

Questions and Answers: RFA-OAA-10-000008
Supportive Environments for Healthy Households and Communities
Corresponding to Amendment #1

1. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] I cannot access the full announcement on Grants.gov.

Answer: The size of the RFA file may account for the viewing difficulties on Grants.gov. Another reason may be a result of unfamiliarity with Grants.gov. To aid in this situation, please note that the RFA file (for Amendment #1) has been made available in two parts (the RFA and separately, the RFA Annexes) on Grants.gov in hopes this will assist the viewing of the file. Also, please note the following directions for accessing the full announcement.

- Go to <http://grants.gov>
- From the left menu under “For Applicants,” click on “Find Grant Opportunities”
- In the middle of the page, under “Search Grant Opportunities,” click on “Basic Search”
- Type “RFA-OAA-10-000008” into the search field “Search by Funding Opportunity Number”
- Click “Search”
- Click on the RFA title “Supportive Environments for Healthy Households and Communities”
- Now you are looking at the synopsis of the RFA.
- To obtain a copy of the full RFA file, click on “Full Announcement” which is located in the middle of the screen, in a grey-dotted box. This takes you to the “Full Announcement” page where you can click and download a pdf or zip version of the RFA file.

If you are still unable to access the file, as stated in the RFA, please contact Moyra Cassidy (mcassidy@usaid.gov) to request a copy.

2. **Question:** [Note: This question has been edited down to its key elements. There are two parts to this question.] Request for Applications (RFA) Number OAA-10-00000-8 describes, essentially, a private sector initiative. As such, it is reasonable to expect that the best expertise to implement some discreet elements in the SOW will be found in commercial or for profit entities. Included in this category will be small businesses of various types, including women-owned and disadvantaged businesses. These entities are targeted for USAID support and their viability depends on their ability to maintain a set profit margin. The question we are raising, below, concerns fee bearing contracts made by the prime awardee.

Are proposers prohibited from using their internal competitive contracting procedures to establish in advance of proposal submission teaming agreements with for profit firms that envision fee-bearing contracts to perform discreet services? **Answer:** Each applicant is responsible for establishing agreements prior to award. Allowable cost shall be in accordance with USAID’s policies and procedures.

If such advance teaming arrangements are not prohibited, and an award is made to a prime recipient based upon a proposal that includes a full and fair description of the contemplated fee-bearing procurement contracts, can we assume, absent special circumstances, that in the future individual Agreement Officers will not substitute their judgment for that of the prime recipient and the Agreement Officer that approved the prime award? **Answer:** It is reasonable to expect that each for-profit relationship an organization has with the recipient shall be reviewed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

3. **Question:** Page 1 of the RFA cites USAID policy pursuant to 22 CFR 226.81 not to award profit under assistance instruments. Does this policy only apply to recipients and sub-recipients, or does it also apply to their contractors or vendors? In other words, in accordance with the RFA, may a recipient's team include service contractor(s)/vendor(s) with contract types (e.g., time-and-materials, labor hour or CPFF) that provide for payment of a reasonable fee or profit?

Answer: Both 22 CFR 226.81 and 22 CFR 226 40-48 apply to this cooperative agreement. 22 CFR 226.81 applies to relationships defined as recipient and sub-recipient, and prohibits profit under assistance awards regardless of status as a for-profit or non-profit. 22 CFR 226 40-48 applies to relationships defined as recipient and contractor, but allows for profit from procurement contracts when the recipient procures goods and services. The Agreement Officer will determine, on a case by case basis, whether the relationship with the recipient is that of a sub-recipient or of a contractor supplying goods or services. Further guidance and definitions can be found in OMB Circular A-133 Section 120.

4. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] If a team includes a for-profit entity as a subcontractor, will that company be able to charge its fee for services rendered under this Cooperative Agreement? AND If a consortium of a non-profit prime organization and a for-profit sub partner submits an application, would USAID permit the for-profit firm to charge fee, if the submitted application is selected for award? **Answer:** The recipient may pay a fair and reasonable profit to contractors providing it with goods and services, per 22 CFR 226.40-48. However, the Agreement Officer will make the determination as to the allowability.
5. **Question:** Please clarify what evaluation criteria USAID will use in reviewing cost applications and how cost applications will be factored in final award selection.

