



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**James Bell Associates Awarded Major Contract to Provide Evaluation and Technical Assistance for AHRQ Comparative Effectiveness Research**

*Arlington, VA, March 25, 2011* – James Bell Associates, Inc. (JBA), a nationally recognized evaluation research firm based in the Washington D.C. area, has been awarded a major contract with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to evaluate findings and provide technical assistance for the federally mandated *Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER)* program. *CER* is supported by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and administered through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). By conducting and supporting comparative effectiveness research, the program's far-reaching goal is to improve overall health care through evidence-based practices that enhance medical decisions and treatments made by patients and their providers.

Through HHS allocations AHRQ is funding comparative effectiveness research to provide information on the relative strengths and weaknesses of various medical interventions. Such research will give clinicians and patients alike valid data with which to make decisions to improve the overall performance of the U.S. healthcare system. *CER* is in keeping with HHS' #1 strategic plan goal: to improve the safety, quality, affordability and accessibility of health care, including behavior health care and long-term health care.

JBA is a prime contractor on the project and will be partnering with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) to conduct a 4.5-year research study. The focus of their evaluation will be to assess grantees ability to accelerate the implementation and dissemination of *CER* findings and other evidence-based practices by leveraging already existing AHRQ networks. The contract is three-fold: to provide a formative evaluation of 6 ARRA-supported grantees and offer technical assistance in their effort to implement and spread *CER* findings; conduct a summative evaluation to assess individual and overall achievement outcomes; and, develop and implement a strategy to generate and spread actionable information to key stakeholders. The results will help inform AHRQ of the effectiveness of specific dissemination protocols in order to expedite a successful, large-scale delivery system transformation and to lay the infrastructure for further work in this all-important area.

Over the last 30 years JBA has earned a national reputation for delivering independent state-of-the art program evaluation, applied research and evaluation, and technical assistance and training. The Arlington, Virginia firm focuses primarily on innovations in health and human services programs and policy areas, while serving clients in both the public and private sectors.

JBA looks forward to working with HHS and AHRQ in facilitating their strategic goals and missions to improve the safety, quality, affordability and accessibility of health care nationwide.

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