

NFO Number: 7200AA18RFA00007

Seed Systems Support Activity

Questions Submitted: February 22, 2018

Q&A Issue Date: March 8, 2018

- 1) **General Questions:** Page 5, NFO Section A: Program Description, 1. Program, Purpose states that *“The Activity seeks to improve functioning of national seed sector in Feed the Future countries and in countries with resilience and emergency seed security programs,”* and provides the link to the FtF target and focus countries. Whereas, page 36, NFO Section A: Program Description, VII. Geographic Focus states that *“the Activity will operate in multiple locations within multiple Feed the Future and Resilience countries, but will be available to Feed the Future aligned and nonaligned countries as well.”* “Could USAID please state in which subset of countries the activity may operate; i.e. the 19 target countries, the 12 focus countries, aligned countries, countries with resilience and emergency programs, or a combination thereof?”

USAID:

- S3A is an Activity that is jointly supported by BFS and OFDA. BFS focus countries and OFDA presence countries will have priority use of S3A. However, S3A will be available to all USAID missions seeking relevant assistance for the seed sector as outlined in the Program Description.
- As will be discussed further below, Feed the Future countries are priorities for S3A, then aligned countries. Missions in other countries may also buy-in but these will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

- 2) Page 8, NFO section of Intervention Areas, footnote 1 states that *“A seed sector in any given country or region is made up of many individual seed systems that can be formal or informal or somewhere in between and each seed systems can have sub-systems. Seed systems can serve a single crop, e.g. maize or soybeans or groundnuts, or a group of crops, e.g. roots and tubers or pulses. See definitions in Annex 3.”* However, there is no Annex 3 provided as part of the NFO. Could USAID please provide the Annex 3, or provide pertinent definitions?

USAID: Reference to Annex 3 has been deleted in the NFO. Instead, please refer to the Seed Systems.org website for comprehensive discussion of the concept of seed systems:

<https://seedsystem.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Syngenta-USAID-brief-3-Integrated-Seed-Systems-3-copy.pdf>

- 3) Page 15, NFO Section A: Program Description, 1. Program, V. Background states that *“USAID hypothesizes in the theory of change that investing in support to add to and*

complement the seed system efforts already ongoing, through an easily accessible means to diagnose, relieve, and remove constraints and bottlenecks in the emerging formal seed systems and to strengthen informal seed systems, will improve the supply of quality seeds for smallholder farmers and better meet their demand for a wide range of choice.” Could USAID please provide a listing of its ongoing project investments where S3A support is prioritized?

USAID:

- First, almost every Feed the Future country, and many of the aligned countries, have activities related to the seed sector.
 - Second, S3A has not been prioritized with respect to particular ongoing project investments.
 - Third, final selection of S3A activities will happen in conjunction with BFS, OFDA, and missions.
- 4) Page 47, Section D5. Application Submission Procedures state that *“If the Application attachments are in excess of that size, then the Applicant must submit over multiple e-mails. For an application sent by multiple e-mails, please ensure the subject lines clearly indicate the NFO number and whether the e-mail relates to the 1) technical application, 2) cost application, or 3) risk assessment.*
- a. Could USAID please confirm that *the Risk Assessment* mentioned in the subject sentence is part of the USAID process to identify a successful applicant?
 - b. Also, could USAID please confirm that the mentioned *Risk Assessment* is not part of the application to be submitted by an applicant. In case it is part of the application, could USAID please provide additional clarification on the submission requirement?

USAID: The NFO Section D5 page 47 has been revised to clarify this. “Risk Assessment” has been removed since it is not a separate submission requirement but a part of USAID’s process to determine the successful applicant. Applicants should only submit two volumes: the Technical and Cost/Business Application and not a separate section called Risk Assessment.

- 5) Page 47, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, General states that allowed font size for this application is 12-point font. Could USAID please confirm that smaller, but reasonable font is allowed for tables, graphs and graphics?

USAID: The NFO formatting instructions have been revised, see page 47. The minimum font style/size shall be Time New Roman 11 point. Tables and Graphics can use smaller font sizes but shall not be smaller than Times New Roman 10 point.