Answer: For clarification, refer to the RFA:

- Section V. A. Overview, "USAID will award to the Applicant whose application best meets the program description and represent the greatest value to the Government, all things considered."

- Section IV. D. Cost/Business Application "USAID will evaluate the cost/business application separately for cost effectiveness and realism."

Also, refer to the following text which is incorporated into the RFA Section V. A Overview, in Amendment #1:

"The Government may, without discussions or negotiations, award an agreement resulting from this RFA to the responsible applicant whose application conforming to this RFA offers the best value. Therefore, the initial application should contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The Government may reject any or all applications, accept other than the lowest cost application, and waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received.

Although technical evaluation factors are significantly more important than cost factors, the closer the technical evaluations of the various applications are to one another, the more important cost considerations become. The Agreement Officer may determine what a highly ranked application based on the technical evaluation factors would mean in terms of performance and what it would cost the Government to take advantage of it in determining the best overall value to the Government."

6. **Question:** [Note this question has been edited.] Please guide us and inform us if our country through the Ministry of XYZ is eligible. **Answer:** As stated in the RFA, Section III Eligibility Information, government organizations are not eligible for this cooperative agreement.
7. **Question:** If the winning team includes an organization that is involved in stove manufacturing/dissemination activities in the field, would that organization be precluded from responding to any RFQs etc. that are generated through the project for supply of stoves/other equipment?

Answer: Recipients will have the responsibilities described in 22 CFR 226.41 through 22 CFR 226.43 regarding procurement, conflicts of interest and competition requirements under any award made pursuant to this RFA. While each relationship among teaming or joint venturing recipients and any sub-recipients or contractors will be reviewed under applicable regulations and agreement terms on a case-by-case basis, the situation described in the question could potentially result in disqualification of a recipient team member from competing for project procurements depending on the specific circumstances and entity functions involved.

8. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] There is some confusion between the synopsis and the full RFA in regards to the award amount. Is USAID planning to make a single award of \$100 million to one applicant, or will multiple awards be made? **Answer:** As stated in the RFA, Section II Award Information, B. Estimate Funds Available, "The estimated amount of funds available under the RFA is \$100 million. Pending the availability of funds USAID expects to award one cooperative agreement as a result of this RFA."
9. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] Please clarify this statement from the RFA, "Applicants are reminded that the anticipated breakdown of activity within Supportive Environments for Health is 80% for WASH and 20% IAQ." Does this mean that more preference will be given to projects focused on WASH activities, or does the project from one applicant need to address both WASH and IAQ with more funding and resources allocated to WASH? Or does it mean that multiple awards will be made and 80% of the \$100 million will go to WASH projects and 20% go to IAQ projects? Will a successful proposal have to include both WASH and IAQ?

Answer: As stated in Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, D.1 Objective, "Approximately 80 percent of Supportive Environments for Health activities will focus on WASH and 20 percent will focus on IAQ," that relates to the emphasis that the overall project places on these two activity areas. As stated in Section V. Application Review Information, applications will be evaluated on both WASH and IAQ elements.

10. **Question:** USAID has specified the requirement of a Masters degree for all of the key personnel positions. Would USAID consider years of professional work experience as a substitute for a Masters degree? If so, for which positions and what is the acceptable equivalent number of years of experience? **Answer:** In this RFA, for all key personnel positions, USAID will accept qualified personnel who have a bachelor's degree and an additional 10 years of experience in directly related fields, in lieu of a Master's Degree. This change to the RFA is reflected in Amendment #1.

