

72026723RFA00001 Iraq Civil Society Activity - Questions and Answers

1. Are national Iraqi-based NGOs eligible to apply as long as we meet all of the objectives in the Program Description and Federal Award management? Or is USAID seeking a US-based or international NGO to take on this program as a Funds/Grant Manager for this NOFO to allocate the award among national Iraqi-based IPs?

USAID's Response: Please see section C. APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION on page 16 of the NOFO: "Eligibility for this NOFO is unrestricted, except that individuals and government entities are not eligible."

2. Page 7 of the NOFO states that "Under this objective, the Activity will increase the ability of individual citizens, and informal citizens' groups not organized as registered CSOs, to engage productively in public life... There is a natural overlap between this objective and objective 2 in that the Recipient will engage Iraqi CSOs to act as implementing agents/partners and leaders in this community-driven work stream." Could USAID clarify its vision for this objective and how "civil society organizations" are defined? Is the intention for registered CSOs to act as "implementing agents" or would providing direct support to unregistered CSOs be acceptable under Objective 1?

USAID's Response: All subawards must be made in accordance with USAID and Government of Iraq or Kurdistan Regional Government laws and regulations. USAID prefers that partners fund registered groups, but would encourage engagement with non-registered groups or groups of citizens on community action projects.

3. Page 8 of the NOFO states that "The sub-grants component will not include funds for renovation, rehabilitation, or construction related activities." Could USAID please clarify whether such activities may be considered/proposed under the Activity Modifier/Rapid Response Component or other areas of the Activity?

USAID's Response: Construction may be authorized in accordance with ADS 303maw, "USAID Implementation of Construction Activities" and the Mandatory Standard Provision, "Limiting Construction Activities (August 2013)". The NOFO has been updated accordingly.

4. Page 9 of the NOFO states that "the Activity must apply a Refine and Implement (R&I) approach for an initial four-month refinement phase. During this period the partner will initiate the co-creation process with USAID that will characterize implementation through the life of the activity and culminate in the first year's implementation plan, with a draft life of activity implementation plan." However, page 40 requires submission of the first-year annual implementation plan within 60 days of award. Could USAID please clarify the expected timeline for development of the implementation plan and ensuring it reflects findings from the four-month R&I phase?

USAID's Response: This has been corrected. The implementation plan will be expected at the end of the refine and implement phase.

5. Page 16 of the NOFO, section 5. Partner Vetting Pre-Award Requirements, states that “the Agreement Officer notifies the Applicant when to submit the USAID Partner Information Form”. Can USAID please clarify the approximate timeframe (e.g. on/about the January 23rd submission deadline, post-application submission, competitive range, apparently successful applicant stage, etc.) when applicants can expect to receive this notification?

USAID’s Response: Upon completion of the merit review process, the Agreement Officer will notify the apparently successful applicant to submit the USAID Partner Information Form.

6. Page 21 of the NOFO notes that 12-point Times New Roman font is required and that 10-point font can be used for graphs and charts. Can USAID confirm that offerors may use 10-point font for text boxes as well?

USAID’s Response: Yes, applicants can use the 10-point Times New Roman font for text boxes.

7. Page 24 of the NOFO states that: "The Applicant must submit a brief narrative description of the R&I Plan specific to the four-month R&I period. This will include a matrix that illustrates proposed interventions and when they will take place." Is the matrix in this section equivalent to/part of the "Mobilization Plan" required on page 28? May the matrix be included in the Mobilization Plan annex? What are the key elements of the Mobilization Plan that USAID expects to see in the annex?

USAID’s Response: No, this is not the mobilization plan. The R&I Plan is a discussion of how the program design will be completed in collaboration with USAID. This would include determining main interventions, establishing priors and potential counterfactuals that the program will need to confront. The Mobilization Plan will provide USAID a better understanding of administrative and logistical considerations that will need to be addressed for the establishment of human and other resources to activate this program in Iraq.

8. Page 25 of the NOFO, subsection f), given the breadth of information required in the Org Chart in line with subsection e), would USAID allow the Org Chart to not be count towards the page limit, and/or can it be formatted to larger than 8.5” x 11”, e.g. legal size 8.5” x 14” paper?

USAID’s Response: The NOFO has been amended to exclude the Organizational Chart from the page limitation.