- 6) Page 30-32, Section A. Program Description, Sub-section VI. Program Statement, Intervention Area 2.2.2: Develop Shock Responsive Seed Systems for Greater Resilience, the NFO refers to both the resilience of the seed distribution system itself (i.e. its ability to continue to function and to adapt in response to shocks), and the resilience of smallholder farmers themselves through their ability to continue to produce in the face of

shocks. Could USAID please clarify if the measurement framework for this program will be designed specifically to measure both of these elements of resilience?

USAID: Please see the US Government Global Food Security Strategy with respect to the measurement framework for this indicator “IR6: Improve adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses.”

https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/USG_Global_Food_Security_Strategy_FY2017-21_0.pdf

- 7) Page 38, Section A: Program Description, Sub-section X. Performance Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, Results Framework and Theory of Change for Seed Systems Support Activity states that “*Applicants are expected to adapt and refine the illustrative Results Framework and Theory of Change and explain their strategic approach to providing Seed Systems Support as part of the application.*” Could USAID please confirm that it is acceptable for the applicants to reconfigure, reword and/or expand upon the 15 Intervention Areas identified on page 8 based on the Applicant’s adapted and refined Result’s Framework and Theory of Change?

USAID:

Since S3A was initially designed, a new Results Framework for the Global Food Security Strategy has been introduced. Applicants should maintain consistency with this framework in their submissions. See:

https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/USG_Global_Food_Security_Strategy_FY2017-21_0.pdf

- With respect to the 15 Intervention Areas, Offerors must address each of these areas. Offerors may reconfigure and expand on them but must provide an explanation and rationale for doing so. Offerors should take care not to broaden the scope of S3A in doing so, which would indicate that they are not being responsive to the NFO.
- 8) Page 40, Section B. Federal Award Information, B3, Subsection b. Approval of Specific Key Personnel states that “*USAID’s policy limits this to a reasonable number of positions, generally no more than five positions or five percent of the recipient employees working under the award,*” and page 51, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, part 3. Key Personnel Qualifications and Staffing Capabilities, Key Personnel Responsibilities and Descriptions lists four key personnel and states “*Applicants may propose alternative positions to these positions but must present their rationale for doing so.*” Could USAID please clarify that up to 5 key personnel positions are allowable and applicants are free to add the fifth, if they prefer to?

USAID: The NFO recommended four key personnel. No more than five personnel may be designated as “Key” for an Activity.

- 9) Page 40, Section B. Federal Award Information, B3, Subsection b. Approval of Specific Key Personnel states the title of key-personnel position as “4. *Emergency and Resilience Seeds Systems Advisor*.” While page 53 states the title as “*Emergency or Resilience Seeds Systems Advisor*.” Could USAID please clarify whether the position proposed should be Emergency and Resilience Seeds Systems Advisor, or “Emergency or Resilience Seeds Systems Advisor?”

USAID: The title is “Emergency and Resilience Seed Systems Advisor.”

- 10) Page 47, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, Page Limitations states that “*The technical application is limited to 25 pages. The Cover Page, Table of Contents, Technical Assumptions, Project Management Plan, Resumes, the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan, Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) Response are not included in the total page limitation.*” Could USAID please clarify what applicants are expected to submit under the “*Technical Assumptions*”? Please also provide the appropriate section where in the technical application the “*Technical Assumptions*” should be provided.

USAID: The NFO section for application requirements have been updated for clarity. Technical Assumptions as a separate section has been removed from the NFO. Applicants should address any related technical assumptions within the overall technical application and should be as clear and concise as possible. It is not the responsibility of the Government to seek out and identify assumptions, conditions, or exceptions buried within the application.

