



USAID
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May 24, 2010

Reference: Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) Program
RFA No. USAID-Washington-EGAT-10-000003-RFA

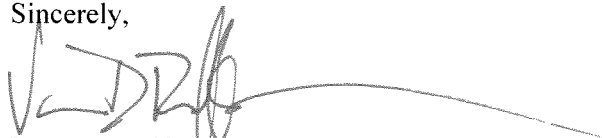
Subject: Amendment No. 02

The purpose of this Amendment No. 02 is to simplify the means of application submission and to publish Questions and Answers submitted via e-mail and during the Pre-Application Conference held on May 19, 2010.

The following changes are made:

1. Page 27, D. The Deadline for Submission of Application, delete the paragraph that begins "In addition, the original and two hard copies... " and the associated addresses, and insert, in lieu thereof, the following: "Electronic submissions through grants.gov or e-mail must contain files that were prepared in Word and Excel in a text accessible format (MS Office 2003 compatible) and all signed pages must be submitted as a pdf file.
2. Page 27, D. The Deadline for Submission of Application, in the paragraph that begins "It is the responsibility," delete, "is received in hard copy, via email and that it," from the first sentence.
3. Questions & Answers – MEAS RFA, is included as an annex to the RFA package.

Sincerely,



Vann D. Rolfson
Agreement Officer

Q&A - MEAS RFA

1. Do you see universities in a managing and implementing role? Or, alternatively, do you see universities as serving in a more supporting and resource role?

Response: See Section III.A. Applicants may structure program implementation proposals in line with their capabilities, interests, and overall strategies. Generally, universities might be expected to have strengths in research and analytical skills, evaluation, access to new technologies and ideas, and training and education. Other partners (NGOs, for-profit firms, cooperative development agencies) might be expected to have strengths in implementing large international projects (establishing offices, hiring staff, procurement, managing operations, reporting), having experience in completed and on-going international extension projects from which to draw analysis and learning, introducing good practice into new programs, and linkages with other development practitioners.

2. Do you see an online resource system as central to the implementation approach?

Response: This was not envisioned in the RFA, but the question suggests a response at two levels. For MEAS Program efforts to mainstream new approaches to extension and advisory services, a robust system is required to disseminate information and ideas. An online resource might be useful to Program outreach efforts. This would depend on the overall Program implementation strategy and approach proposed by the Applicant. An alternative might be to expand outreach by partnering with the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) or other partner to post materials on their website.

For Program support to country or regional extension and advisory services systems, online resource systems may be appropriate. This will depend on the country and context for the extension and advisory services. For example, it might be quite appropriate for services targeting agribusinesses and/or NGOs in countries with high literacy and computer access, but (depending on the country) might be of little value to a program targeting very poor farmers, minority groups or women.

3. The Program Director position appears to have low minimum qualifications compared to their level of responsibility. Could you give more direction on the level of qualifications for this person?

Response: The Program Director will be critical to Program success and will have to be a good manager, entrepreneurial, and knowledgeable about extension and agricultural development. The minimal qualifications were set low to avoid disqualifying potential candidates that may be very strong candidates, based on experience and skills but fail to meet a specific minimal criterion. For example, an individual with many years of extension, overseas, and management experience may not have advanced degrees or an individual with strong analytical, management, and extension experience may not have many years overseas experience. A strong, highly qualified individual in the Program Director position is essential to the MEAS Program.

4. The RFA lists on p. 15 the indicator of “Rural Clients Receiving Improved Services” reaching 20 million within five years. This translates to 4 million rural clients per year. What indicators are you looking for to demonstrate outreach of extension services in addition to those listed in Annex C?

Response: Details on the Performance Monitoring Plan and performance indicators will be the responsibility of Recipient to be proposed in the Application and further defined in Work Plans to be approved by USAID. This illustrative indicator would likely rely on reports on implementation from extension programs funded from other sources that are strengthened by design, planning, reform and implementation support from the MEAS Program. This would also include extension programs funded under any Associate Awards.

5. How important are private-sector driven extension services?

Response: These are very important to farmers and other stakeholders. The importance in the MEAS Program will depend in part on the Mission and country interests. Private sector driven and implemented extension and advisory services have been important in recent years in USAID funded programs. Public-private partnerships are expected to be important to effective and sustainable extension services.

6. Is involvement with other developed countries and non-USAID recipient countries encouraged? There is much to be learned from these other systems through study tours, technical assistance, etc.

Response: The focus will be on AID-recipient countries. Specific activities will be defined and approved in annual work plans. Direct assistance to extension services will target AID-recipient countries. Analytical work may draw from other countries.

7. What countries will the GIFRAS survey cover? Is it better for the case studies to move toward these countries or away from these countries?

Response: The global survey of extension capacity is being carried out by IFPRI in conjunction with FAO. This will target nearly 200 countries with a summary survey. It is expected to complete in-depths studies of three countries [Ethiopia (already completed) and probably India and Zambia]. It may cover additional countries with funds from other donors. The MEAS Program may carry out similar in-depth studies of other countries. Applicants may propose specific country studies/activities, which may be confirmed or revised in the Program Work Plans.

