SUMMARY

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) on a competitive basis for work on an initiative that is funded under a contract issued by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) to support the work of the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP). The goal of this RFP is to establish research priorities and advance knowledge of the changing trends in adolescent sexual behavior and pregnancy in order to improve the delivery of family planning services. Topics should focus on a better understanding of the adolescent (defined as up to age 24) and the choices they make, including the role of adolescent development, risk taking, family and peer support, substance use, and brain maturation in decision-making.

PURPOSE

AIR seeks to engage the services of third-party researchers to submit manuscript proposals on topics related to **adolescent and young adult decision-making especially with regard to recognized risk behaviors and the implications of this decision-making for decisions about family planning, healthy relationships, sexual activity, and general reproductive health.** Applicants who are proposing to use secondary data analyses must use available data that can be analyzed and ready for publication within the short timeframe. No new data collection should be conducted as part of the manuscript proposal. Below are broad topic areas of interest identified by AIR; however, other manuscript ideas related to adolescent and young adult family planning may be considered.

AIR anticipates competitively awarding:

- Up to ten (10) subcontracts/consultant agreements, with a period of performance to include start-up, secondary data analysis, sharing lessons learned in a meeting, and producing a final manuscript.
- Total value of no more than $25,000 per subcontract/consultant agreement.

The anticipated duration of services to be provided starting in March 2018 through December 31, 2018.

BACKGROUND

Although the rates of teen pregnancy and births have been dropping since the early 1990s, the rates in the United States are still much higher than in other western industrialized countries. The rate of unplanned pregnancy is also highest among 18 to 24 year old women, and the observed decline has been smaller than the decline in teen pregnancy.
Often overlooked in the debate over teenage pregnancy prevention, and certainly overwhelmed by the practical burdens of what is a serious public health issue, is the teenager. Data from the CDC’s 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance indicates that the majority (58.8%) of students in grades 9 through 12 have never had sex, and the percentage of high school students who have never had sex increased 13% between 1991 and 2015. However, many high school students are engaged in sexual risk behaviors related to unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV infection. Among sexually active high school students, 11.5% reported having had sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their life. In 2013, the most recent year for which we have pregnancy data, 456,000 female teens became pregnant, resulting in 276,000 births to female teens. The most recent data on teen births indicate that nearly 212,000 female teens gave birth in 2016. Although the social policy and economic ramifications of teen pregnancy and childbearing are substantial, each of these pregnancies is about an actual teen and his or her ability to manage the complicated risks associated with premarital sexual behavior and how to shoulder the real possibility of pregnancy. And if solutions are to be found, they must focus on the factors that lead to sexual activity and pregnancy among teens. In short, the solution is to find the best approaches to protecting teens from high risk behavior.

Not surprisingly, the overall pregnancy rate for young women ages 20 to 24 (127/1,000 women in 2013) is much higher than the teen pregnancy rate (43/1,000 women in 2013). Approximately 75% of teen pregnancies are unplanned, and 59% of pregnancies to women age 20 to 24 are unplanned. The most recent data available show declines in unplanned pregnancy among 20 to 24 year olds between 2008 and 2011. However, unplanned pregnancies among this age group had increased slightly between 2002 and 2006-2010. The overall birth rate has also been declining among 20 to 24 year olds, as with teens.

Recent discoveries in brain development offer new insights into how the adolescent brain works. Through imaging, neuroscientists have identified two networks in the frontal lobe of the brain that impact adolescent behavior and choices. The emotional network dominates the cognitive network during adolescence, impacting two factors important in contraceptive use and pregnancy.

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6 From the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)
prevention – planning and risk assessment. During adolescence, the cognitive network that governs planning, thinking ahead, and self-regulation matures gradually. Under normal conditions, the cognitive network can regulate the social/emotional network. However, when the social/emotional network is highly activated, they do not work together. The emotional network dominates the cognitive network. The result is that emotion, rather than reason, often influences adolescent decision-making.\(^8\)

AIR invites manuscripts that describe and explain the process of positive youth development, capturing the latest research on adolescent development and how it impacts decision-making, family and peer relationships, and prevention programs for risk behaviors, including in the context of family planning.