11. **Question:** Provide more clarity regarding the Monitoring and Evaluation information requested on page 25 to be included in the proposal (provide an indicator table “with illustrative mid-project and end-of-project targets”) and the indication on page 26 that the M&E plan is not required until 90 days into the project. **Answer:** In Section IV.C.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, requested as part of the application, the narrative and table are illustrative of the broader Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that will be submitted 90 days after award, per Section I. H.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.
12. **Question:** Can USAID provide more clarity regarding the definition of “significant reductions” to be achieved by the project as presented on page 9? **Answer:** The public health impact of *Supportive Environments for Health* will be dependent on country context and applicants should specify what they think is a reasonable and realistic estimate of such impact based on the program approach proposed and the resources available.
13. **Question:** What level of detail is needed for the 3 illustrative activity descriptions requested for Sub-objective I? Are these expected to be 1 to 2 page descriptions as requested for the WASH integration activity on page 25? **Answer:** To clarify the application instructions for Section IV.C.2.b. Sub-objective 1: the third bullet shall be amended to specify the illustrative activity shall be one-to-two pages in length, as follows,
“A minimum of three illustrative activity descriptions (one-to-two pages) for the development, introduction, and scale-up of new and proven WASH interventions, including objective, planning process, means of implementation, and monitoring plan;”
This change to the RFA is reflected in Amendment #1.
14. **Question:** Is USAID requiring/requesting the establishment an Advisory Committee, as per Section II.E.3 (substantial involvement) (p.20) **Answer:** Per Section II. E. Substantial Involvement, 4. “USAID and Recipient collaboration or joint participation, which may include selection of advisory committee members.” The mention of an advisory committee is an example of the kind of “substantial involvement” that USAID might have in the implementation of the Cooperative Agreement. An advisory group might be established on a particular topic area which would include joint participation of USAID and the Recipient. At this stage there is no requirement or request that such an Advisory Committee be established.
15. **Question:** Are there any page limits on CVs? **Answer:** The RFA is amended to state in the instructions in Section IV. Application and Submission Information, each resume is not to exceed three pages in length.
16. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] Please clarify if three Past Performance Reports (PPRs) are required only from the prime (3 total to be submitted) or if USAID prefers three PPRs from the prime and from each major subcontractor.

Answer: To clarify, Section IV. C. 6. Past Performance will be replaced in Amendment #1 as follows,
“6. Past Performance (note: all material to be provided in an annex and does not count toward the 45 page limit)

This section of the application provides information about the applicant’s past performance record in implementing similar programs.

In an annex, provide past performance information (using the form attached at Annex D) for three (3) past performance references which describe any contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements which the applicant organization, as well as any substantive sub-recipient partners, has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past three years. Provide three (3) past performance references each for the prime and for any substantive sub-recipient partners if applicable. In this RFA, a substantive sub-recipient is defined as one that would be allocated at least 20% of the total proposed budget of the project. Include the following information for each reference: name and address of the organization for which the work was performed; name and current telephone number and email address of responsible representative from the organization for which the work was performed; contract/grant name and number (if any), the period of contract/grant performance, annual amount received for each of the last three years and beginning and end dates; brief description of the project/assistance activity and key project accomplishments / results achieved to date.

It is recommended that the applicant alert the contacts that their names have been submitted and that they are authorized to provide past performance information when requested. Please note that USAID reserves the right to obtain past performance information from other sources including those not named in this application.”

17. **Question:** Could the cost share be significantly raised in just one or two countries selected?
Answer: Cost share is for project expenditures overall and could be raised from any relevant source. For further cost share information refer to the RFA Section III. B. Cost Share and 22 CFR 226.23.
18. **Question:** In Section III.B., Cost Share (page 21), the RFA calls for “a cost share minimum of the Award’s projected value (\$100 million) ... ” However, if the Award’s value turns out to be less than \$100 million, can you confirm that the cost share requirement would be 10% of that value, rather than the “projected” value? **Answer:** If the Award’s value turns out to be less than \$100 million, the cost share would be adjusted to 10% of the actual value of the Award.
19. **Question:** What is USAID’s vision for the role of missions in this centrally funded program?
Answer: It is anticipated that interested missions will provide field support (funding) for *Supportive Environments for Health* activities in their countries and participate actively in the design and oversight of these activities.
20. **Question:** In order to meet the legislated requirements for how the funds will be spent, what is the anticipated breakdown in the funding between direct delivery of services versus the other activities in the RFA? **Answer:** There is no legislated requirement on how the funds should be spent regarding direct service delivery versus other activities in the RFA. Such decisions will be based on strategic programming, e.g., the relative impact of direct service versus investments in other aspects of WASH or IAQ (e.g., capacity building, policy development, innovative technologies, etc.)- and/or some combination of the above.
21. **Question:** When budgeting for this proposal, does USAID envision project funds being set aside for operations research & innovation, such as technology development (i.e. prototype development, field testing) as well as impact assessments for WASH and IAQ interventions?
Answer: It is anticipated that operations research and innovation as well as impact assessment will be among the budgeted activities in the *Supportive Environments for Health*

