Chutaro E, Camacho J, et al. (2023) COVID-19 in the US-affiliated Pacific Islands: A timeline of events and lessons learned from March 2020–November 2022. PLOS Glob Public Health 3(8): e0002052. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0002052>

procurement and inventory systems.² Building on existing bodies of literature on COVID-19 responses in the USAPIs, this RFP aims to further investigate the experiences of those involved in the USAPI COVID-19 response from a regional perspective and now that some time has been since the height of COVID-19 responses in the Pacific from 2020 to 2023. PIHOA aims to contract a specialist(s) to conduct a retrospective After-Action Review (AAR) of the USAPI regional COVID-19 response, as supported by and coordinated across PIHOA, U.S. federal and local/regional/international partners, and USAPI health departments.

An AAR is the process of gathering key informants and stakeholders for a directed discussion and documentation of four main questions:

- What was expected to happen during a certain activity, process, or event?
- What actually happened, including how and rationale?
- What was successful and not successful and why?
- What are some key lessons learned from the response that can improve responses moving forward?³

Thus, while AARs look to the past, the main goal is to improve actions and processes in the future. AARs are useful because they allow stakeholders to express their individual experiences and impressions of an event, which can help with decompression and closure. They also serve as documentation of an event, which contributes to institutional memory.

III. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF WORK

PIHOA is seeking an AAR Specialist (individual consultant, multi-disciplinary team, or organization) to plan and facilitate a retrospective AAR of the regional COVID-19 pandemic response in the USAPIs.

The scope of the AAR includes the experiences of participating USAPI health department staff, PIHOA, and other relevant partner agencies at the local, regional, and international levels intimately involved in the planning, coordination, and implementation of USAPI COVID-19 responses.

The objectives of the AAR are to:

1. Understand the degree to which the USAPIs and PIHOA were aware of the risk of pandemics and were prepared to respond to them before December 2019;
2. Understand what went well during the COVID-19 pandemic response;
3. Understand what did not go well or could be improved during the COVID-19 pandemic response; and
4. Learn from the COVID-19 pandemic response to build resilience to future health security threats.

Other considerations for the AAR:

- Participants in the AAR should include health and other officials from the USAPIs, key PIHOA staff and consultants, and relevant members of local, regional, and international partner organizations (e.g. CDC, ASPR, SPC, WHO, etc.) who had actively participated in jurisdiction responses and support from regional support.
- The AAR should focus on specific issues as they relate to the pandemic. These include:

² Ibid.

³ <https://www.mathematica.org/features/covid-19-after-action-review-toolkit>

- Communication, coordination, and collaboration
- Border closures and restrictions
- Resource mobilization – human capital, procurement, and logistics
- Financing and resource allocations
- Risk communication and community engagement
- Health information systems, surveillance, and reporting
- Detection, testing and laboratory capacities
- Contact tracing and case investigation and management
- Vaccination
- The USAPIs participate in PIHOA’s field epidemiology training program (FETP) called the Strengthening Health Interventions in the Pacific (SHIP).⁴ Ideally, current students and graduates would be involved in the facilitation and/or as key informants of the AAR

Key tasks include:

1. With input from PIHOA Secretariat, refine a plan for the AAR. This should include:
 - The approach taken (e.g., facilitation style, trauma-informed)
 - Methodology (step-by-step process for gathering information from stakeholders)
 - A timeline for completing the AAR within the contract period
 - An outline of any tools to be used (e.g., focus group questionnaires, surveys)
2. Plan and conduct on-site and remote key informant interviews and discussions to gain deeper, local and regional insights and perspectives on COVID-19 response impacts.
 - The PIHOA Secretariat will assist the AAR Specialist with contact lists for potential stakeholders and partners.
3. Attend the CDC’s Pacific Islands Preparedness and Response (PIPER) Summit in Saipan, CNMI, February 24-28, 2025 to meet with key USAPI health department stakeholders/informants.
4. Conduct additional interviews in participating jurisdictions (travel required) and remotely with key informants and stakeholders.
5. Analyze findings and review and validate the analysis with key stakeholders as necessary. Based on the lessons learned, develop specific recommendations for the USAPIs, PIHOA, and relevant partners on how to strengthen resilience to future health security threats.
6. Complete the retrospective AAR report and present the main findings and recommendations to the PIHOA Board, PIHOA Secretariat, and key partners (in person at an in-person or virtual PIHOA Executive Board Meeting).

IV. SCHEDULE OF DELIVERABLES		
ACTIVITY	COMPLETION DATES	SUBMISSIONS
Develop the AAR Plan	Within 2 weeks (14 days) of the contract execution date	AAR Plan including approach, methodology, timeline, and outline of tools
Plan and conduct on-site and remote key informant and stakeholder interviews and meetings	No later than May 31, 2025	Workshop Plan, including facilitation tools and logistics
Conduct additional remote interviews	No later than June 14, 2025	N/A

⁴ See <https://www.pihoa.org/regional-initiatives/health-information-management-systems-surveillance-2/strengthening-public-health-interventions-in-the-pacific-ship-program/>

Analyze, review, and validate findings Develop recommendations	No later than June 30, 2025	Interim Report on main findings and recommendations
Complete and present the AAR	On or before July 31, 2025	Final AAR Final AAR Presentation

V. MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 5 years of experience in planning and facilitating AARs or similar multi-stakeholder projects. 2. Education or professional experience in public health, clinical practice, evaluation, or other relevant social and health sciences fields. 3. Deep understanding of COVID-19 and preparedness and response issues related to the pandemic 4. Professional experience in the Pacific region (preferably the USAPIs), or other low resource environments. 5. Experience in managing logistics for large meetings. 6. Ability to travel to the USAPIs and/or Hawaii.
KNOWLEDGE AND DEMONSTRATED MASTERY
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing AAR or similar methodologies and tools 2. Facilitating multi-stakeholder lessons learned events with multiple breakout sessions 3. Knowledge of COVID-19, its impacts on societies, and issues related to pandemic preparedness and response 4. Conducting individual interviews 5. Managing logistics and facilitating regional meetings with 50+ participants 6. Excellent verbal and written communication skills (English), with experience in developing detailed reports and clearly presenting complex information
PREFERRED SKILLS/QUALIFICATIONS
N/A
VI. RFP RESPONSE. Respondents should include the following information in their proposals:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cover Letter and Certification of Eligibility. All respondents must include a signed letter certifying that the respondent is not debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in federal assistance programs or activities, the applicant is an equal employment opportunity employer, and the applicant will comply with all applicable contract provisions required for contracts under federal awards or other grantor stipulations. 2. Experience working on projects with a similar scope of work. 3. A clear summary of the approach to the scope of work. 4. Statement of qualifications and experience to perform the scope of work, including staffing plan (as applicable), summary of related experience for all those to be involved in the project, and a resume/CV for all those to be involved in the project. 5. Description of project management approach and ability to manage the project scope within the designated timeline. 6. Fee for services based on the performance period and completion of stated deliverables as itemized in Section IV. Schedule of Deliverables, to include estimated travel costs and any costs associated with local personnel (for example, for data recording and entry). 7. Sample of similar work.

8. The names, phone numbers and email addresses of three individuals, preferably at different organizations, who have been clients during the last three years who can be contacted as references.
FORMAT
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Proposal shall not exceed more than 10 pages, excluding budget, attachments, and sample work. 2. The Proposal should be organized in the order in which the requirements are presented above and should clearly indicate the specific requirement that is being addressed. 3. The Proposal shall include all the required information indicated herein. Failure to submit all required information may result in a request for prompt submission of missing information, a lower Proposal evaluation score, or rejection of the Proposal.

VII. EVALUATION. Proposals will be scored on the following criteria:	
DESCRIPTION	MAX POINTS
Experience in planning, facilitating, and documenting similar projects	35
Technical proposal, work methodology, and proposed work plan in line with consultancy objectives	25
Writing and presentation skills (communication)	20
Proposed consultancy cost	20
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS:	100
<i>Proposals must have a minimum score of 70 to qualify for a contract.</i>	

VIII. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION
<p>Proposals will be accepted until evaluator awarded. Submit proposals via email to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janet Camacho, Deputy Director at janetc@pihoa.org • Cerina Mariano, Grants Manager at cerinam@pihoa.org • Keleise Reid, Contracts Management Officer at keleiser@pihoa.org <p>Award of the contract is subject to approval by the Executive Director. Any protest or dispute respective to the solicitation may be addressed to the Executive Director and submitted via email to emic@pihoa.org.</p> <p>PIHOA is an equal opportunity employer. Discrimination based on age, race, sex, handicap, or national origin is expressly prohibited.</p>

IX. RFP TERMS & CONDITIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PIHOA is not liable for any costs or expenses incurred by a Responder or any other person or entity in the preparation of their Proposal. 2. PIHOA reserves the right to reject all Proposals received from Responders as a result of this RFP, as is in the best interests of PIHOA, as determined solely by PIHOA. 3. In determining which Proposal is best, PIHOA will take into consideration the responsiveness to the requirements, the consultant cost and the experience, qualifications, references, responsibility and current availability of the Responder to perform the Services. PIHOA may waive any technicalities or formalities in determining how best to serve the interests of PIHOA.

PIHOA reserves the right to cancel the award of the contract at any time prior to execution of the contract without liability on the part of PIHOA.

4. This RFP may be sent as a courtesy to known interested individuals and firms. The receipt of this RFP from PIHOA in no way implies that the recipient is a qualified Responder.
5. Any Proposal submitted to PIHOA is not confidential. All materials submitted become the property of PIHOA. PIHOA has the right to use any or all un-copyrighted concepts presented in any Proposal. Approval or disapproval of a Proposal does not affect this right.
6. Any changes to any part of this RFP, will be communicated to all Responders who have registered their interest, as required, and explained on page 1 of this RFP.
7. To be considered, proposals must be complete, in the format indicated in this RFP, and delivered by the date and time indicated in this RFP. Responders will not be given an opportunity to change any part of a proposal after submission. A Responder may submit only one proposal. More than one proposal from an individual, firm or partnership, corporation or association under the same or different names will not be considered, and will be considered grounds for disqualification and/or rejection of the proposals involved, unless prior approval has been given by PIHOA.
8. If the Responder to whom the award is made fails to execute the subsequent contract within 14 days of receipt, the award may be annulled and the contract awarded to the second highest responsible Responder, and such Responder shall fulfill every stipulation embraced herein, as if the Responder were the original party to whom the award was made, or PIHOA may reject all of the bids, as its interest may require.
9. From the issue date of this RFP until a determination is made regarding the qualification of Responders, all contacts with PIHOA concerning this RFP must be made through the Deputy Director, Janet Camacho, and Grants Manager, Cerina Mariano. All questions about the meanings or intent, discrepancies or omissions of the RFP shall be submitted in writing. Replies to these inquires shall be made in writing. The written responses become part of the RFP and will be provided to each Responder who has registered their interest in this RFP.