- 11) Page 47, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, Page Limitations states that “*The technical application is limited to 25 pages. The Cover Page, Table of Contents, Technical Assumptions, Project Management Plan, Resumes, the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan, Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) Response are not included in the total page limitation.*” Whereas, page 49, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, General Instructions, 2. Management Plan and Institutional Capability suggests 7 pages for the [Management Plan and Institutional Capability] section. Could USAID please:
- confirm that the “*Project Management Plan*” referenced on page 47 is the same as the “Management Plan” referenced on page 49, and there is a page limit allocated to this section?
 - However, if it is not the same document, could USAID please clarify what applicants are expected to submit under the “*Project Management Plan*” referenced on page 47, and also provide the appropriate section where in the technical application this “*Project Management Plan*” should be provided.
 - clarify which elements of the “*Project Management Plan*” should be attached as a separate annex and do not count towards the page limit, and which elements should be included in the application itself?

USAID: The Project Management Plan is the same as the Management Plan. Since the Management Plan is a part of the technical approach under the Management Plan and

Institutional Capability Section, it is therefore NOT exempt from the 25 page limit. The NFO Technical Application Instructions section has been revised accordingly.

12) Page 47, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, Page Limitations states that *“The technical application is limited to 25 pages. The Cover Page, Table of Contents, Technical Assumptions, Project Management Plan, Resumes, the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan, Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) Response are not included in the total page limitation.”* Whereas, page 66, Section D. Cost/Business Application, Branding Strategy and Marking Plan states that *“applicants are encouraged, but are not required, to submit their BS/MP with their initial cost/management applications”*. Could USAID please:

- a. Clarify whether Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP) is part of a technical, or a cost application?
- b. Confirm that the Cost/Management Application referenced on page 66 is the same as the Cost/Business Application referenced on page 54, Section D.

USAID:

- The Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP) should be included as a part of the Technical Volume and not the Cost Volume. Therefore, BSMP has been moved from the Cost/ Business Application page 72 to the Technical Application, Section 5 on page 56.
- Yes, the reference to “Cost/Management” on page 66 is the same as Cost/Business Application. The NFO has been updated to provide more clarity.

13) Page 47, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, Page Limitations states that *“The technical application is limited to 25 pages. The Cover Page, Table of Contents, Technical Assumptions, Project Management Plan, Resumes, the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan, Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) Response are not included in the total page limitation.”* Whereas, page 68, Section D. Cost/Business Application, Environmental Compliance, INSTRUCTIONS listed it under the Cost/Business Application. Could USAID please confirm whether an environmental Compliance narrative is part of a technical, or a cost application?

USAID: The Environmental Compliance Section should be submitted under the Technical Volume. The NFO Technical Application Instructions Section has been updated to clarify.

14) Page 49, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, part 1. Technical Understanding and Approach states that applicants must develop a *“Performance Monitoring Plan”* under the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Could USAID please confirm that the *“Performance Monitoring Plan”* may also be an annex attached to the application and is not included in the 25-page limit?

USAID: Please see reply to Question #11. The “Performance Monitoring Plan” is the same as the “Monitoring and Evaluation Plan” and should be addressed within the Technical Understanding and Approach section. The Performance Monitoring Plan will be counted towards the 25 page limitation. The NFO Technical Application Instructions section Page Limitation (page 47) has been updated to provide more clarity.

15) Page 52, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, part 3. Key Personnel Qualifications and Staffing Capabilities, Key Personnel Responsibilities and Descriptions states that one of the qualifications for proposed Chief of Party should be “*At least 15 years’ experience leading, managing and implementing large international projects, specifically with experience in two or more of the following areas: management, agriculture, natural resource management, ecology or food security, including at least 5 years of experience on seed-systems specific programming.*” While page 52, qualifications for Development Seed Systems Advisor states that “*The Development Seed Systems Advisor is part of the management team which is expected to complement the Project Director [COP] in knowledge and experience.*” Could USAID please, either: remove the requirement of “*at least 5 years of experience on seed-systems specific programming*”; or at least confirm that this requirement is one of the two areas of experience required and not a separate stand-alone requirement for the Project Director/COP, noting that the Development Seeds Systems Advisor will have “*at least 3-5 years of experience in seed systems*”, and will thus complement the Project Director/COP?

USAID: We confirm that this requirement is one of the two areas of experience required.