22. **Question:** Section I.G. of the RFA addresses Personnel. On page 17, under Non-Key Personnel, the RFA states: “The professional level-of-effort (LOE) assigned to professionals from developing countries and institutions should be at least 20% of the total LOE assigned to Non-Key Personnel.” (This requirement is also noted in the evaluation criteria, Section V., page 32.) We seek clarification on the definition of “professionals from developing countries and institutions.” Must such professionals be currently based in a developing country? Or, might this phrase also include professionals who are originally from developing countries but are now based in, for example, the U.S.? **Answer:** While the “professionals from developing countries and institutions” may currently be based in the U.S., the 20% assignment in the RFA was designed to encourage Applicants to take advantage of professionals and institutions currently based in developing countries when allocating the total LOE assigned to Non-Key Personnel.
23. **Question:** With regard to increasing access to improved water sources, the RFA appears to emphasize provision of technical assistance to NGO partners and leveraging various partnerships over direct investment in and implementation of large-scale water and sanitation infrastructure. For example, page 11 of the RFA highlights providing TA to PVOs and local NGOs in “implementing water supply development activities, such as providing services or products for capping springs, protecting wells, repairing pumps ... etc.” Can USAID please confirm this emphasis? **Answer:** Both technical assistance to NGO partners and direct implementation of water and sanitation infrastructure can be supported under this award.
24. **Question:** Can USAID please provide a plug figure/estimate to be budgeted for commodities and program-related hardware? **Answer:** There is no standard answer to this question. The budget for commodities will depend on the program approach defined by the applicant in their technical application.
25. **Question:** What are USAID’s expectations for the project’s balance between innovation and pilot activities to develop new interventions versus implementing proven interventions at scale? Is USAID’s priority aim for this project to reach large numbers of low income households, carry out rigorous research to inform future projects, or accomplish both objectives through a mix of activities? **Answer:** As described in Section I. D.1 Objective, USAID’s expectations are to accomplish both objectives highlighted in the question through a mix of activities.
26. **Question:** Key Personnel (Section I.G) – are the 5 identified key personnel positions expected to be full time for the duration of the 5 year CA? **Answer:** Yes. This is clarified in Amendment #1 of the RFA.
27. **Question:** The RFA makes multiple references to implementing WASH and IAQ programs at scale. Sanitation appears to be a particular priority for USAID; for example, page 10 of the RFA, notes that “... the implementation of innovative approaches to increase the use of sanitation at scale will be a priority of Supportive Environments for Health.” Can USAID please provide additional guidance as to what levels of scale (e.g., communities, municipalities, districts, national, etc.) it is looking for in WASH and IAQ interventions? **Answer:** Working at scale is a program approach in which implementers consider from the outset the dimensions that are needed to take a program to scale. It is not anticipated that the project would invest in pilot activities that would not be scaleable. Measures of scale will

28. **Question:** In Section IV.C.2. – page 24, Technical Application Instructions for Technical Understanding and Approach – the RFA calls for the following information to be included in the Technical Understanding and Approach section: Proposed project title, RFA number, name of organization submitting the application, contact person, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail, address, and an acronym list. We understand that this information will not count against the page limit. Can you also please confirm that this information can be included at the front of the proposal (along with information such as the table of contents), rather than within the Technical Understanding and Approach section?

Answer: The RFA Section IV. Application and Submission Information has been revised to allow for placement of both the acronym list and the basic project information (Proposed project title, RFA number, name of organization submitting the application, contact person, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail, address) to be anywhere within the technical application and to not count toward the technical application page limit. This change to the RFA is reflected in Amendment #1.

