



Request for Application (RFA) # SOL-669-13-000056 – Amendment No. 02

RFA Title: Advancing Community-Based Services for Health Activity
Amendment No. : 02
Issuance Date: June 30, 2014
Issued by: Rosalind Sika, Supervisory Agreement Officer

The purpose of Amendment No. 02 is to:

1. Amend the Solicitation to reflect changes as shown in the uploaded “Revised RFA No. SOL-669-13-000056”. Specific changes made to the RFA as a result of Amendment 02 are shown in an attached “Revised RFA No. SOL-669-13-000056 (in tracking)”;
2. Extend the closing date for receipt of applications from July 7, 2014 to July 9, 2014; and
3. Provide to all potential applicants the following answers to questions received in reference to the RFA:

Questions and Answers (Q & A)

- 1) Can members of the international scientific community apply for this grant? And is this research specific only to Liberia?

Answer: This RFA is open for all applicants, but is focused on the implementation of activities. It is not specifically research-oriented.

- 2) Please confirm that the cover pages, table of contents, and executive summary are not included in the 25 page technical application limit.

Answer: The 25-page technical application limit does not include the cover page, table of contents, and executive summary.

- 3) The three targeted Counties (Nimba, Lofa and Bong) comprise more than 1 million inhabitants. What are USAID’s priority geographical areas within ACBSH, if any, within these three Counties (urban vs rural, selected districts within these Counties)?

Answer: As outlined in the CDCS, USAID's focus counties are Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Montserrado which are aligned around the country's key development corridors. The selection of Bong, Nimba, and Lofa counties for intensive health and WASH investments was based on careful review and consultation with MOHSW on health status, availability of resources, and other donor plans. These three counties represent one-third of Liberia's population and thus offer the greatest potential for influencing national statistics. Through its previous projects, USAID has made considerable progress in Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties over the last five years, and continued investment strengthens the potential for them to become model counties of prevention and health care practices, laying the groundwork for replication in other parts of the country. There are no geographical limitations in terms of districts, rural or urban areas in the three targeted counties.

- 4) It is understood from the RFA (page 32) that the Project will support the improvement of rural water supply infrastructure; does ACBSH aim to target 100% of the rural population in the three focus counties (approximately 781,000 people) or only a number of selected districts/communities in its water supply intervention? Will sanitation and hygiene interventions also focus on the rural population only or both rural and urban population?

Answer: The RFA is designed to improve access to WASH services with a focus on areas under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), which is responsible for rural water supply and sanitation. Section I.5.4.2 strongly emphasizes use of community structures, the private sector, and county-level management structures to achieve these objectives. Emphasis is placed on rehabilitation and sustainable maintenance of existing water points, though development of new water points may be undertaken where critical/urgent gaps are identified. This is clarified in the revised RFP. The Recipient will work with the MPW counterparts at county level in the planning (including community engagement), design, citing and continued oversight in such a way that they are critically involved in accomplishing this result and sustaining rural water infrastructure. In terms of how to prioritize behavioral vs. infrastructure-related interventions, USAID expects Applicants to propose the best use of resources to achieve meaningful outcomes in the WASH sector in the three targeted counties to address identified gaps and achieve USAID objectives. USAID expects ACBSH to build on previous interventions to institutionalize best practices in the sanitation and hygiene sector and scale up where it makes sense in close coordination with the counties.

- 5) What definition of rural area is used in the context of the RFA? (The Liberia Water & Sewer Corporation has the mandate to service County capitals and towns with a population of more than 5,000 while LISGIS (Liberia Statistics Institute) defines rural as all populations living outside Monrovia and the 14 County capitals).

Answer: In the water sector, the GOL defines urban areas as those over 5,000 in population. The applicant should propose approaches that enable USAID and the GOL to improve health

in line with the objectives of the RFA with a focus on rural areas. The approach should be coordinated with other projects and partners to achieve maximum impact, including, if approved, future USAID financing of the Ministry of Public Works to accelerate improvements in rural water supply. In this context, applicants should propose approaches that enhance the role of relevant GOL institutions in establishing, monitoring, and maintaining clean water access as described in section I.5.4 of the RFA.