16) Page 49, Section D6. Technical Application Instruction, Sub-section 2. Management Plan and Institutional Capability asks for submitting a management plan including an organizational chart. Furthermore, on page 50, the NFO asks for “*A. Organizational chart with the roles and responsibilities and lines of authority and reporting within S3A including both technical and administrative.*” Given the nature of the information requested, could USAID please allow the organizational chart to be part of the annexes and not be counted with the page limit?

USAID: Yes. The Organizational chart can be excluded from the 25 page limitation count. See updated NFO Technical Application Instructions.

17) Page 52, Section D6. Technical Applications Instructions, Sub-section 3. Key Personnel Qualifications and Staffing Capabilities, Key Personnel Responsibilities and description states that Senior Advisor for Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning should have “*a Master’s degree or equivalent in agriculture, plant breeding, ecology or related field.*” Could USAID please confirm that a Master degree in international development or relevant field will suffice to meet this requirement?

USAID: A Master's degree will suffice, so long as the proposed candidate meets the other requirements, specifically in regard to relevant experience.

18) Page 54, Section D6. Technical Application Instructions, Sub-section 3. Key Personnel Qualifications and Staffing Capabilities states that *"Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: The applicants should include a description of the approach the Applicant will use to monitor and evaluate the project, including an analysis of why this approach is appropriate. The plan should clearly articulate an illustrative Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, including the results to be achieved, targets and associated performance measurement indicators, and data sources, methods of collection and frequency of collection using agreed indicators."* Furthermore, page 73, Section E. Application Review Information, Factor B. Management and Institutional Capacity states that Monitoring and Evaluation will be evaluated on *"The extent to which the Applicant presents appropriate performance indicators (disaggregated by sex where appropriate) that describe data collection method, type, information source, as well as the anticipated outcomes; the extent to which the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan details a clear approach for how the Applicant will meet USAID reporting requirements."* Could USAID please confirm that the instructions on the *Monitoring and Evaluation Plan* from page 54 referenced here belong to the Sub-section 1. Technical Understanding and Approach (page 48)? If so, could USAID please amend the Section E, Application Review Information, Factor B. Management and Institutional Capacity, reference here from page 73, to reflect that the evaluation of the *Monitoring and Evaluation* will be part of the Sub-section 1. Technical Understanding and Approach on page 48, and make adjustments to page allocations, as needed?

USAID: The NFO has been updated to clarify this. The paragraph describing the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan from page 49 has been moved to page 52 under the Management Plan and Institutional Capability Subsection E. Additionally, the language describing the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan on page 54 has been moved and consolidated within the same Subsection on page 52. The evaluation criteria cited under Factor B, NFO page 73 remains unchanged.

Financial Proposal Questions

19) Page 55, Section D. Cost/Business Application, 1. Application for Federal Assistance lists the forms to be submitted from the Standard Form 242 series, including *"SF-424A Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs," "SF-424B Assurances for Non-Construction Programs," "SF-424C Budget Information for Construction Programs," and "SF-424D Assurances for Construction Programs."* Could USAID please clarify at this stage if Construction is allowable under this program? If construction is not allowable, could USAID please confirm that applicants should complete forms SF-424A and SF-424B?

USAID: Construction is allowable under this program but no construction is planned at this time.

20) Page 55, Section D. Cost/Business Application, 2. USAID Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient references to the Section H for details, while page 64, Evidence of Positive Risk Assessment refers to Statutory and Regulatory Certifications also referencing to the Section H. Could USAID please confirm *USAID Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient* and Statutory and Regulatory Certifications are the same document?

USAID: Both of these are the same document.

21) Page 56, Section D. Cost/Business Application, 2. USAID Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient, Sub-section b) Budget Spreadsheet states “*The breakdown must show separate costs according to any partner organization (sub-recipient) involved in the program.*” Could USAID please define partner organization here, clarifying if this includes all potential sub-recipients or is limited to “*substantive sub-recipient partners only*”?

USAID: This applies to partner organizations and subrecipients as applicable. The NFO page 56 subsection b. has been updated to clarify.