9. On page 25-26 of the NOFO, the desired qualifications for the COP and DCOP include a Master's degree. Would USAID consider revising this requirement and/or confirming the status as “desired” and not “required”, to more broadly open the field to candidates who may bring relevant experience and qualifications, but may lack a higher education

degree?

USAID's Response: We confirm that qualifications listed for key personnel are “desired” and not “required” as stated on pages 25-26 of the NOFO.

10. Page 26 of the NOFO states that development of the MEL plan will entail "identifying indicators and realistic (yet ambitious) targets." Does USAID expect to see illustrative targets in the "Illustrative MEL Plan with indicators" to be annexed to the technical application, or will targets be defined through co-creation during the R&I phase? Is there a specific template which USAID requires for the Illustrative MEL Plan annex?

USAID's Response: USAID encourages applicants to include illustrative targets; more precise targets will be developed collaboratively with the Recipient during the R&I phase. USAID will provide the Recipient with proposed templates during this R&I phase.

11. Page 29 of the NOFO, subsection d) Summary Budget, states that it must be “inclusive of all Activity costs broken out by major budget category and by fiscal year for interventions to be implemented by the Applicant and any potential sub-recipients for the entire period of the Activity.” Can USAID confirm Fiscal Year refers to the USAID Fiscal Year, and not the applicant's Fiscal Year, should it be different?

USAID's Response: USAID confirms that NOFO refers to the USAID Fiscal Year which is October 1 - September 30.

12. Section A (pages 7-8) and Section B (2) contain two sets of Expected Results for this activity that are somewhat different. Can USAID please confirm that the list of Expected Results provided in Section A is the more complete list that applicants should use?

USAID's Response: USAID recommends that applicants review and report to both sets of Expected Results. The listed expected results are viewed as complementary to each other. These expected results are expected to be clarified in collaboration with USAID during the refine and implement phase of the project.

13. Per Section D (5)(1)(E)(a), does USAID envision the Gender Action Plan, Civil Society Landscape Analysis, Political Economy Analysis, and Conflict Sensitivity Analysis (page 24) to be separate deliverables and written products? Given the interrelatedness of these different pieces of analysis, may these deliverables be combined into one or more deliverables according to the applicant's technical application and most effective approach(es) to research and analysis?

USAID's Response: USAID anticipates that these plans and analysis would be separate products given the diversity of their subject matter and their importance to both the Agency and to the implementation of this program.

14. Recognizing the importance of localization, does USAID have geographic areas of priority for this activity?

USAID's Response: No, geographic areas for this program are being determined at this time. USAID envisions that this program will occur across the breadth of Iraq. Specific geographic targets will be determined collaboratively in the refine and implement phase.

15. In Section D (5)(1)(E)(a) "Project Management Approach," under "Refine and Implement Period" (page 24), the NOFO requires "a matrix that illustrates proposed interventions and when they will take place" as key elements of the Project Management Approach section of the technical application. Section D(5)(1)(H) "Annexes" (page 28) includes a Mobilization Plan, limited to four pages. The matrix described in the former section appears to be more aligned with the latter Mobilization Plan. As such, would USAID permit applicants to include the matrix requested for the Refine and Implement Period in the Mobilization Plan annex instead the Project Management Approach section of the technical application?

USAID's Response: USAID sees these as different documents. The implementation plan could include parts of the mobilization plan, but we are looking for an illustrative sense of how you would execute your interventions and the proposed timelines for doing so. This implementation plan will be refined in the refine and implement phase of this program.

16. Section E (2)(a) mentions "the proposed first year draft implementation plan matrix" as an element that will be evaluated under Criterion 2. Could USAID clarify if the first-year draft implementation plan matrix refers to the four-page Mobilization Plan referenced in Section D (5)(1)(H) "Annexes" and if there are specific time parameters or other associated requirements for the Mobilization Plan annex?

USAID's Response: USAID sees these as different documents. The implementation plan could include parts of the mobilization plan, but we are looking for an illustrative sense of how you would execute your interventions and the proposed timelines for doing so. This implementation plan will be refined in the refine and implement phase of this program.

17. Per Section D (5)(1)(E)(f), the organizational chart is to be included in the body of the technical proposal within the four pages allotted for the Project Management Approach section. Given the many requirements for that section, would USAID kindly consider allowing the organizational chart to be included as an annex instead, not counted in the 10-page limit for annexes?