- 6) In the topic of WASH, what is USAID's expectation (if any) on the relationship of these ACBSH sub-grants to local CSOs to the future investments that the MPW (with USAID funding) will make on community-based WASH infrastructure in the same Counties? Please explain your relationship in temporal, geographical and thematic terms.

Answer: In terms of WASH, the intent of the sub-grants is to build local and community-level capacity to improve people's access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. Improvements to community- and private sector-based mechanisms for maintaining water points and improving sanitation and hygiene should closely complement the efforts and mandate of MPW in this area, particularly as MPW has limited capacity for community mobilization and water point maintenance at present. The Recipient should work closely with relevant WASH sector officials and partners at the county level to ensure that activities, and targeted locations and timing thereof, are harmonized and do not duplicate other planned investments.

- 7) Please describe how the MPW will disburse the USAID-provided funding to improve community WASH services, e.g. Will MPW use a supply or a demand approach? Will the funds be managed by MPW, by the Counties or by the communities? Will the funds cover infrastructure, hygiene promotion and/or training activities? Will the funds also benefit private providers of WASH-related goods and services?

Answer: As noted on Page 32 of the RFA, "USAID hopes to conclude an agreement with the GOL to fund, directly through MPW, investments in the expansion of sustainable rural water supply infrastructure during the period of ACBSH implementation." The feasibility, magnitude, and structure of such an agreement, and MPWs mode of implementation, will be determined after a series of public financial management and programmatic assessments are completed. It is expected that the primary focus of such an activity would be on development, management, and maintenance of rural water infrastructure in coordination with CHSWTs, communities, and other local WASH sector stakeholders in line with MPWs envisioned mandate in rural water.

- 8) The RFA mentions that funding of water supply investment will be "directly through MPW" (page 32): does this mean that MPW will be directly in charge of the implementation of all investments (project design, contracting, direct supervision, etc.) and then transfer the constructed facilities to the communities for O&M, or will it hold more of a facilitation role in which it provides overall coordination, technical and financial support and standard compliance to CSOs who will directly implement the investments?

Answer: The feasibility, magnitude, and structure of any USAID agreement with MPW, as well as MPW's mode of implementation, will be determined after a series of public financial management and programmatic assessments are completed. It is expected that the primary focus of such an activity would be on development, management, and maintenance of rural water infrastructure in coordination with CHSWTs, communities, and other local WASH sector stakeholders in line with MPW's envisioned mandate in rural water. ACBSH will play a crucial role supporting MPW to better fulfill its mandate by supporting enhanced WASH sector coordination at the local level, and strengthening community and private sector WASH structures including maintenance of infrastructure.

- 9) As stated in Page 32 of the RFA, an important assumption for the WASH activities is: "USAID hopes to conclude an agreement with the GOL to fund, directly through MPW, investments in the expansion of sustainable rural water supply infrastructure during the period of ACBSH implementation". What are USAID's expectations on the Recipient's fulfillment of the proposed outcomes and activities (page 33 of the RFA) if the MPW-USAID funding is delayed or does not come at all? Does USAID have an alternative plan to fill this funding gap if this situation happens (e.g. transfer this infrastructure funding directly to the ACBSH recipient)? Please advise.

Answer: Applicants should propose a technical approach that will meet the expected outcomes through interventions at the community level in line with the RFA without regard to potential future USAID financing for MPW. Any future USAID investments in rural water infrastructure through MPW will be additive to the efforts of ACBSH.

- 10) The RFA (page 21 and 33) mentions IWASH and USAID Building Markets project as a relevant reference for the WASH activities in ACBSH. Please provide the latest annual reports (or any other relevant documentation which can be used to assess its activities).

Answer: Annual Reports are now posted along with this RFA Amendment.

- 11) The Liberia Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (2009) recommends that the basic services for rural population includes the provision of safe water at 25 lpcd; would this also be a minimum supply requirement by the RFA or no specific requirement must be followed?