**GOALS**

- To better understand trends in teen sexual activity, teen births, and unintended pregnancy and birth rates in young adulthood (e.g., drivers behind decline in teen sexual initiation or teen birth rate, contributors to current rate of unintended births in youth)

- To identify common components of effective pregnancy prevention programs (e.g., common components and mediators of successful programs and practices to reduce teen and unplanned pregnancy)

- To understand the impact of development, emotions, trusted family and social supports, and substance use on adolescent decision-making (e.g., how do youth decide when, where, and how to navigate risk behaviors, including those involving sexual activity and family planning)

- To identify the effect of adverse childhood experiences on youth development and unintended pregnancy, family planning, and reproductive health outcomes in adolescence (e.g., what are the mediating mechanisms between adverse childhood experiences and premarital sexual activity, or teen or unintended pregnancy)

**DETAILS AND SUBMISSION**

AIR will independently contract with manuscript authors and award a subaward honorarium of up to $25,000 per manuscript, for a total of approximately ten (10) manuscripts. Manuscripts should be completed and ready for publication in a peer-reviewed journal and submitted to AIR by December 31, 2018. Applicants who are proposing to use secondary data analyses must use available data that can be analyzed and ready for publication within the short timeframe. No new data collection should be conducted as part of the manuscript proposal.

Research findings from the manuscripts may be translated into web-friendly content such as infographics or research briefs that will be posted to youth.gov after submitting the manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal.

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Lead authors will be expected to participate in periodic conference calls and virtual meetings at key points in the project (e.g., project start, discussing research question(s) and study methods, presenting preliminary findings, translating research findings to web-friendly content).

Completed manuscripts ready for publication in a peer-reviewed journal will be due by December 31, 2018.

Lead authors will be invited to an in-person meeting in Washington, D.C., in September 2018 to present their study and findings at a research symposium attended by members of the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs and other federal staff. Manuscript authors are expected to pay for travel costs for this in-person meeting with funds from their subaward honorarium, and travel costs must be included in the budget submission.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Questions concerning this RFP should be submitted via electronic mail to Mary Thorngren (mthorngren@air.org) no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time on January 26, 2018.

All proposals shall be submitted by email to Mary Thorngren at mthorngren@air.org no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time on February 19, 2018.

TIMELINE OF KEY DATES AND DELIVERABLES

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for questions</td>
<td>January 26, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for Proposal Receipt</td>
<td>February 19, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expected Notification of Selection</td>
<td>On or about March 9, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manuscript outline and tables/figures with preliminary results</td>
<td>August 24, 2018</td>
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<td>Present study and findings at research symposium in D.C.</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
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<td>Webinars and conference calls with AIR and key federal staff</td>
<td>Periodic (up to 4 throughout the contract period)</td>
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<td>First draft of manuscript due to AIR</td>
<td>November 15, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final manuscript ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, due to AIR</td>
<td>December 31, 2018</td>
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MANUSCRIPT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All manuscript proposals must be submitted via electronic mail to Mary Thorngren at AIR at mthorngren@air.org no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time on February 19, 2018.

Submissions should be **formatted** as follows and are limited to 1,500 words and double-spaced using a 12-point font with 1-inch margins.
**Corresponding Author:** Include the name, email address, and contact information of the corresponding author.

**Authors:** Include a list of all proposed authors and their affiliations.

**Proposed Title of Paper:** Include a working title for the paper.

**Target Journal:** Include the name of the first journal to which the paper will be submitted. Include target journal word count, abstract word limit, max number of tables and figures, and max references.

**Contribution to the Field:** Describe why this proposed publication would be an important contribution to AIR’s understanding of adolescent family planning, including decision-making, relationships, and sexual behavior.

**Research Questions:** Describe the research question(s) that will guide the focus of the article.

**Data Source and Study Population:** Describe the data source. This should include information on whether the data are publicly or non-publicly available and describe the study population. Describe author’s familiarity and experience using the data source.

**Research Design:** Brief description of the original research design of any data to be analyzed for this manuscript. This should include information on the survey methodology or evaluation design used, the process for research group formation or random assignment (if applicable), a brief description of the consent process, and the timing and modes of data collection.

**Analytic Methods:** Describe the anticipated analytic approach and a brief description of how this approach is appropriate for the research question(s), study design, type of data, and data source.

**Publication Record:** Please also list author’s 10 most recent publications in peer-reviewed journals as either lead author or co-author (author(s), title, journal, publication date). **Author’s publication records will not count toward the 1,500 word count.** Additionally, list any challenges the author may anticipate encountering in meeting the deadlines of this contract.

### MANUSCRIPT PROPOSAL REVIEW CRITERIA

AIR will not provide applicants with individual critiques of submitted proposals.