22) Page 60, Section D. Cost/Business Application, 2. USAID Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient, I. Illustrative Leader Award Budget, (8) Training states “*Training costs must include a complete budget breakdown of all training-related costs, e.g., number of participants, pre-departure medical exams, health and accident coverage, passports/visas, travel and per diem or maintenance costs, registration or tuition fees, books/training materials, etc.*” Could USAID please clarify if travel and per diem costs related to training should be budgeted underneath Training or budgeted underneath Travel, Transportation, and Per Diem?

USAID: Any travel, transportation, and per diem related costs under Training should be placed under the Travel, Transportation, and Per Diem cost element. The NFO Section D page 60 has been updated.

23) Page 62, Section D. Cost/Business Application, I. Illustrative Leader Award Budget states that “*An illustrative summary budget for the Leader Award must be included using the following Budget Template.*” Could USAID please clarify whether the template provided on pages 62-63 is illustrative, or a must-to-use template?

USAID: We are mandating applicants use the budget template to summarize their costs in the budget excel spreadsheet.

24) Page 63, Section D. Cost/Business Application, Past Performance states that *“Past performance is the degree to which the applicant completed related work successfully, satisfied its customers/partners/sponsors under past agreements, and complied with relevant laws, regulations, and terms and conditions of its past awards. Past performance information shall be provided in an annex to the technical application, which will not count against the page limit.”* Further on page 74, Section E. Application Review Information, Cost/Business Evaluation, Risk Assessment states that: *“Applicants’ past performance will be evaluated to determine potential performance risk based on the following however Past Performance will not be considered as part of the overall Technical Score.”* Could USAID please confirm that the Past Performance information as requested on page 63 is part of the Technical Application Annex and not part of a Cost/Business Application?

USAID: Past Experience references should be submitted as a part of the Cost/ Business Application not the Technical application. References to Past Performance should be Past Experience and that language has been updated throughout the NFO including page 69 to provide clarity.

25) Page 64, Section D. Cost/Business Application, Evidence of Positive Risk Assessment states *“Applicants should submit evidence of responsibility they deem necessary for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility.”* Could USAID please confirm that the Evidence of Positive Risk is to be included as a part of the Cost/Business Application, as an annex to the Cost/Business Application, or as a separate and additional section to the Technical and/or Cost/Business Applications?

USAID: The Cost/Business application does not have a page limit associated with it, therefore the applicant may choose to include the evidence of positive risk assessment as part of the cost application, or as an annex to the cost application.

26) Page 65, Section D. Cost/Business Application, Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management states *“All applicants must have a DUNS number and hold an active U.S. Government’s System for Award Management (SAM) registration at the time of application submission.”* Could USAID please confirm if the applicant is required to submit certification of registration in SAM as a part of the application? If yes, should the certification of registration be included as an annex to the Cost/Business Application?

USAID: Applicants should comply with SAM registration requirements. We will verify through SAM online if the applicant has a valid SAM registration, therefore a separate certification of registration in SAM is not necessary unless it is requested.

27) Page 68, Section D. Cost/Business Application, sub-section Environmental Compliance states that *“Recipients shall comply with the terms of the Initial Environmental Evaluation. Applicants shall submit a narrative to describe how they plan to address the recommendations cited in the IEE, in particular address areas with a “Negative with*

Conditions” determination.” Could USAID please confirm that this narrative on environmental compliance is part of the Cost/Business Application?

USAID: The narrative regarding Environmental Compliance should be submitted as part of the Technical Volume and not the Cost/Business Application. The Environment Compliance Section referenced on page 67 has been moved to Section 5 of the Technical Application Volume in the updated NFO to reflect this change.

28) Page 70, Section D. Cost/Business Application, Waivers from or Approvals under USAID Procurement Requirements states *“If the applicant foresees the need for waivers from, or approvals required under, USAID’s source and supplier nationality requirements, the application should describe goods and services need approval/waivers, and provide an explanation and justification for the same.”* Could USAID please clarify in which section of the application this description should be included in?