Answer: USAID supports the GOL in implementation of the Liberia Water Supply and Sanitation Policy. USAID expects the Applicant to use required national standards and indicators, and propose standard indicators applicable to the activity. USAID's global indicator definitions for improved water access require that an "improved source" must be able to consistently produce 20 liters per day for each person counted as "gaining access."

- 12) Does the RFA imply a non-subsidy policy for individual household sanitation infrastructure, as exemplified by CLTS?

Answer: USAID expects the Recipient to propose innovative and promising practices in the implementation of WASH activities, in line with GOL policies and plans.

- 13) Section 1.5.4.2 in the RFA (Access to WASH infrastructure and products expanded, page 32) mentions that the Project will fund investments “in the expansion of rural water supply structure” – will the rehabilitation of existing non-functional water WASH services be also funded by the Project and be eligible as its outcomes and activities?

Answer: Yes, rehabilitation and maintenance of existing water points is a key focus of ACBSH. Refer to the revised RFA for clarification.

- 14) On page 47 section (3) (iv), USAID/Liberia requests rate verification documentation. Please confirm that the Biographical Data Sheets are required for named key personnel only.

Answer: Rate verification documentation is required for all proposed personnel.

- 15) With regards to “Addendum 1 – RFA Budget Template,” please confirm that Offerors should include Units in the LOE column for non-labor categories.

Answer: The LOE column should specify LOE for labor, and units for non-labor categories.

- 16) On page 47 section (1) (d), does “object class categories” refer to the detail line items provided on the detail page of the “Addendum 1 – RFA Budget Template?”

Answer: Yes.

- 17) On page 47 section (2), does the “elements-focused budgeting” refer to the summary line items provided on the summary page of the “Addendum 1 – RFA Budget Template?”

Answer: No. this refers to the cost elements/sub-line items specified in the “Detail” sheet (e.g., for Labor: Direct Long Term Labor, Direct Short Term Labor Local Staff, Home Office, etc.).

- 18) As per the Standard Provisions, the information required for international travel approval includes the estimated number of trips, the number of travelers, the points of origin and destination, and the estimated cost. Please confirm this is the only information required in the Cost Application for international travel approval.

Answer: Detailed justification/explanation for each trip should also be provided, as well as for all other proposed budget categories.

- 19) On page 47 section (3) (ii) and (iii), the RFA reads, “state the amounts of time, such as months and percent of time that will be expended by each position...” Please confirm that the Offeror can use number of months OR percent of time to indicate labor LOE on the provided “Addendum 1 – RFA Budget Template” detail page.

Answer: Applicants may use either number of months or percentage of time.

- 20) On page 48 section (3) (e) (iii), USAID/Liberia states that the basis for cost estimates must be provided “e.g., pro forma invoice, published price lists, etc.” We would like to ask that this requirement be removed since an invoice, published price list, and other similar documentation will not be up-to-date until the procurement is underway.

Answer: This requirement is not removed, as each proposed cost will be to be justified. Applicants may allow up to 1% to cover possible increases.

- 21) Please confirm that local organizations can charge a fixed indirect cost rate in accordance with Standard Provisions for non-US NGOs RAA4?

Answer: Reference Page 48, (3)(i) of the RFA, “ No indirect costs should be included in the cost/business application. All costs a local institution will incur will be treated as direct costs and must be proposed as such.”

- 22) On page 43, the RFA indicates that “The resumes may not exceed four pages in length per individual...” Please confirm this four page limit is exclusive of the one page letter of commitment for each individual.

Answer: Yes, the four-page limit does not include the one page letter of commitment.

- 23) An ordered list of the five rated technical application criteria is presented on page 51 of the RFA, but lists “Performance Management Plan” twice. Please confirm that criterion 3 should be “Performance Monitoring Plan” and criteria 4 should be “Management and Staffing Plan”, in accordance with the order of criterion listed on pages 53-54.

Answer: Criteria 3 should be “Monitoring & Evaluation Plan” and criteria 4 should be “Management and Staffing Plan”.

- 24) It is our understanding that the ACBSH budget will need to include costs for sub-grants to local CSOs/NGOs/FBOs. Can USAID please clarify the value and mechanism USAID will use for sub-awards?

Answer: Applicants should refer to RFA requirements in proposing the value and scope of sub-awards.

- 25) Does USAID anticipate continuing to fund the existing IWASH and LMWP programs? Is the expectation of this new project to link to these two programs?

Answer: IWASH ends in February 2015. LMWP will continue until at least September 2015 and may be extended for up to two option years. LMWP focuses on Sanniquellie and Voinjama, which are outside the scope of water supply interventions under ACBSH.

- 26) On page 40 of the RFA, USAID states that the persons who drafted the Technical and Cost applications be named in the proposal. Can USAID please elaborate on this request?

Answer: Provide this information as requested.

- 27) Please clarify the level of investment that should be made in Margibi, Montserrado, and Grand Bassa. On page 10 of the RFA, six USAID target counties are listed: Bong; Grand Bassa; Lofa; Margibi; Montserrado and Nimba. The RFA goes on to state, “While ACBSH will primarily focus investments in three of the six USAID priority counties, they are expected to have national and sub-national impact through technical assistance (TA) and support for systems strengthening at the central level, as well as the service delivery sub-awards that will be implemented in the USAID priority counties.” Please indicate whether any activities specifically targeting Grand Bassa, Margibi or Montserrado should be included in ACBSH project proposals.

Answer: Bong, Nimba and Lofa should be the focus counties for ACBSH, with the exception of sub-grants under I.5.2.1 which may be implemented in any of the six counties. See revised language in the RFA.

- 28) Page 26-27 of the RFA reads: “As described, the Recipient will design and manage local partners to implement community services over the first three years of the activity life. With transitioning of some of these local CSOs to USAID direct administration, the Recipient will continue to ensure quality service delivery by local organizations through third party monitoring and evaluation, linked to performance bonuses for organizations that meet or exceed performance targets. In addition, based on the results of data verification and other monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches, the Recipient will provide feedback and TA to central MOHSW, CHSWTs, and local CSOs to identify gaps and ensure that the appropriate training modules, supportive supervision approaches, or complementary support systems are strengthened or restructured to enable community volunteers to deliver services more effectively.” Please confirm that USAID expects applicants to carry out (and budget for) all the above-mentioned activities in Years 4 and 5. Also, please indicate the type of organization USAID is seeking to carry out the third party monitoring and evaluation.

Answer: As specified in the RFA, ACBSH will support sub-awardees for the “first three years” (pages 23, 25, and 26) of the activity life, and that graduation to direct USAID awards will be based on “benchmarks [developed] in close collaboration with USAID/Liberia’s Health Team that qualify the intended sub-awardees for graduation” and that these benchmarks “will be included in the design of the sub-awards”. Accordingly, the time period of three years represents an estimated period of time required to meet benchmarks and establish a USAID direct award; the actual timeframe will depend on the organization’s ability to meet the performance benchmarks, and on close coordination with USAID/Liberia to establish a process and timeframe for transition. This implies: 1) different sub-awardees may graduate at different times to become USAID direct recipients, and 2) support for sub-awards, either for direct management of ACBSH sub-awards or for third party monitoring of USAID local awards, should be expected to continue throughout the ACBSH project.

- 29) Will USAID please clarify whether the line in the budget template marked “fee” should be disregarded as this is a cooperative agreement?

Answer: That is correct. Please see revised budget Addendum 1.

30) Please confirm it is acceptable for applicants to use their own organizational budget templates, as supposed to Addendum 1, provided all the elements of Addendum 1 are included.

Answer: Use Addendum 1 template, as its use will facilitate our review of the cost applications.

31. For the submission of applications, is there a MB size limit on attachments per email?

Answer: The limit per email is 25 MB.

32. On page 41, the RFA states that “Applicants must confirm with USAID whether their email submissions were successfully received by the required due date”. Will it not be USAID that confirms with the applicant? How will the applicant be able to confirm reception by USAID?

Answer: After application submission, applicants should send a separate email requesting confirmation of receipt.

33. Can USAID confirm that the requirement to number pages consecutively for the technical application only applies to the 25-page technical narrative and not to the supporting documents included as annexes?

Answer: Yes.

34. Would USAID allow the Applicant to provide the organizational chart, timeline and milestones (workplan), and mobilization timeline as annexes, in addition to the 5 annexes referenced in the RFA?

Answer: Yes.

35. Can USAID confirm if the required references for Key Personnel and the 1-page letter of commitment count against the 4 page limit for the resumes or if it is 4 page limit should include the resume, references and 1 page letter of commitment?

Answer: See response to Question #2.

36. The budget template in Addendum 1 says that it is the “Mandatory Budget Format.” Could you confirm if applicants can make modifications to this budget format in order to better address the guidance provided on pages 47-49 of the RFA? For example, can we add columns to show % level of effort for staff, or to demonstrate cost share contributions?

Answer: Yes.

37. On page 47 the RFA refers to “*elements-focused budgeting (EFB)*” as per the budget template in Addendum 1; could you provide a definition and further guidance on what EFB

is exactly? The template provided as addendum 1 doesn't make reference to EFB and seems to be a standard budgeting template for USAID.

Answer: See response to Question #17.

38. Is the applicant required to submit a budget detail as well as another budget in the EFB format? Or do these refer to the same thing? Is the template in Addendum 1 the only budget format that needs to be submitted?

Answer: Submit only one detailed budget, as indicated in Addendum 1. See also response to Question #17.

39. Can USAID confirm whether *Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements* need to be completed and submitted only for the prime applicant, or for all sub-awardees identified in the proposal as well?

Answer: At the time of application submission, only the prime applicant needs to submit the Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements. However, these certifications will need to be completed by proposed sub-awardees and submitted by the successful applicant prior to award.

40. Page 47 of the RFA, under section i) (3) (iv) it states "*provide rate verification documentation*" for Personnel. Could you confirm what USAID's expectations are for this documentation (should we submit Form 1420 as for acquisition? Or would USAID prefer to see salary scales for expat and national positions?). Also, does this requirement only apply to Key Personnel or all staff members budgeted under the program?

Answer: The applicant should certify the salary of all proposed personnel (key and non-key) already employed by the applicant. Format of the salary certifications are at the applicant's discretion. Salary scales should also be submitted for expatriate, home office and local positions.

41. In the program description, USAID consistently refers to the graduation of Sub-awardees to "*direct management by USAID*" (page 23-24, 25, 26). Could USAID confirm if applicants should only include sub-award amounts in their budget for the period during which sub-awardees have not yet graduated to direct management by USAID or will their funding still come from the applicants budget even after they have graduated to this level? In other words, is the anticipated \$24.8 million award amount expected to cover sub-awards that are only under the management of the applicant or those that also graduate to direct management by USAID?

Answer: After sub-awardees graduate to a direct USAID award, USAID will finance the award, but ACBSH may continue to provide technical assistance for award administration as

indicated by capacity assessments. Also, refer to the answers to Question #28 and #42 regarding sub-awards.

42. On page 26 of the RFA, it states *“As described, the Recipient will design and manage local partners to implement community services over the first three years of the activity life.”* Could USAID clarify whether the applicant’s sub-award program should have a phasing out approach beginning in Year 3 through Year 5 (as more organizations graduate to direct management by USAID) or if all sub-awards should stop in Year 3 without any further phasing for sub-awardees that have not yet graduated?

Answer: According to pages 23, 25, and 26 of the RFA, “USAID expects that some sub awardees for the first three years of the activity life will graduate to direct USAID award based on “benchmarks [developed] in close collaboration with USAID/Liberia’s Health Team that qualify the intended sub-awardees for graduation” and that these benchmarks “will be included in the design of the sub-awards”.