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<th>Review Criteria</th>
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<td><strong>Significance</strong></td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<td>• The merit and significance of the manuscript to advance research on the goals outlined in this solicitation.</td>
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• The extent to which the proposal addresses adolescent family planning including decision-making, relationships, and sexual behavior.

**Contribution to the field**
• The extent to which the manuscript will contribute to our understanding of adolescent family planning, decision-making, and relationships.

**Research Question(s)**
• The extent to which with the research question(s) are clearly described.

**Data Source and Study Population**
• The accessibility and appropriateness of the data source and its ability to produce meaningful results within the proposed project period.
• Authors’ familiarity and experience using the data source.

**Research Design**
• The appropriateness of the original research design, the type and quality of data collected, and the ability to address the proposed research questions within the proposed project period.

**Analytic Methods**
• The appropriateness of the analytic methods and their ability to answer the research question(s) proposed.

**Publication Record**
• The extent to which the applicant demonstrates having the necessary experience, and expertise, to complete the research proposed within the proposed project period.

### Additional Requirements

Selected applicants must agree to comply with following requirements upon acceptance of a subcontract. AIR encourages applicants to review this information pertaining to these additional requirements before submitting an application.

### Intellectual Property

WORKS FOR HIRE: Seller agrees that all materials and work products developed under this Order, including software and documentation, shall be considered "Works for Hire."

(a) Any work, writing, idea, discovery, improvement, invention (whether patentable or not), trade secret, or intellectual property of any kind first produced or conceived by Subcontractor/Consultant in the performance of this Subcontract or which is derived from the use of information supplied by AIR shall be the exclusive property of AIR.
Subcontractor/Consultant shall disclose promptly all such works, writings, ideas, discoveries, improvements, inventions, trade secrets, or intellectual property to AIR, and shall execute all necessary documents to perfect AIR’s title thereto and to obtain and maintain effective protection thereof. Any work performed pursuant to this Subcontract/Consultant agreement shall be considered a work made-for-hire to the extent permitted by law, and, to the extent not so permitted, shall be assigned to, and shall be, the exclusive property of AIR.

(b) Subcontractor/Consultant hereby grants to AIR, and to AIR’s Client, in connection with the use of products or work being performed for AIR, an irrevocable, non-exclusive, paid-up worldwide license under any and all intellectual property (whether domestic or foreign), including patents, copyrights, industrial designs and/or mask works owned or controlled by Subcontractor/Consultant at any time or licensed to Subcontractor/Consultant, provided such a sublicense does not conflict with any provisions of the license to the Subcontractor/Consultant.

(c) Subcontractor/Consultant hereby grants to AIR, and to AIR’s Client, a perpetual, non-exclusive, paid-up worldwide license to reproduce, distribute copies of, perform publicly, display publicly, or make derivative works from any software included in or provided with the items delivered or services provided under this Subcontract/Consultant agreement as reasonably required by AIR in connection with AIR’s testing or use of the good or service.

(d) All hardware, software, materials, products, and data produced or acquired with Task Order funds; or under the Contractor’s control as Government Furnished Property or Materials shall be turned over to the Government or new Contractor in good condition. All data and all supporting documentation shall be submitted, including the website, data files, analytic data files (with associated instructions and codebook listing and defining all variables), and public use data files with associated documentation. Unless the underlying data used are leased or proprietary, analytic files (where source files are reduced in volume and tailored to specific analyses), data analytic programs and the results produced under the auspices of this project shall be the property of the Government. All information and materials including data developed under this Task Order are the property of the Government and shall be delivered as part of the turnover at the end of the Contract. No information developed under this Task Order shall be released by the Contractor without the written permission of the Government.

For additional information contact:

Ms. Mary Thorngren, American Institutes for Research

Email: mthorngren@air.org

The subject line of the email must include “Adolescent Family Planning Manuscript Proposal”
**Budget and Budget Narrative**

1. **Budget.** Applicants should provide a budget that (1) is complete, allowable, and cost-effective in relation to the proposed activities; (2) shows the cost calculations demonstrating how they arrived at the total amount requested; and (3) provides a brief supporting narrative to link costs with project activities, including travel to a meeting to be held in the Washington, D.C., area. The budget should cover the entire award period. Budget templates are available upon request.

2. **Budget Narrative.** The budget narrative should thoroughly and clearly describe every category of expense listed in the Budget. AIR expects proposed budgets to be complete, cost effective, and allowable (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities).