

Question and Answer as a result of the NOFO: SOL-OAA-15-000106 issued to grants.gov on June 8, 2015.

OVERALL

Can you tell us what exactly is the purpose/intent of this grant and its requirements?

The purpose/intent of this grant is outlined in the solicitation. USAID recommends reading the solicitation in its entirety.

Have local and regional organizations around the world been notified of this solicitation using a mechanism other than the grants.gov posting?

As of November 1, 2005, the preferred method of distribution of USAID assistance solicitations (*i.e.*, NFOs and Annual Program Statements [APSs]) and amendments to such solicitations is electronically via <http://www.grants.gov> ("Grants.gov"), which provides a single source for USG-wide competitive grant opportunities. This solicitation has been posted to Grants.gov.

We no longer see the above-mentioned NFO on the Grants.gov website. Does this mean that it is no longer available for application? Was there any kind of notification sent out?

I noticed recently that this opportunity is no longer posted on the grants.gov website. Has it perhaps been cancelled or withdrawn?

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NoFO) Number SOL-OAA-15-000106 issued to grants.gov on September 15, 2015 replaces the NoFO Number: SOL-OAA-15-000106 issued to grants.gov on June 8, 2015.

My organization submitted a Concept Note for consideration before the original solicitation was removed. Do I need to resubmit it to be considered under the new posting?

No. Concept Notes received under the original posting will be considered by USAID. Applicants who previously submitted Concept Notes may withdraw, amend, or submit new

Concept Notes before the deadline stated on the first page of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Is there a difference between the Concept Note and the Full Application?

Yes. The Concept Note required in Phase I of the competition differs significantly in content and length from the Full Application required in Phase II.

USAID decided to conduct competition for this award in two stages for efficiency. Specifically, potential Applicants will not have to expend the time and resources to prepare a Full Application including the detailed cost application (budget), the commitment of personnel, and various certifications required of all Applicants for grants and cooperative agreements from USAID until they have received indications that their applications will be of interest to USAID. Similarly, USAID will not have to expend the time and resources to evaluate Full Applications from Applicants other than those with the most highly rated Concept Notes.

An Applicant's Full Application will build upon the ideas, capabilities, and approaches outlined in the Applicant's Concept Note.

The Concept Note is limited to a maximum of ten (10) pages; the Full Application is limited to a maximum of forty (40) pages.

Information on the Concept Note can be found in Section IV.C.2 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and information on the Full Application can be found in Section IV.C.3. When preparing Concept Notes and Full Applications, prospective Applicants should be mindful of both the instructions for preparing submissions in Section IV "Application and Submission Information" and the evaluation criteria in Section V "Application Review Information" against which submissions will be reviewed..

Will USAID provide feedback and guidance based on the concept note?

Yes. USAID will invite Applicants who submitted the most highly rated Concept Notes in Phase I to submit Full Applications in Phase II of the competition. At that time, USAID will inform Applicants of the strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies (if any) identified by USAID's evaluation panel during the review of the Applicant's Concept Note.

How does the Regional and Local Support for Elections and Political Transitions program relate to the Global Support for Elections and Political Transitions program (RFA-OAA-15-000016)? Will USAID missions be given the option to use either or both mechanisms? Is there significant overlap in the technical areas? Will one mechanism be given priority over the other in certain countries?

The Regional and Local Support for Elections and Political Transitions program and the Global Support for Elections and Political Transitions program are both part of USAID's continuing support for advancing democracy, human rights, and good governance worldwide. USAID has never relied on any one mechanism for providing support to elections and political transitions. USAID's Missions do frequently turn to centrally-managed mechanisms for support on elections and political transitions, especially when events do not allow sufficient time for a full and open competition, but Missions have used a variety of awards to support elections and political transitions including centrally-managed grant mechanisms focusing on civil society, human rights, and political processes and centrally-managed contract mechanisms for political transitions, elections, and assessments and evaluations. There are similarities between the Regional and Local Support for Elections and Political Transitions program and the Global Support for Elections and Political Transitions program – they are both Leader with Associates Awards; they have similar program objectives; and they have similar start and end dates. There are also differences – one will be awarded through a full and open competition and the other through a competition limited to organizations based outside the OECD DAC countries; one has a larger funding ceiling and the other will make up to three awards with a smaller combined ceiling. These mechanisms were designed to reflect needs identified by USAID and to provide USAID Missions a variety of assistance options.

