

Introduction

Guidelines

1. Prepare a tender based on study specifications while adapting it, when appropriate, for each individual country.
2. Ensure a fair and competitive bidding process.
3. Select the survey research organization or firm best suited to carry out the survey in each country within budget constraints.
4. Execute a contract that addresses the rights and obligations of all parties involved and references local legal requirements, if applicable.
5. Define upfront the quality standards that lay the quality framework for the rest of the survey lifecycle.
6. Document the steps taken while preparing tenders, soliciting bids, and drawing up and executing contracts.

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Introduction

The following describes the process for preparing tenders, soliciting bids, and drawing up and executing contracts. Tenders should be based on the specifications outlined in [Study Design and Organizational Structure](#). Bids should be obtained from as many qualified organizations as possible to ensure a high quality and cost effective survey for the local market available. The goal of entering into a contract is to create a legally binding agreement between the organization coordinating the study and the organizations collecting the data. Complications will inevitably arise over the course of the study, but it is important that the mutually agreed upon contract defines, in as much detail as possible, the specifications and expectations regarding procedures, responsible parties, and outcomes for all parts of the study across all participating organizations. Towards this end, the tenders, bids, and contracts should all be as specific and detailed as possible. In multinational, multicultural, or multiregional surveys, which we refer to as '3MC' surveys, the tendering, bidding, and contracting process will involve various parties (e.g., the survey organizations, central coordinating center, and funder(s)), and there are many ways for these parties to conduct the process. For example, the coordinating center may prepare tenders and solicit bids from survey organizations in each country where the study will be carried out. The resulting contracts are between the coordinating center and each selected survey organization. There are other situations in which the coordinating center enters into a contract with an international organization that is responsible for data collection in several countries. Sometimes, the funder(s) prepare tenders for the central coordinating center and survey organizations separately and the coordinating center submits, rather than solicits, a bid. Thus, there is a contract between the funder(s) and the coordinating center, as well as separate contracts between the funder(s) and local survey organizations. Finally, there are other situations in which the central coordinating center is not involved with any contractual work, and contracts are individually arranged and signed at the country level. In this situation, the central coordinating center may provide specifications and supervise the process, but the contract is an agreement between the local funder(s) and local survey organizations. See [Study Design and Organizational Structure](#) for further detail. The guidelines presented here address the general approach used in the tendering, bidding, and contracting process described in the first case—outlining a competitive bidding process between a central coordinating center and survey organizations (in particular, survey organizations selected at the country level). Nevertheless, many of the guidelines below also apply to the other contracting arrangements.

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Guidelines Goal: To prepare tenders and conduct a competitive bidding process that will result in detailed contracts within defined budget parameters and an established legal framework.

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1. Prepare a tender based on study specifications while adapting it, when appropriate, for each individual country.

Rationale The tender is the first step to soliciting bids and executing contracts. The specifications in the tender will have long-term effects on the final contracts and the implementation of the study. With the tendering process, the coordinating center should consider the amount of risk it is willing to assume and specify the type of contract it will offer. The ten

should outline study details and requirements of the bidding survey organizations. Requesting detailed information on technical and business aspects of the survey organization's bid reduces the opportunity for misunderstanding to go up and helps ensure that the study specifications have been fully understood and adequately accounted for in the plan and budget. In the final preparation of the tender, local adaptations should be considered, and multiple tenders may need to be developed for multiple countries to set reasonable expectations based on the culture and availability of resources.