USAID: As indicated in the NFO, please include this information in the cost application.

29) Can you please advise if Georgia is eligible to apply?

USAID: Please see the answer to Question #1.

30) I am looking for someone that can tell me if the Seeds Systems Support Activity program is institutionally limited. If so, how many applications can be submitted per institution?

USAID: USAID will only accept one submission per institution; so for example, if a university, the proposal must represent the entire university and not specific colleges within the university.

31) How will applications that propose differentiated services to prioritized countries/regions be evaluated in comparison to applications proposing undifferentiated services to all FtF countries?

USAID: The amount of detail provided in its application is up to the Applicant. Information must be accurate and demonstrate why the Applicant is best qualified for this Award. USAID appreciates that there are a substantial number of crops, varieties, and countries, and that these cannot all possibly be covered in a single proposal.

32) With reference to the above RFP, I have the following two queries:

- i. For the specified 4 key personnel, namely
 1. Chief of Party
 2. Monitoring and Evaluation/Learning and Knowledge Manager
 3. Development Seed Systems Advisor
 4. Emergency and Resilience Seeds Systems Advisor

Is there a specific place or location that they should be based at? Since this is a global project covering number of FTF countries can they be located on a place of choice where the management entity will be located or elsewhere?

USAID: The choice of location of personnel is up to the Applicant, but should clearly describe why a particular location is an advantage to USAID and should be reflected in the Applicant's cost proposal.

33) The Program covers the FTF countries. Should this be covering all of the Focus countries of FTF or the Target countries alone or FTF countries and additionally Seed Emergency vulnerable countries?

USAID: Please see the reply to Question #1.

34) As a PIO, we would like to confirm that should our organization be successful, the ADS 308 provisions would apply. We also would like to verify that should our organization participate as a sub-awardee under a prime applicant, in accordance with ADS 303.3.21 (c) "for sub-awards to PIOs", it would be subject to the terms and conditions contained in the "Standard Provisions for Cost-Type Awards to PIOs in ADS 308"?

USAID: That is correct.

35) We have seen there is an anticipated result framework (page 7) and outputs and outcomes (page 95). What is the relationship between the result framework and the outputs and outcomes indicators?

USAID: Please see the reply to Question #7.

36) Per page 8 of the Seed Systems Support Activity NFO, USAID is planning for some common core and mission funded activities. What will the timing be for starting these common core vs. mission-funded activities? How will core and mission activities be segregated under the same intervention?

USAID: Core funding will be used to develop the capabilities and tools as described in the Intervention Areas, and to trial them in some cases. Core funding may also be used at the discretion of BFS and OFDA, in some cases, as co-funding for mission seed-sector interventions.

37) Per page 95 of the NFO, "The project can offer more choice, better quality and affordability of seed of yield-enhancing and climate-smart varieties to smallholder farmers in formal regulated commercial seed systems and in informal non-regulated seed systems". Are there any country-specific crop varieties (including nutrition-enriched

crops) that USAID will promote to develop overall seed systems in each country, or will this be decided by the Leader awardee?

USAID: S3A will strengthen seed systems across many crops and varieties. Which crops and varieties have not been predetermined; at this time there are no specific varieties planned for any interventions. These interventions will be determined in consultation with USAID Bureaus and Missions after an Award is made.

38) Clarifying the outputs given construction and installation of cold storage, seed warehousing, and irrigation?

USAID: Please see the reply to Question #19.

39) Section A. Program Description, Page 8. Footnote number one on the definition of a seed sector directs the reader to “See definitions in Annex 3”. Will USAID please provide Annex 3?

USAID: Please see the reply to Question #2.

40) Does USAID have a standard for genetic diversity in crops that it intends to apply to the activities of this NFO?

USAID: No.

41) Section B. Federal Award Information, Page 42. The RFA states: “There is no mandatory level of cost-sharing (matching) for this program but USAID nevertheless encourages cost-sharing to the maximum practicable extent, and any proposed cost-sharing will be assessed by USAID as part of determining which applications offer the greatest value.” Can USAID please provide more information as to how the cost-sharing will be assessed as part of determining “greatest value?”

USAID: Cost share is encouraged but not required. Language referencing cost share in the cost/business application evaluation section on page 75 of the NFO has been revised for clarity.

42) Page 47. Regarding the requirement that applications be in “12-point font using fixed pitch spacing per inch,” can USAID please confirm that applicants may use a standard word processing font, such as Times New Roman, in point size 12.

USAID: Please see reply to Question #5.

43) Page 47. May applicants include a brief cover letter that does not count toward the 25-page limit?

USAID: Yes, the cover letter does not count towards the 25 page limit.

44) Page 45 and 47. Can USAID kindly confirm that the application should be submitted in 3 separate emails, including: 1) Technical Application, 2) Cost Application, and 3) Risk Assessment.

USAID: The application package should be submitted as two separate emails only (technical and cost). Risk assessment has been removed. Please see reply to Question #4.

45) Page 47. May applicants include an acronyms and abbreviations list that does not count toward the 25-page limit?

USAID: Yes, the acronyms and abbreviations list can be excluded from the 25 page limit.

46) Page 47. Would USAID please allow applicants to include an Executive Summary that is not included in the 25-page limit?

USAID: No. Applicants may submit an executive summary if they want to but it should be included within the 25 page limit.

47) Pages 47 and 63. Can USAID please confirm that the Past Experience (limited to 3 pages per project) should be submitted as an Annex and is not included in the 25-page limit.

USAID: Past Experience submissions will not count towards the 25 page limit.

48) Page 47. Would USAID please confirm 1) that Past Experience is the same as Past Performance and 2) that Past Performance should be included as a technical annex that won't count toward the 25-page limitation?

USAID: See reply to Question #24. Past Experience is the same Past Performance and will not count towards the 25 page limit.

49) Pages 47, 49, and 54. Could USAID clarify if applicants should submit both a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and the Performance Monitoring Plan as part of the technical application? If so, can USAID please 1) clarify the difference between the two and 2) confirm that both are to be included as annexes?

USAID: See reply to Question #11 and #14.

50) Page 47. Under "Page Limitations", USAID notes that the Project Management Plan will not count toward the 25-page count. Is the Project Management Plan the same as the Management Plan referred to on pages 49 and 50? If so, will the Management Plan not count toward the 25- page limitation or can USAID clarify if there are pieces of the

Management Plan that are expected to be included in an annex called “Project Management Plan?”

USAID: See reply to Question #11 and #14.

51) Page 49. The RFA states: “The Applicant shall develop a Performance Monitoring Plan detailing the Life-of-Project Work Plan and routine monitoring and reporting, focusing on program performance and impact; and Life of Project Indicators and Targets.” Could USAID provide more information on the level of detail required for the Life-of-Project Work Plan?

USAID: We don’t have a generic example but generally, we are looking for Quarter 1, month-by-month detail, Q2, Q3, Q4, then Years 2-5. Applicants should stick to the 15 Intervention Areas.

52) Pages 52. The Project Director (Chief of Party) position has the following language under experience and qualifications: “A minimum of 15 years’ experience leading, managing and implementing large international projects, specifically with experience in two or more of the following areas: management, agriculture, natural resource management, ecology or food security, including at least 5 years of experience on seed-systems specific programming.” Given the RFA’s emphasis on developing sustainable seed systems through both informal and formal markets, would USAID consider revising the requirement to a minimum of 15 years of experience that combines international projects and US-based agricultural research and/or private sector industry experience?

USAID: USAID is looking for someone who has demonstrated knowledge of the complexities of seed systems internationally. US-based positions may meet this requirement if the candidate can be shown to have led internationally-focused activities while being based in the US.

53) Page 53. Would USAID please confirm that resumes of the four key personnel and other senior program staff should be presented in an annex to the technical proposal?

USAID: For this solicitation resumes should be no more than 2 pages each and included in an annex. See NFO Technical Application Instructions.

54) Page 54. Could USAID please clarify what is meant by “agreed indicators” to be used in the illustrative Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan?

USAID: Please see the reply to Question #7.

55) Page 62. The budget template provided in page 62 of the does not have a line item for Consultants. Should Offerors add such a line item?

USAID: The cost for Consultants should be included in the Direct Salaries and Wages/ Labor Cost element. The budget template (page 69) has been updated to reference labor costs rather than salaries.

56) Page 63. Please confirm that only up to three (3) past performance references in total are to be provided for the application?

USAID: The NFO has been updated accordingly to clarify. Applicants should submit a minimum of 3 past experiences references, as applicable for the prime and for all and any subrecipients.

57) Page 63. Would USAID please confirm that an additional three (3) past performance references for each substantive sub-recipient partners are required?

USAID: Please see reply to Question #56.

58) Page 66. Can USAID please confirm that the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan should be included as an annex to the cost proposal (not as an annex to the technical proposal: see page 47).

USAID: Please see reply to Question #12.

59) Page 68-69. The RFA states: “Applicants shall submit a narrative to describe how they plan to address the recommendations cited in the IEE, in particular address areas with a “Negative with Conditions” determination. The Applicant’s response to environmental compliance will be not rated competitively. However, the Agreement Officer shall review the Applicant’s responses for compliance and will negotiate, approve, and include the environmental compliance proposal in the award”. Can USAID please confirm that submission of the narrative described above is only required of the apparently successful offeror, and not required of all Applicants at this stage?

USAID: Submission of this narrative is required at the application stage because 1) while the the IEE mitigation plan will not be rated competitively, USAID reserves the right to approve or disapprove of the plan, and 2), the mitigation plan may have cost implications, and those would need to be evaluated at the application stage.

60) Section E: Application Review Information
Page 73. Can USAID please confirm that the application narrative on Monitoring and Evaluation should be included alongside the text for Management and Institutional Capability (not Personnel: see page 54).

USAID: Please see reply to Question #11 and #14.

61) Section F: Federal Award Administration Information

Page 82. Would USAID consider revising the Geographic Code from 937 to 935, in light of the fact that one of the leading seed systems in Africa, and a model that USAID is supporting around the continent, is found in South Africa and is housed, in large measure, in the South African National Seed Organization (SANSOR), a not-for-profit?

USAID: We have determined that 937 is the most appropriate geographic code based on the program description. With use of code 937, procurement is allowable from the United States, The recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries (here is the list: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/310maa.pdf>)

62) NFO Attachment 002, Page 11, NFO Attachment 002. The IEE indicates that S3A is “global in nature and actions will take place mainly in FtF countries and in other New Alliance or FtF aligned countries with resilience of emergency recovery food security programs. It then lists the FtF focus countries, and countries with Resilience Programs, and other priority countries.” Will USAID please confirm that the listing of FtF focus countries and Resilience countries is still current and should be used for purposes of preparation of the response to the NFO.

USAID: The information on Feed the Future is the up-to-date.
Please refer to: <https://feedthefuture.gov/countries>

63) I am writing regarding the Seed Systems Support Activity grant opportunity. I am working with an organization in Morocco. We are interested in submitting a proposal for this opportunity, but want to make sure our project is eligible. Does the project country need to be a "Feed the Future" country as listed on the .gov website? This project would indeed coincide with the broader national plan in Morocco to address food security and socio-economic development through agriculture, as well as other sustainable agriculture and seed-oriented initiatives.

USAID: Please also see reply to Question #1

- USAID is seeking applicants with experience across a broad spectrum of expertise in seed systems and countries. Applications are welcome from anywhere in the relevant Geographic Code. Ultimately, the value of an offer towards meeting S3A's overall objectives (and in light of USAID strategic priorities) will be weighed, and location may be one of the criteria.
- With specific regard to Morocco, if the question is motivated by a desire to have Morocco or Morocco-based seed projects be one possible beneficiary of this activity, this would imply USAID/Morocco funding for Morocco-specific activities and the potential Offeror should therefore contact the USAID/Morocco Mission about its potential interest.