USAID's Response: The NOFO has been amended to exclude the Organizational Chart from the page limitation.

18. Section D(5)(F) (page 26) states that the deputy chief of party is desired to have "At least eight (8) years of experience working in the engagement of civil society" as well as "a Master's degree in social sciences, community development, communications, business, international development, and/or other related fields." USAID personnel policies often

allow for the substitution of years of work experience for a specific degree. As such, and to allow for a broader and more diverse candidate pool, would USAID kindly consider modifying the desired qualifications to “At least eight (8) years of experience working in the engagement of civil society or other fields related to the position description” and “a Master’s degree or corresponding years of experience in social sciences, community development, communications, business, international development, and/or other related fields”?

USAID’s Response: Key Personnel qualifications are “desired” and NOT “required.” Applicants may propose the individuals that they believe are best suited to the requirements.

19. Section D(5)(1)(H) “Annexes” describes an Institutional Capabilities/Experience annex, limited to one page, and requests that applicants provide a list of up to three awards. Could USAID please confirm that the page limit is one page per award, up to a total of three pages? Kindly also clarify whether applicants should submit the requested information for these awards in USAID’s Past Performance Information template (FAR 2.101 and 3.104) or in another format, and if a specific template is requested, include it as an attachment to the NOFO.

USAID’s Response: The page limit is one page for a list of up to three awards. No specific format is required, please see subsection H. Annexes, b) on page 28.

20. In Section A (page 4) and Section B (page 13), the ordering of Objectives 1 and 2 is reversed. Could USAID please clarify that the preferred sequencing for Objectives 1 and 2 is as they are outlined in Section A?

USAID’s Response: USAID views all the objectives as having equal importance. The NOFO has been corrected but the listing of the Objectives is not in priority order.

21. Section A (pages 6-7) outlines USAID’s proposed Theory of Change. Could USAID please clarify whether offerors are encouraged to conform to or expand on the theory of change as provided by USAID?

USAID’s Response: This Theory of Change represents how USAID envisions this program. Applicants are encouraged to provide suggested changes to the proposed TOC.

22. Section D, page 21: As with graphs and charts, may offerors use 10pt font for text boxes?

USAID’s Response: Yes, applicants may use 10-point Times New Roman font for text boxes.

23. Section D, page 22: May applicants include a cover letter and acronym list that do not count toward the 25-page limit?

USAID's Response: Applicants may include a Cover Page and a List of Acronyms, which will not be included in the page limit; a "Cover Letter" is not authorized.

24. Section D, page 25: Would USAID allow applicants to include the required organizational chart in an annex and increase the annex page limit to 11?

USAID's Response: The NOFO has been amended to exclude the Organizational Chart from the page limitation.

25. Section D, page 25: Would USAID consider additional years of experience and a Bachelor's degree to be equivalent to eight years and a Master's degree for DCOP (or ten years and a Master's degree for COP), to encourage applicants to explore and consider a wider pool of otherwise qualified Iraqi national talent to fulfill the COP or DCOP positions?

USAID's Response: Key Personnel qualifications are "desired" and NOT "required." Applicants may propose the individuals that they believe are best suited to the requirements.

26. Section D, pages 25-26: USAID describes the qualification criteria for the key personnel as desired qualifications. Please confirm that the criteria listed for these key personnel roles is desired but not required, and that USAID seeks a balance of skills, qualifications, and management experience amongst all the Key Personnel candidates to fulfill the NOFO objectives and applicant's technical approach.

USAID's Response: We confirm that qualifications listed for key personnel are "desired" and not "required" as stated on pages 25-26 of the NOFO.

27. Section D, page 26 refers to "established baselines." Can USAID please clarify whether applicants are expected to set baseline values? If so, may applicants enter TBD for all baseline values that have not yet been collected? When referring to the full MEL plan on page 46, USAID states to enter TBD if the baseline value has not yet been collected.

USAID's Response: Yes, applicants can enter TBD for baselines. It is anticipated that baselines will be set during program inception.

28. Section D, page 27: Is the following indicator, "Number of CSO activities resulting in a measurable increase in visibility and/or credibility of CSOs within Iraqi society," an Iraq Mission indicator? If so, can USAID kindly share the PIRS?

USAID's Response: The Performance Indicator Reference Sheet has not yet been developed. It will be developed in coordination with the Recipient during the inception phase.

29. Section D, page 28: May offerors arrange the annexes so that the Resumes annex, which does not count toward the page limit, falls last in the ordering?

USAID's Response: Yes, applicants may include the Resumes annex as the last one in the ordering.

30. Section D, page 28: Would USAID consider giving applicants the flexibility to adjust page limits across individual annexes, maintaining that the overall page count for annexes combined, excluding Resumes, does not exceed 10 pages?

USAID's Response: No, to ensure more uniform application formats and review, applicants must follow the page limits stated in the NOFO.

31. Can USAID please confirm the exchange rate to use in preparing cost applications?

USAID's Response: Applicants may determine the exchange rate for preparing their cost application. USAID recommends that you include the exchange rate rationale in the budget narrative.

32. Would USAID share the most recent local compensation plan (LCP) or FSN scale?

USAID's Response: Yes, the latest Local Compensation Scale is attached to NOFO Amendment 1.

33. Attachment 1, Detailed and Summary Budget Template: Can USAID confirm whether applicants may adjust the line items and cost categories within the provided budget template to better align with our operational approach and internal cost management structures, as well as to align with the major line items listed on pages 30-31 of the NOFO? For example, two major cost categories, Subawards and the Flexible Activity Modifier Component for Rapid Response, are both missing from the current budget template, whereas Construction is included.

USAID's Response: Yes, the Detailed and Summary Budget Template can be adjusted to align with an applicant's operational approach and internal cost management structures.

34. Attachment 1, Detailed and Summary Budget Template: The budget template provided has hidden columns C and D, "Objective" and "Outcome." Can USAID confirm that applicants may delete these columns?

USAID's Response: Yes, applicants can delete columns C and D from the template.

35. Page 9, *Programming Approach- Refine And Implement/Inception Phase* states "To identify challenges and allow flexibility and adaptation at an early stage of implementation, the Activity must apply a Refine and Implement (R&I) approach for an initial four-month refinement phase. During this period the partner will initiate the co-creation process with USAID that will characterize implementation through the life of the activity and culminate in the first year's implementation plan, with a draft life of activity

implementation plan." Question : Can USAID please clarify what it sees as its substantial involvement role once the year 1 implementation plan and draft life of activity implementation plan are developed?

USAID's Response: USAID views this as a collaborative program activity. USAID envisions working with the Recipient to ensure the program priorities are aligned with Mission and Agency goals. This will be done through the review of annual implementation plans and through semi-annual pause and reflect sessions between the Recipient and USAID.

36. While the focus of this activity is on civil society, does USAID expect any engagement with supply side actors to ensure there are willing and receptive actors to receive the increased engagement coming from civil society and citizens writ large?

USAID's Response: Yes, we would like to see these activities include the whole civil society ecosystem, but the primary focus will be on Civil Society Organizations.

37. Can USAID please confirm that holding another project in country does not prohibit an organization from receiving this award?

USAID's Response: USAID confirms that holding another agreement/contract in Iraq does not prohibit an organization from this award. However, this award should not be duplicative or in conflict with any other USAID award nor should other awards duplicate the goals of this program.

38. Can USAID confirm if we are able to include an Acronym List after the Table of Content that does not count towards the page limitation?

USAID's Response: Yes, an acronym list may be included and will not count against the total page limit.

39. On page 25 of the NOFO, USAID states under point F. b (Personnel Qualification and Experience), to specify the technical and managerial experience and skills. Can USAID clarify if it would like the applicant to specify the technical and managerial skills of the key personnel, the overall project team, or the applicant organization?

USAID's Response: USAID envisions this to be about personnel as noted in the NOFO.

40. On page 25 of the NOFO, USAID states under point F. d (Personnel Qualification and Experience), to specify the practical experience in managing and implementing similar programs in developing countries. Can USAID clarify if this is in reference to the key personnel or the applicant organization?

USAID's Response: USAID envisions this to be about personnel as noted in the NOFO.

41. Can USAID confirm if there are geographical areas or regions of priority for the proposed Activity?

USAID's Response: Geographic targets should be proposed by the applicant. This will be a discussion point for the inception period. USAID envisions increased presence in southern Iraq, but also anticipates geographic distribution across all of Iraq.

42. Can USAID confirm that \$5 million should be set-aside under objective 2 of the NOFO and an additional \$5 million should be set-aside for the flexible activity modifier? In total, the NOFO is requiring \$10 million to be set-aside for grants and the flexible activity modifier.

USAID's Response: \$10 million should be set aside for local group funding.

43. On page 8, the NOFO states: "the Activity will create and implement a demand-driven small, sub-grants component valued at \$1 million annually." On page 31 under subsection ix. it states "The application should include set-aside for a demand-driven small, sub-grants component valued at a minimum of \$5 million over a five-year period." Can USAID confirm if the proposed Activity will need to award a minimum of \$1 million to sub-grantees annually? Or will the sub-grants component be measured over the life of project?

USAID's Response: It will be measured over the life of the project, although the \$1 million annually and \$5 million total is the goal.

44. Under Objective 2 on page 8, the NOFO states: "the Activity will create and implement a demand-driven small, sub-grants component valued at \$1 million annually to enable local sustainability, and shift more leadership, ownership, decision-making, and implementation to local groups." Under Objective 1 on page 7, the NOFO states: "the Recipient will engage Iraqi CSOs to act as implementing agents/partners and leaders in this community-driven work stream, from design through to monitoring and evaluation phases." Can USAID confirm if the \$1 million annual grants component under Objective 2 is inclusive of funding to the Iraqi CSOs implementing agents/partners under Objective 1?

USAID's Response: No, this is envisioned to be a separate funding stream.

45. Can USAID confirm if the initial obligation of \$7.5M includes programming under the flexible activity modifier? Given the refine and implement period and vetting requirements, can USAID reconsider the initial obligation of \$7.5M over 18 months?

USAID's Response: The initial obligation for \$7.5M is anticipated for the first 18 months, excluding the crisis modifier.

46. On page 13 of the NOFO, USAID specifies the results under Objective 1 and 2. However, these results do not appear to align with the objectives presented on pages 7

and 8 of the NOFO. Can USAID confirm if the results on page 13 under objectives 1 and 2 are presented correctly?

USAID's Response: USAID views all the objectives as having equal importance. The NOFO has been corrected but the listing of the Objectives is not in priority order.

47. On page 4, USAID lists Objective 1 as “Increase the engagement and agency of citizens....” while on page 13, Objective 1 is “Increase sustainability and resilience of CSOs...” Does USAID have a preference on the order of objectives?

USAID's Response: Increasing “the engagement and agency of citizens...” is our preferred language but USAID holds both goals with equal interest and sees that increased sustainability and resilience will lead to increased engagement and agency for citizens... as a primary Objective. USAID views all the objectives as having equal importance. The NOFO has been corrected but the listing of the Objectives is not in priority order

48. On page 21, USAID states the Technical and Cost Application must comply with “Use standard 8 ½x11 (or A4)...” As A4 paper size has slightly different dimensions than 8 ½ x 11in, can USAID please clarify which size is required?

USAID's Response: Either page size is acceptable.

49. Can USAID please confirm if the Mobilization Plan annex can take the form of a GANTT chart covering the initial 18 months of the project?

USAID's Response: This is acceptable although a narrative outlining critical details that need further explanation should be included as well.

50. Can USAID confirm that the flexible gender action plan is to be submitted by the successful applicant following the award of this opportunity and is not to be submitted as part of the initial application?

USAID's Response: This is envisioned to be developed in the inception phase of the project although USAID encourages a discussion of gender goals and strategies in the technical approach section of the application.

51. Can USAID please confirm if it would like an organizational chart to be included in the 'Project Management Approach' or can it be submitted as a separate annex, in light of the four page limit for that section?

USAID's Response: The NOFO has been amended to exclude the Organizational Chart from the page limitation.

52. Could USAID please clarify the page limit for the 'Institutional Capabilities/Experience' annex? If applicants are expected to include at least three awards demonstrating past experience could USAID please reconsider the current page limit of 1-page per applying partner?

USAID's Response: USAID feels that one page is sufficient for this response.

53. Does USAID have specific instructions for what should be included in the four page mobilization plan and the time frame associated with that plan?

USAID's Response: USAID is seeking to understand how the partner would mobilize the resources and staff to begin this project.