USAID Missions may choose to make future associate awards under any or all (or none) of the resulting awards. Such decisions are determined independently and documented internally through approved Choice of Instrument memoranda, but it will be each Mission's decision based on its assessment of its needs. However, USAID Missions will not compete associate awards among the Recipients of different Leader Awards.

The discussion on page 12 of Leader Award activities and those under an associate award is not entirely clear to us. When is an activity to be undertaken under a Leader Award, and when will it be undertaken pursuant to an associate award?

A Leader Award will incorporate the Technical Program Narrative from a successful Applicant's Full Application as the Program Description of the award. An associate award is a separate award issued without competition to the Recipient of a Leader Award. An associate award is typically made by a USAID Mission to meet country-specific objectives within that Mission's country strategy or in response to a changing country context.

ELIGIBILITY

Does USAID welcome new partners with perhaps minimal USAID project management experience?

Yes. USAID encourages applications from potential new partners. Prior experience with USAID is not required.

What is the meaning of a consortium applying for the Leader Award? Does it refer to one lead organization with its partners?

A consortium is an association of two or more organizations with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal. The nature of the association may be a legal arrangement among participating organizations or a less formal agreement between them. When evaluating submissions, USAID will make no distinction between pre-existing consortia and consortia formed for the purpose of applying for this award.

While clear from the solicitation eligibility criteria that all "applicants" in a consortium that is applying must meet the listed eligibility requirements, what about secondary resource, associate, etc. organizations? Should they also meet the eligibility?

The eligibility criteria detailed in Section III "Eligibility Information" apply only to the Applicant, who if successful, will become the named Recipient of a Leader Award and any future associate awards. When the Recipient of a Leader Award works with a consortium or subrecipients, any associate awards under the Leader Award must be issued to the Recipient of the Leader Award, not to any member of the consortium or subrecipient. The Recipient of the Leader Award may make subawards to the consortium members or non-

members as necessary for the program. The Recipient is not restricted to making subawards only to consortium members or other partners named in the award.

Does a consortium need a new DUNS number?

If the Applicant is a legally established consortium, it will need a DUNS number. If the Applicant is an individual member of a consortium, then only that organization will need a DUNS number.

Will not working in partnership with other organizations prejudice one's application?

No. There is no requirement that an Applicant partner with any other organization. USAID recognizes that many organizations already have established cooperative relationships with other organizations. It further recognizes that few individual organizations cover the entire scope of the Program Objectives. However there is no requirement that Applicants establish partnerships.

Would USAID consider joint ventures between organizations based in low or lower-middle income countries and US-based groups as eligible? Would USAID consider other nationalities as subs or resource partner organizations?

The criteria in Section III "Eligibility Information" apply to the Applicant only.

Can an organization be included in more than one application?

Yes.

May an Applicant submit more than one application?

Yes.

Organizations that are eligible for this award may have little experience with USAID funding and may not have the accounting provisions in place to manage the LWA according to USAID regulations (described on page 6 and 13). Will the USAID DRG Center consider providing a supplemental Capacity Development activity to ensure the implementing organizations are prepared to comply with US government regulations?

As stated in Section I.B.3 “Elections and Political Process Program Objectives” and Section IV.C.2 “Phase One: Concept Note,” Applicants are encouraged to include a component – not to exceed 10% of the overall award – aimed at strengthening the organizational and technical capacity and sustainability of their own organization, or the network/coalition of organizations. Applicants are responsible for assessing their own needs.

Page 8 mentions that up to 10% of the LWA budget can be used for capacity development of the implementing organization(s), including “... a specific technical assistance package sought from an international partner with which the organization(s) may have worked in the past.” Must this international partner also meet the eligibility requirements listed in Section III? Would USAID consider a phased approach where a US organization provides support in the first 2-3 years then phases out of the project?

The criteria in Section III “Eligibility Information” apply to the Applicant only.

REGION

What does “region” include? Is it a continent only or sub-regions as well?

An Applicant should identify the geographic area where it is most capable of providing assistance in its Concept Note. The final award(s) will be global in nature, and the successful Applicant(s) will not be restricted to their primary geographic region.

USAID has intentionally not defined “region.” Applicants should respond factually. Responses will not be evaluated competitively. For example, there is no advantage for applicants who identify larger geographic areas over smaller areas or for areas including

more countries over fewer countries. USAID recognizes that there are many valid ways to define “region,” and Applicants should not artificially conform to continents, the organization of USAID’s regional bureaus, membership in an international organization, etc.

A region should be defined geographically. Thematic groupings of non-contiguous states, such as post-conflict countries or all Francophone countries, do not constitute a region.

A region must contain at least two countries.

USAID will make up to three LWA awards under this program (page 2). Will those awards be divided up geographically or by technical area of expertise? Does USAID have regional preferences in selecting the Leader recipients?

No. Concept Notes and Applications will be independently evaluated against the pre-determined evaluation criteria set forth in Section V “Application Review Information” with the highest rated applications being considered for awards. Applications will not be compared to other applications. USAID will not conduct a competition among applications from any region separate from the global competition.

Can [prospective applicant] propose a concept note for [specific country] and to work under this grant with USAID in [specific country]?

Country-specific work may be included in an Applicant’s technical program. Applicants should note, however, that this Funding Opportunity includes latitude to achieve results, provide technical leadership, or establish communities of practice at the regional level whereas USAID primarily supports country-specific activities through local USAID Missions and within established country strategies.

PERSONNEL

In the discussion of key personnel positions, which begins at page 34, it is not clear whether all of such personnel must be retained by the applicant at the time of

submission of the application or whether some of them can be retained later (especially the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist). Please elaborate, if you can.

On staff complement – can the program be managed by current staff or do new staff need to be recruited specifically for the program?

Proposed key personnel do not need to be currently employed, contracted, or otherwise retained by the Applicant, but please note that the application instructions in Section IV.C.3.4 require a letter of commitment from each person named to be a key personnel position in the Full Application expressing their willingness to work in that capacity if the Applicant receives the award. The key personnel do not all need to be based with the Applicant; key personnel may be associated with the Applicant's partner organizations.

Considering that there may be different types and sizes of consortia applying, would USAID be open to alternative proposals for Key Personnel structure based on programmatic and management approach described in the concept paper? (A Chief of Party/Deputy structure may be restrictive for this kind of project).

Although cognizant that all Applicants, consortia, partnerships, and programs will have different management needs, USAID requests Applicants propose key personnel with the roles and skills described in Section IV.C.3.4 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Applicants which deviate from this structure may receive lower ratings during USAID's review process according to the evaluation criteria named in Section V "Application Review Information." USAID encourages Applicants to develop management structures and identify key personnel which best serve their proposed programs within these parameters.

Please note that USAID recognizes that not all key personnel positions may require full-time levels of effort.

BUDGET

Should the indicative budget for the Concept Note be a maximum of USD 2.5 million? What is covered, and what is not covered by the USD 2.5 million?

A detailed budget is not required as part of the Concept Note but will be required as part of the Full Application. The budget should include all costs related to the program including

direct costs, indirect costs, and cost-sharing, if any. Profit is not allowed under this funding opportunity.