Procedural steps

- 1.1 Determine the appropriate tendering process in each participating country.
 - 1.1.1 Decide between open tendering and restricted tendering.
 - Open tendering allows any survey organization to provide a bid. It is advantageous because it protects against favoritism. Open tendering is absolutely necessary if the coordinating center is not familiar with the availability of qualified survey organizations in a country.
 - Restricted tendering limits the bidding process to a few survey organizations pre-selected by the coordinating center. Restricted tendering is used when the coordinating center has prior knowledge of survey organizations that are capable of implementing their country's portion of a 3MC survey.
 - 1.1.2 Become familiar with the local requirements for tendering (e.g., some countries prohibit restricted tendering using public funds).
- 1.2 State in the tender which type of contract will be offered: fixed-price, cost-reimbursable, or time and material. The decision on which type of contract will be offered depends on the level of risk the coordinating center (or funding source) and the survey organizations are willing to take. These guidelines assume cost-reimbursable contracts; these three types of contracts are defined below.
 - 1.2.1 A fixed-price (or lump-sum) contract requires stating upfront a fixed total price for the clearly-defined work and deliverable(s). Fixed-price contracts may also allow for bonuses if expectations are exceeded. The coordinating center incurs little risk while the survey organizations incur much risk.
 - 1.2.2 A cost-reimbursable contract requires paying the survey organizations for the actual costs necessary to complete the agreed-upon scope of work and production of the deliverable(s); it may include paying them a profit—typically received as profit. Cost-reimbursable contracts also allow for bonuses if expectations are exceeded. This type of agreement is riskier for the coordinating center than for the survey organizations. Thus, it is important for the coordinating center to carefully evaluate survey organizations during the bidding process and monitor progress during survey design and implementation.
 - 1.2.3 A time and material (T&M) contract has elements of both the fixed-price and the cost-reimbursable contracts. Time and material contracts may require a fixed level of effort by a specific class(es) of resources (staff) from the survey organizations or may have a variable level of effort by a specific class(es) of resources at an agreed-upon rate of pay for the specific class(es). These contracts may be open-ended, such that the exact price for the work and/or deliverable(s) may not be determined when signing the contract. This type of contract is used for the implementation of an entire survey project; it is sometimes used when contracting work for a particular task in the survey lifecycle (e.g., contracting with an organization to perform the post-collective analysis).
- 1.3 Ask bidders to provide specific technical information about their survey organization and their plan to execute the survey within the study specifications, generally referred to as the Technical Proposal. As suggested by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the proposals submitted by bidders should reference ethical codes in social, market, and public opinion research.
 - 1.3.1 Request the following from the survey organization:

- Examples of similar studies the bidder has conducted (describing the size, complexity, topic, etc.).
- Examples of the bidder's training and supervisory materials, details of procedures used, and reports from previously conducted.
- References or contact names for previously completed work.
- Number and relevant qualifications of all levels of staff assigned to the study, as well as an organization and outline of responsibilities for this survey.
- Organizational capacity (e.g., size of field interviewing staff).
- Financial capacity (e.g., adequate financial resources to pay staff and expenses until the reimbursement is received).
- Technical system capability (e.g., any computer-assisted interviewing, sample management capabilities data entry software).
- Facilities and equipment (e.g., computers, Internet access, and e-mail).

1.3.2 Request the following regarding their plan to execute the survey:

- Timeline with survey tasks, milestones, and deliverables. See [Study Design and Organizational Structure](#) details about creating a timeline and see [Appendix A](#) for an example of a timeline of effort.
- Staff responsibilities for each survey task. See [Appendix B](#) for an example of a person loading chart detailing how responsibilities are assigned.
- Consent, confidentiality, and data protection procedures. See [Ethical Considerations](#).
- Sampling methods (e.g., sample size, type of frame, etc.) See [Sample Design](#) and the .
- Questionnaire development and translation methods, if applicable. See [Questionnaire Design](#) and [Translations Overview](#).
- Pretesting methods, including pretesting the questionnaire, technical instrument, and field procedures. See [Pretesting](#).
- Design of survey instrument. See [Instrument Technical Design](#).
- Interviewer recruitment, selection and training protocol (i.e., number of hours of training, topics covered). See [Interviewer Recruitment, Selection, and Training](#).
- Interviewer characteristics (e.g., age, education, gender, and experience). See [Interviewer Recruitment, Selection, and Training](#).
- Unique identification of the interviewers.
- Interviewer payment plan (typically by the hour or by completed interview). See [Interviewer Recruitment, Selection, and Training](#).
- Interviewer employment structure (i.e., employees of the survey organization or contract workers).
- Ratio of interviewers to supervisors (see [Data Collection: General Considerations](#)).
- Mode.
- How information about the contact attempts will be collected and reported (e.g., time, day, interim display codes). See [Paradata and Other Auxiliary Data](#).
- Production requirements (e.g., minimum number of contacts to attempt to obtain a complete interview, minimum response rate, etc.).
- Local quality monitoring (e.g., evaluating recorded interviews, re-interviews on key survey items). See [Paradata and Other Auxiliary Data](#) and [Survey Quality](#).
- Plans in place to address nonresponse bias (see [Data Collection: General Considerations](#)).
- Procedures for data transfer during the production period from the field to the study country's office (e.g., or electronic transfer of completed survey questionnaires and other materials).
- Procedures for processing, managing, and storing data (see [Data Processing and Statistical Adjustment](#)).
- Procedures and methods for providing data to the coordinating center.
- Procedures developed to handle unexpected problems (i.e., risk management) .