29. **Question:** In Section IV.C.1. – page 24, Technical Application Instructions for Personnel – the RFA calls for information about Key Personnel and Non-Key Personnel to be presented as a matrix within the 45-page narrative. Can these two matrices be included as annexes, with the Personnel information within the 45 pages presented more as narrative/text?

Answer: The RFA Section IV. Application and Submission Information instructions are revised in Amendment #1 to allow for the personnel matrices to be submitted using 8.5 inch by 14 inch paper and 10-point font, but all other instructions remain the same.

30. **Question:** Authorized Geographic Code (Section I.I) – This section states: “The authorized geographic code for sub-procurements of services under this award is 935. Due to the geographic focus of the activities to be completed under the resultant award, can the geographic code for procurement of goods be changed to 935?”

Answer: The RFA Section I. I Authorized Geographic Code is revised in Amendment #1 to state, “The authorized geographic code for sub-procurements of services under this award is 935. The authorized geographic code for procurement of commodities is 000. Any sub-procurement of goods outside of code 000 will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Recipients may request a waiver. Note that when the total procurement element is \$250,000 or less, no waiver is required.”

31. **Question:** [Note: This question is a combination of several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] (a) Can USAID provide an anticipated breakdown of how it envisions the project should allocate funding between “field-based programs” and “core funding” to support technical assistance, development of tools and guidance, and participation in international fora related to water, sanitation, hygiene and indoor air quality?

(b) With regard to the Cost/Business Application, please clarify if the RFA budget is to be broken down by core and field funding. If so, is there any specific guidance USAID can provide regarding assumptions that should be used for core and field -funded activities (e.g. amounts, field scenarios, specific activities to be shown on field vs. core, etc)? If illustrative country budgets are desired, what level of detail is required?

(c) Can USAID provide the anticipated LOE and/or budget expected for each sub-objective?

Answer: Activities under sub-objective 1 are likely to be largely financed by field missions. Activities under sub-objective 2 are likely to be financed by both Global Health Bureau core funds and field missions. Sub-objectives 3 and 4 are likely to be largely financed by core funds. It is likely that approximately \$3 million/year will be available in Global Health Bureau core funding, or \$15 million over the 5-year life-of-project. The balance of the estimated funding is likely to be generated through support from Missions and other Bureaus.

32. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.] Does the RFA on Supportive Environments for Health apply to initiatives currently being undertaken in Haiti? **Answer:** Supportive Environments for Health is a global award with the potential for activity in any of the thirty-one Maternal and Child Health priority countries listed in Annex A.

33. **Question:** [Note: This question reflects several submitted questions, some of which may have been streamlined or combined.]

(a) The RFA states that at least 10 of the 31 MCH priority countries need to be targeted by a successful applicant, is there any global/regional distribution that is required? Can it be assumed that mission support in all 31 MCH priority countries is forthcoming? Does the applicant need to specifically mention the list of countries where activities will be implemented? Or is it envisioned that USAID will participate in this selection once the award has been granted?

(b) Does USAID wish bidders to name 10 illustrative countries in which they propose activities? Will USAID provide any additional guidance in terms of the geographic distribution it wishes to see in proposed country activities?

(c) Is there a preferred region where projects should take place?

(d) Please clarify whether USAID expects the level of effort to be allocated approximately equally across the 10 (or more) countries or customized according to the needs and opportunities in each country.

(e) Given variations in local labor laws, rent, compensation rates, logistics, etc. among the priority countries listed in Annex A of the RFA, would USAID identify a short list of illustrative countries out of the 31 on the list, for cost application budgeting purposes?

Answer: The RFA states in Section I.E. Geographic Focus that Supportive Environments for Health will work in at least ten (10) of the thirty-one Maternal and Child Health priority countries listed in Annex A. It is envisioned that the selection of which of these countries are most appropriate for the project will be decided post-award in conjunction with USAID and will reflect Mission interest. The level of effort and budget will be customized according to the nature of the activity and the needs and opportunities in each country. USAID does not require an illustrative list of ten countries. For purposes of the overall technical understanding and approach and for budgeting, applicants can assume the following

geographic mix regarding number and region of countries: Sub-Saharan Africa (5), Asia (3), Middle East (1) and Latin America (1). This answer is incorporated into the RFA in Amendment #1.