The direct and indirect costs combined in the proposed budget should not exceed \$2.5 million but may be less. The Applicant's proposed cost-sharing, if any, may cause the total budget to exceed \$2.5 million when added to the direct and indirect costs.

Should cost-sharing be included in the indicative budget?

Yes. Cost-sharing is not required under this Notice of Funding Opportunity, but it is encouraged by USAID. Although not a technical evaluation criteria, any proposed cost-sharing will be assessed by USAID as part of determining which applications offer the greatest value.

If cost-sharing is proposed, the cost application should use the budget format shown in form SF-424A where line 14 "Non-Federal" refers to Applicant's contribution to the total cost of the program from sources other than the United States Government.

The Applicant's proposed cost-sharing, if any, may cause the total budget to exceed \$2.5 million when added to the direct and indirect costs.

Given that the thematic and geographic areas of intervention are unknown, how do we develop the budget?

The Applicant's budget should correspond to the Technical Application including the program described in the Applicant's Technical Program Narrative as well as sufficient management, administrative, monitoring, and indirect costs to ensure successful achievement of results and compliance with the terms of the award.

Any future associate awards will have separate budgets.

More specifically, in submitting a proposal, how should an organization budget for activities which it might be asked to perform on short notice under the Leader Award, as contemplated by Section I.C.2 on page 12?

Applicants may propose a rapid response fund within their cost application.

Page 39 mentions that: "Source and Nationality Requirements: Goods and services provided by the Recipient under this USAID-financed award shall have their source and nationality in the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, in accordance with the policies in ADS Chapter 310 and 22 CFR Part 228." Therefore, if a country is included on the 02/06/2012 "List of Advanced Developing Countries" which is linked to ADS Chapter 310, would it be impermissible to source goods and services from that country for programs in the region but outside of that country?

Yes, generally it would not be an allowable cost to procure goods and services from an advanced developing country except for activities benefiting that country. Specific information is found in ADS 310 and 22 CFR 228. Eligibility as a source is based on the definitions contained in ADS 310 which relies on country income categories determined by the World Bank and updated annually. The referenced country lists in ADS 310 were current at the time they were prepared but should not be considered definitive.

POST-AWARD DETERMINATIONS

Regarding the pre-award survey (IV.B.11 Pre-Award Audits/Surveys and Discussions on page 26) , if the consortium has no lead organization (performing a new consolidated-organization) which party should be audited?

The pre-award survey applies only to the Applicant, who if successful, will become the named Recipient of a Leader Award and any future Associate Awards.

Can you give an indication of the timeframe for the risk assessment of a first time USAID applicant?

Unfortunately, USAID cannot commit to any timeframe for the risk assessment. USAID intends to make up to three awards by March 31, 2016.

When is an environmental assessment carried out? Between the submission of the concept note and full application or after the final award?

Prior to award, USAID will determine the Applicant's compliance with 22 CFR 216 Environmental Procedures.

ERRATTA

The cover letter says questions are due on July 24, 2015, but on Page 21, Section-IV APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION states that questions are due July 17, 2015. Please clarify the correct one.

This was an error that has been corrected in the revised Notice of Funding Opportunity. The revised deadline for submission of questions is September 21, 2015.

On page 22, the reference to the Applicant's Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (described in Section IV.B.3.7 below) seems to possibly refer to those guidelines in Section IV.D.2. Since we couldn't find Section IV.B.3.7, can we assume IV.D.2 is the guiding section?

This was an error that has been corrected in the revised Notice of Funding Opportunity.

On page 16, the sentence, "The recipient's and sub-recipients' contractors and subcontractors at all tiers must also meet USAID's supplier nationality requirements described in Section III.D below," doesn't seem to match up to any such requirements in Section III.D. Is it safe to assume that the reference should be to nationality requirements set forth in Section III.C?

This was an error that has been corrected in the revised Notice of Funding Opportunity.