1.4 Ask bidders to complete a separate Business or Cost Proposal (allowing for concurrent independent reviews of technical and business/cost proposals). Have the bidders organize the business proposal by each major survey activity, tailoring the budget to the specific country's implementation of the study . All of the Cross-Cultural Survey

Guidelines could be considered viable survey tasks (see [Study Management, Appendix E](#) for a brief description of each survey task).

- 1.4.1 Within each organized survey task, ask bidders to prepare a detailed budget for the two general categories: direct costs and indirect costs. Direct costs typically consist of salary and non-salary costs, and indirect costs are typically calculated as a percentage of some or all of the total direct costs (both salary and non-salary costs).
 - Salary costs include labor (both regular and temporary staff), fringe (calculated as a percentage of the regular staff labor costs), and overhead (calculated as a percentage of the total labor and fringe costs). For each position, budget the number of hours or percent of effort needed for each staff member for each survey task in which he or she will contribute. See [Appendix C](#) for a salary budget example template that specifies labor for the pretesting task.
 - Non-salary costs include general sample purchase, supplies (e.g., pencils, folders, binders, etc.), printing (e.g., letterhead, training materials, respondent booklets, maps, reports, etc.), postage, communications (e.g., long distance telephone calls and service, high-speed Internet connection, etc.), computing (e.g., laptop computers, printers, equipment maintenance, software licensing, security protection, etc.), interviewer recruitment (e.g., advertisements, community meetings, etc.), interviewer training (e.g., hotel arrangements, meals, travel, etc.), interviewer travel during the production period (e.g., lodging, mileage, vehicle rental, vehicle maintenance, fuel, etc.), respondent incentives, and consultant fees (e.g., stipend, per diem, travel). See [Appendix D](#) for a non-salary budget example template that specifies costs for the pretesting task.
- 1.4.2 Require bidders to provide written justifications for all direct and indirect costs, as well as to be explicit about the budgeting assumptions taken (e.g., the duration/dates of each survey task, the questionnaire length, the number of hours needed to receive a complete interview, the average distance interviews will travel, the expected response rate, the expected interviewer attrition rate, the cost of each supply item, etc.).
- 1.4.3 For study designs with a lot of uncertainty, advise bidders to include contingency (possibly 10%) into the budget to account for this risk.
- 1.4.4 For studies lasting longer than one year, suggest the inclusion of a cost-of-living increase.
- 1.4.5 For areas with rampant inflation, require frequent updates to the projected budget.

Lessons learned

- 1.1 Interacting with survey organizations upfront to discuss project details can help avoid possible complications in the bidding process, especially if a culture is unfamiliar with a formal bidding process. However, any information shared with one potential bidder needs to be shared with all potential bidders to prevent an appearance of impropriety or collusion in the bidding process (see [Guideline 2](#) below).
- 1.2 Gathering information about constraints on survey organizations before issuing tenders will improve the bidding process. These constraints include legal requirements, cultural norms, lack of organizational capacity (e.g., do they have computer-assisted interviewing capability), and standard organizational practice (e.g., organization usually provides interviewers two days of training but the tender requires a week), etc. This information should be used to adapt specifications in tenders to each country as appropriate.
- 1.3 Survey organizations may hesitate to mention any obstacles to conducting the study as outlined in the tender specifications for various reasons. Organizations should be encouraged in a culturally appropriate fashion to be transparent and explicit about anything that would conflict with the study specifications. Some obstacles may be quickly resolved if identified in advance. For example, it may be necessary to appoint male interviewers to some locations (such as lumber camps or mines) or to notify gatekeepers of the study and explain the need to contact given respondents. Strategies and schedules should be developed to accommodate this.