Accordingly, the time period of three years represents an estimated period of time required to meet benchmarks and establish a USAID direct award; the actual timeframe will depend on the organization’s ability to meet the performance benchmarks, and on close coordination of USAID/Liberia’s Office of Acquisition and Assistance to establish a process and timeframe for transition. This implies: 1) different sub-awardees may graduate at different times to become USAID direct recipients, and 2) support for sub-awards, either for direct management of ACBSH sub-awards or for third party monitoring of USAID local awards, should be expected to continue throughout the ACBSH project.

As a result, USAID does not expect all sub awards to stop in Year 3 but continue for those sub awardees that are yet to graduate.

43. On page 11 of the RFA it states: *“While activities under ACBSH will primarily focus on investments in three of the six USAID priority counties, they are expected to have national and sub-national impact through technical assistance (TA) and support for systems strengthening at the central level, **as well as the service delivery sub-awards that will be implemented in the USAID priority counties.**”* Could USAID clarify the role it would expect the successful applicant to play in relation to sub-awards to the three priority counties that aren’t the focus of this activity (Margibi, Montserado and Grand Bassa)? Will it only be sub-award management without the capacity building and technical assistance that is to be provided to sub-awardees in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties? If this is the case, will other actors be providing the activity’s sub-awardees with capacity building and technical assistance in these other counties?

Answer: USAID expects the Applicant would provide the same technical assistance and capacity building for local sub-grants in any of the six focus counties.

44. As all 4 result areas under the ACBSH activity are significant in scope, would USAID be able to provide an indication of how it expects financial resources to be allocated between results?

Answer: USAID expects the Applicant will propose the most effective allocation of resources to achieve the project objectives and in line with national gaps and priorities outlined in Liberia's National Health and Social Welfare Policy and Plan.

45. Are there any specific preventive reproductive (RH) health services that USAID would not be willing to support under the ACBSH activity? For example, would preventive RH services for adolescents in a school setting be an acceptable intervention?

Answer: The same USAID standard provisions for reproductive health activities would apply to this activity. USAID also expects the Applicant to closely coordinate with other USAID-funded activities in all sectors.

46. Pg. 27 – 1.5.2 *Illustrative Activities* mentions the development of “program descriptions” for an integrated package of community-based services. Would USAID clarify the intended meaning of “program descriptions” in this context?

Answer: This refers to program descriptions under the sub-grants to be awarded under this agreement.

47. On page 27, the RFA indicates that recipients must incorporate “‘partnership-defined quality’ approaches” to M&E. Is the expectation that recipients adhere to the Save the Children PDQ methodology as-is or rather that recipients incorporate activities that further the principles on which PDQ is based?

Answer: The intention is to amplify PDQ activities already underway in USAID focus counties, and to be supported under the Collaborative Support for Health Systems Strengthening (CSHSS) activity.¹ See revised RFA language in section I.5.2.3.

48. Per pages 17-18 of the RFA, *“The ACBSH Activity will align with this strategy, shifting emphasis along with the rest of the sector away from a short-term, simple focus on constructing water and sanitation infrastructure towards building access to quality and sustainable WASH services through sub-grants to indigenous CSOs and TA to MOHSW and MPW in their mandates to comprehensively improve access to and proper utilization of quality and sustainable WASH services at the community level.”* Does USAID consider the Natural Leaders Network in its definition of “indigenous CSOs”?

Answer: Yes.

¹ RFP available at https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=df42070df7e7f0ac6d0bc09658135455&tab=core&_cview=1

49. On page 34, in the last paragraph under I.5.5 Monitoring and Evaluation, the RFA states that *“The M&E will focus on the program performance of the Recipient. Indicators and targets should illustrate how the Recipient will measure and achieve the results of the activity.”* However, both Sections IV.5 (Technical Application Guidance) and V.3 (Technical Proposal Evaluation Criteria) require that the Applicant identify its “approach to collecting data for both treatment and comparison groups.” (pp. 45 and 53). Treatment and comparison groups are more usual for impact evaluations than for the required performance evaluation. Would USAID clarify its expectations with regards to M&E activities related to evaluating impact through treatment and comparison groups?

Answer: Indicators and targets should illustrate how the Recipient will measure and achieve the results of the activity in an efficient and effective manner.