2. Ensure a fair and competitive bidding process. *Rationale* If the research capacity of a country is unknown to the central coordinating center, the bidding process is one way to illuminate this and to determine if any methodological or substantive expertise may be needed to supplement local resources. A competitive bidding process is not always possible; sometimes, there are only one or two competent survey organizations within each location being studied. As suggested in the , a series of standards are needed to provide a generic and standard set of processes, procedures and methods so that a fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective system can be created. *Procedural steps*

- 2.1 Request bids in a language understood by the reviewers from the central coordinating center, or arrange for language resources for the reviewing team to enable them to evaluate the bids.
- 2.2 Provide bidders with the evaluation criteria , such that they will then know what is expected at each phase of the survey lifecycle as well as what deliverables are required at each phase .
- 2.3 Encourage consortium bids as seems relevant because, in contexts with sparse resources, partnerships may encourage survey organizations to make stronger bids if together they have a broader set of proficiencies .
- 2.4 Set a timeline for the bidding process that includes time for clarification of any questions which may be raised in discussion between the contracting parties and for the bidder(s) to develop complete and comprehensive bids.
- 2.5 Encourage bidding organizations to identify any elements required in the tender specifications that they are unable or unwilling to meet . Doing so helps avoid bids which the bidding organizations will not or cannot fulfill.
- 2.6 Check bids for potential problems, such as the following:
 - 2.6.1 Can a proper sampling frame be obtained? See [Study Design and Organizational Structure](#) and [Sample Design](#).
 - 2.6.2 Does the bidding survey organization have access to the sample elements on the frame (e.g., will political conflicts or travel restrictions limit the areas in which the survey organization can contact individuals)? See [Sample Design](#) and [Data Collection: Face-to-Face Surveys](#).
 - 2.6.3 Is the concept of probability sampling understood and its implementation assured? See [Sample Design](#).
 - 2.6.4 Are suitable protocols and trainers available for interviewer training and interviewer motivation? See [Interviewer Recruitment, Selection, and Training](#).
 - 2.6.5 Are essential nonresponse bias reduction techniques realized? See [Data Collection: General Considerations](#) and [Paradata and Other Auxiliary Data](#).
 - 2.6.6 Are adequate quality control procedures in place? See [Survey Quality](#).
 - 2.6.7 Are necessary facilities, such as hardware, software, and Internet access, available? See [Data Collection: Face-to-Face Surveys](#).
 - 2.6.8 Is the specification of budget details adequate?
 - 2.6.9 Are there local research 'traditions,' such as quota sampling or undocumented substitution, that may conflict with study specifications?
- 2.7 Keep the bidding process transparent, open, and fair.
 - 2.7.1 Provide the same level of help or assistance to every survey organization .

- 2.7.1 If new information becomes available that would be useful in preparing a bid, distribute this information to all bidders.

Lessons learned

- 2.1 Following up with the survey organizations to make sure they know what is expected is one way to maintain the bidding process. By clarifying aspects of the survey organization's bid, the coordinating center can avoid possible complications later in the implementation of the survey. For example, in many countries, the research tradition is to pay interviewers by interviews completed rather than by hours worked. The coordinating center may want to clarify that this practice might work well if all interviewer assignments are of the same difficulty and if the length of the interview administration is within well-defined limits. However, if assignments vary in difficulty (longer travel for example) or the length of the interview can vary widely (dependent upon the respondent's answers), this may not work as well. It is important for the coordinating center to emphasize the risk of paying interviewers by interviews completed. Interviewers might be tempted to use strategies to keep interviews as short as possible in order to complete more cases. In the worst scenario, interviewers might be tempted to falsify the interview (i.e., interviewer falsification) (see [Interviewer Recruitment, Selection, and Training](#), [Ethical Considerations](#), and [Data Collection for Face-to-Face Surveys](#)).

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3. Select the survey research organization or firm best suited to carry out the survey in each country within the budget constraints. *Rationale* The decision to select a survey organization or collaboration of organizations that will carry out the study, based on pre-specified and agreed-upon evaluation criteria, is a critical one. A poor choice of an organization can divert attention and resources away from other aspects of the study and may have a lasting impact on the entire endeavor.

Procedural steps

- 3.1 Form a bid evaluation team within the coordinating center that is comprised of a substantive expert, a statistical advisor, a methodological advisor, a financial reviewer/advisor and, as relevant, legal and local expertise.
 - 3.1.1 When necessary, involve additional consultants throughout the contracting process, from preparing the contract to signing the contract .
 - 3.1.2 Ensure there are no pre-existing relationships between the bid evaluation team members and the bidding survey organizations, which could violate the fairness of the process.
 - 3.1.3 Determine in advance the process for final decisions on survey organization selection, in case disagreement among the review team should arise.
 - 3.1.4 Have the Technical Proposals and Cost Proposals evaluated separately on their own merits.
 - 3.1.5 Have each evaluation team member evaluate the survey organizations individually and make written notes.
 - 3.1.6 Organize among the team a group discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of various bids.
 - 3.1.7 Even if there is only one bid for a given country, conduct evaluation as described above with notes and discussion.
 - 3.1.8 If the final required work scope and budget cannot be met by the bidding organization(s), decide whether a new round of bids is necessary or if some other alternative is available.
- 3.2 Use the following indicators as the basis of evaluation criteria for choosing an organization:
 - 3.2.1 Local knowledge of the population of interest .

- 3.2.2 Organizational and staff expertise in the subject area and survey methods envisioned .
 - 3.2.3 Knowledge of and experience with conducting similar types of surveys (both the organization as a whole and the management/personnel assigned to the project) .
 - 3.2.4 Ability to estimate the costs to complete the entire work scope.
 - 3.2.5 Transparency of procedures.
 - 3.2.6 Organization of field staff, including the planned supervisory structure and implementation strategy (e.g., whether interviewers are stationed throughout study areas or travel extensively in teams to different sampling locations).
 - 3.2.7 Demonstrated or projected ability to meet the timeline and various specified outcomes .
 - 3.2.8 Demonstrated or projected availability of management staff and statistical support.
 - 3.2.9 Affiliations with professional organizations.
 - 3.2.10 Cost.
 - 3.2.11 Methodological rigor and quality of the technical proposal.
 - 3.2.12 Adequate proficiency of the language used by the coordinating center among, at the minimum, those key personnel in the survey organization who will be working on the project.
- 3.3 Find out as much about the culture as possible before negotiating strategies with survey organizations. In particular:
- 3.3.1 Make use of local or regional feedback about the survey organizations. It can be very useful to ask local contacts (these may not be directly local but at least in the region) to provide information about the organizations.
 - 3.3.2 Try to become aware of any local tendencies in terms of management and likelihood of acknowledging obstacles. Encourage people to point out difficulties in terms of the knowledge of local tendencies. If you have knowledge of what could be involved and do not have someone suitable to act as an informant, then introduce the topics you need to know about (for example, “We have sometimes found organizations fear their bids will not be considered if they admit they have trouble meeting requirements. We have learned to recognize information about local constraints as very important. Is there anything you would like to raise with us?”).
 - 3.3.3 Learn to wait longer than you may be accustomed for a response and listen attentively for indirect mentions of constraint.
 - 3.3.4 Try to become aware of local survey traditions or their absence. If through preparation for local negotiations it becomes clear that the study specifications run counter to local traditions, ask for information about how the organization intends to address this difference .
 - 3.3.5 Try to become adept at recognizing and addressing hesitancy, as people or organizations may be reluctant to engage in unfamiliar procedures.
 - 3.3.6 If something is known or found to be unusual in a given context, ask for a demonstration of its usefulness.
 - 3.3.7 Aim to persuade those involved to try out suggested techniques or help adapt them to local conditions before deciding on their use. In other words, work with survey organizations to try out techniques before determining their use.

them as not feasible.

- 3.4 Negotiate work scope and costs with the most promising organization.
 - 3.4.1 If the specifications change significantly, then reopen the bidding process to all competitive organizations.
 - 3.4.2 Agree upon alternative designs prior to signing the contract, since change is more difficult once a study has started.
- 3.5 Throughout this selection process, do not rely on the same person to act as both translator and negotiator with survey organizations.
- 3.6 Notify unsuccessful bidders of your selection once the contract has been awarded. Supply them with your rationale for selection, and provide feedback as to how they could be more successful in future bidding processes.

Lessons learned

- 3.1 When evaluating survey organizations, one of the most difficult decisions made is determining whether a survey organization is truly capable of implementing what has been promised in its bid. If two competing survey organizations propose similar technical bids, it is not always prudent to select the organization with the less expensive business/cost bid, even though not doing so might conflict with pre-determined bidding evaluation criteria. It is important to balance the proposed technical aspects, timeline, and budget with the survey organization's skills and experience and references. Prior work is often very foretelling of future work.
- 3.2 When evaluating the proposed data collection timeline of each survey organization, seasonal effects must be taken into account. One country's harvest time may be another's winter months; access to areas may be restricted or facilitated by the season. In certain times of year, large parts of the population may be on vacation or working in rural areas and difficult to reach at their usual residence. See [Data Collection: General Considerations](#) for further discussion of scheduling and timelines in 3MC surveys.

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4. Execute a contract that addresses the rights and obligations of all parties involved and references local legal requirements, if applicable. *Rationale* The final contract that the coordinating center drafts is legally binding, and must fall under the auspices of a recognized legal authority with the power to sanction contract breaches. The sanctions should be explicit, up to and including nullifying the contract. The contract needs to be properly signed and dated by authorized representatives. Local, independent legal advice is critical to this process. ***Procedural steps***

- 4.1 Write the contract based upon the study design and specifications as described in the tender.
- 4.2 Tailor contracts to the funding source, contracting organizations, and countries, as necessary. Each may carry additional requirements, such as stipulated delivery of reports, an ethics board review, and so forth.
- 4.3 Require official pre-approval of any subcontracting. Any known need for subcontracting in any form should be disclosed in advance by the survey organization(s).
- 4.4 Incorporate bonus schemes in the contract and cost estimates as appropriate. Examples may include:
 - 4.4.1 Interviewer bonuses, based on performance.
 - 4.4.2 Organizational bonuses, such as a payment for completing interviews beyond the expected total.

- 4.5 Identify and specify the coordinating center's right to observe aspects of data collection (e.g., live interview callbacks to selected households for verification, spot checks of original questionnaires, and electronic control).
- 4.6 Set reasonable production benchmarks, where possible .
- 4.6.1 Define targeted response rates as one of the production benchmarks (see [Data Collection: General Considerations](#)).
- For the purpose of response rate calculation, provide the survey organizations with a defined list of the disposition codes to be used uniformly (see [Data Collection: General Considerations](#), Appendices [D](#), [E](#), [G](#) for a description of disposition codes and templates for calculating response rates).
 - Go through the list of disposition codes, checking applicability of each for the local situation and define need for additional codes to account for local conditions.
- 4.6.2 Require field monitoring progress reports (possibly at the individual interviewer, interviewing team, or level) to ensure benchmarks are met. See [Data Collection: General Considerations](#), [Paradata and Other A Data](#), and [Survey Quality](#).
- 4.7 Establish and specify in writing ownership of the data and respondents' sample and contact information within limits of any confidentiality restrictions.
- 4.8 Specify requirements for how the local survey organization will execute the data delivery and the frequency updates on data collection progress to the coordinating center (see [Data Collection: General Considerations](#), [I Collection: Face-to-Face Surveys](#), [Data Harmonization](#), and [Data Dissemination](#)).
- 4.9 Specify any deliverables (such as sample specifications, instrument specifications, and source questionnaire expected delivery dates and commitments from other parties involved, including any central organization to local organizations (e.g., advisory boards and help lines)
- 4.9.1 Identify and specify all required documents.
- Agree on format for these as well as who has the responsibility to develop the format.
 - Include provisions for training for those required to provide documentation.
 - Consider requiring copies of the consent form, translated questionnaire, training materials, and methods (see [Ethical Considerations](#) and [Interviewer Recruitment, Selection, and Training](#)).
- 4.10 Specify copyrights for data and documents, including stipulations for data release (by when and by whom) and plans for data access rights (taking into account any legal restrictions and/or legal requirements).
- 4.11 Define the necessary security level of respondent data (e.g., contact information and survey responses) for both physical and electronic storage and transfer.
- 4.12 Define any restrictions on the survey organization's ability to present and publish any of the substantive or methodological results, with or without review.
- 4.13 For longitudinal studies, indicate, as appropriate, decisions about the protocol for possible respondent recontact. If potential for future followup exists, consider introducing this possibility at the time of initial contact with the respondents and ask the survey organization to budget for this activity.
- 4.14 Instruct the survey organization to notify the coordinating center of any potential need to change or modify the contract .

Lessons learned

- 4.1 Although it is important to enforce adherence to specifications, a measure of flexibility is also needed. Natural disasters, unexpected political events, and outbreaks of disease can interrupt data collection and make agreed-upon deadlines impossible.
- 4.2 Approving the use of subcontractors may impact the coordinating center's level of control. For example, making data collection will be problematic if subcontractors restrict the right of the coordinating center to observe aspects of the survey process. Certain study specifications, such as the required security level of respondent data, can be difficult to ensure while working with subcontractors.

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5. Define upfront the quality standards that lay the quality framework for the rest of the survey lifecycle. *Rationale*

The bidding process may be the first interaction the survey organizations have with the coordinating center. Hence, it is essential for the coordinating center, from the conception of the survey, to demonstrate and emphasize the importance of quality. ***Procedural steps***

- 5.1 Develop a quality management plan (see [Survey Quality](#)). Use this plan as the outline for expectations of the survey organizations throughout the entire study.
- 5.2 Ask bidding survey organizations to detail their quality control and quality assurance procedures, and include minimum quality requirements in the criteria used for evaluating the bidders.
- 5.3 Consider re-releasing the tender if no bidding survey organization can meet the requested quality standards.
- 5.4 Define progress approval points throughout the research process (e.g., sample selection, questionnaire design, interviewer training, and data collection milestones) to ensure each party involved achieves the study's objectives.
 - 5.4.1 Require certification from the coordinating center at these formal points before a survey organization can proceed with the study.
 - 5.4.2 Sanctions for unnecessary delays or specification deviations should be specified, in the contract, before the study begins.

Lessons learned

- 5.1 Since budgets are often underestimated, it is critical to monitor the overall budget throughout the survey lifecycle to avoid a potential overrun at the end of the study. In addition, individually monitoring the budget of each survey organization is an important quality assurance procedure. If the budget for each survey task is more detailed (i.e., specified by task for each direct cost component), it is useful to systematically assess the status of the budget and weigh the quality trade-off by monitoring costs at the lower levels (see [Survey Quality](#)).

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6. Document the steps taken while preparing tenders, soliciting bids, and drawing up and executing contracts

Rationale The coordinating center can use the contract resulting from the bidding process to enforce its expectations of the survey organizations. Thus, it is very important that steps taken throughout the process be clearly noted and transparent to those involved. No one involved should be surprised at how the study is to be structured, what production actions are required, and when the final deliverables are to be completed. ***Procedural steps***

- 6.1 Clearly state specifications in tenders.
- 6.2 In advance of releasing tenders, document the evaluation criteria to be used when assessing bids.

- 6.3 Keep a record of the information exchanged with each survey organization to make sure no one organization receives differential treatment during the bidding process.
- 6.4 Document bid evaluation team scores for each survey organization's bid.
- 6.5 Collect notes from each member of the bid evaluation team as to how they arrived at their selection decision.
- 6.6 Make sure each survey organization formally details all aspects of their anticipated scope of work in their bid. Information beyond what is written in the bid (e.g., from other forms of correspondence) should not be considered when evaluating the survey organization—so as not to give differential treatment.
- 6.7 Keep records of all notifications to unsuccessful bidders of your selection.
- 6.8 Write contracts that are tailored to the involved parties (e.g., funding source, coordinating center, survey organization, etc.). When writing the contract, include all specifications of the scope of work, budget, and timeline which each survey organization should commit.
- 6.9 In the contract, establish responsibility for documenting all aspects of the study.
- 6.10 Request documentation of any subcontracts from the survey organizations.
- 6.11 Have a signed agreement regarding the ownership of the data and respondent information, within the limits of confidentiality regulations (see [Ethical Considerations](#)).
- 6.12 Keep a copy of the tenders, all bid materials provided by any survey organization submitting a bid, and a copy of the contracts as well as any modifications.
- 6.13 Documents must be subject to a version control process to identify changes.

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