8. Inconsistency regarding first year funding – In Section I, A.3 (pg 12), “...First year funding for the startup of the Leader Award Program is estimated at \$1.8 million in two tranches...” However, in Section II A (pg 18), “...Applicants should use as a guide an initial startup amount in mid-FY 2010 of \$50,000 followed by a late FY 2010 obligation of \$1,450,000 and an annual obligation thereafter through FY 2014 based on the outstanding pipeline and the planned level of effort for the following year...” How should these two statements be resolved?

Response: This was resolved with Amendment #01 to the RFA.

9. Are only universities eligible to be recipients of the Leader Award under this RFA?

Response: Only universities are eligible as lead recipients of awards under this RFA. See Section I.D (p.16) of the RFA.

10. Cover Page – in Section IV, C.4.1 (pg 22), “...A summary table shall be included that lists the prime applicant and all partner organizations as well as the percentage of overall program activities that each partner will contribute...” How is this computed, by budget share, outcomes or applicant discretion?

Response: The table should present percentage of program activity by budget share.

11. Cost Spreadsheets Format – in C.5, b (pg 24), “...ii. The name, annual salary, fringe benefits, and expected level of effort...” and “...vi. Each type of “other direct costs” must be listed as a separate line item...indicating quantity and per unit cost.” The following questions arise regarding quantity and unit costs:

- a. Can unit costs vary from year to year?

Response: Yes.

- b. Should quantities and unit costs for each of the five years be presented on the same worksheet or should applicants present this information on separate sheets for each year?

Response: Separate sheets for each year are preferable with the inclusion of a summary sheet, encompassing the life of the program.

12. Allowances – in Section IV, C.5 (pg 24), “...iv. Allowances by type and by person...” A definition of allowances would be appreciated.

Response: Allowances are generally as defined by Department of State Office of Allowances in the Bureau of Administration, which coordinates the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) (<http://aoprals.state.gov/>).

Allowances are defined by USAID ADS Chapter 477 – “ALLOWANCES AND DIFFERENTIALS”, which pertains to USAID employees (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/400/477.pdf>). Applicants are not held to these allowances and rates, and grantees often find them not to be relevant. These allowances and rates generally define an upper limit for allowances. Applicants should use allowances and rates as established for their general corporate operations.

13. Is there a limitation on the number of proposals from one institution?

Response: No. Applicants may submit more than one application; however, the Government only anticipates awarding one Cooperative Agreement as a result of this RFA. Interested institutions may participate as potential sub-contractors/grantees on multiple applications.

14. Page 18, C: Award Type and Substantial Involvement

Award Type: The Government intends to award one Cooperative agreement resulting from this RFA to the responsible applicant whose application conforms to this RFA offering the greatest value in furthering the goals of the program (see also Section 1 of this RFA). The Government may (C) accept more than one application.

Is this a contradiction of the intent or an error? What happens to the funding level if in fact it accepts more than one application?

Response: This is not a contradiction or an error. The Government intends to award one Cooperative Agreement resulting from this RFA, but reserves the right to accept more than one application, if this should prove advantageous to the Government. In such an event, it is unclear what, if any, implications there would be on funding levels for the Recipients.

15. What are the issues or considerations regarding the ability of private sector corporations making a profit in public-private partnerships?

Response: Profit is essential to the sustainability and good performance of for-profit extension and advisory providers (consulting firms, newspapers, TV/radio, producer organizations, input suppliers, exporters and processors, and others) with which the MEAS Program may work. Such entities should generally have business plans or models that provide for financial sustainability. Farmers and agribusinesses involved with the Program and receiving extension and advisory services should be financially viable.

16. What types of case studies does USAID want from the Program? Is there a specific list of priority issues for MEAS?

Response: The RFA includes an extensive listing of possible extension and advisory issues on which the Recipient might work (Section A.3.2, page 13-14). Applicants should propose and justify selected topics in their application and the draft work plan for the Program. Obviously, not all issues can be addressed under the Program, and the Applicant should propose its priority topics. For Program implementation, the Recipient, in consultation with USAID, shall agree in Program Work Plans on specific issues to be addressed.

The Program is premised on the need to rebuild expertise in USAID, its development partners, and host countries with respect to building capacity for efficient, effective and sustainable extension and advisory services. The Program represents a general effort directed at promoting understanding of issues and opportunities in capacity building for extension and advisory services. This assumes a need to learn from past experiences and adapt new approaches and strategies to specific country and situational contexts. The case studies and other analytical and outreach work should be oriented to meeting this objective.

17. Our NGOs began as country level extension programs. Now they are multi-country. We would like to address these extensions services at the country and multi-country level. Is this acceptable?

Response: Yes. Although the RFA was based on an assumption of need for building extension and advisory system capacity at the country level, such a regional or multi-country approach may be fully appropriate. The Applicant may propose and justify such a multi-country activity in their application and the draft work plan for the Program. For Program implementation, the Recipient, in consultation with USAID, shall agree in Program Work Plans, on the final selection and nature of activities on which to work.

18. What is the role of the associate awards compared to the leader award? Will associate awards be made by the missions?

Response: The purpose of the RFA is to award a Leader with Associates (LWA) instrument. The competition for the LWA covers both the Leader Award which will be a cooperative agreement and Associate Awards which may be either grants or cooperative agreements. The Leader Award is funded separately from Associate Awards and will contain funding to perform the activities and program of research as described in the RFA and an estimate of funding available for Associate Awards. As USAID/Washington or missions identify additional activities related to the program description, USAID will issue an RFA to the Leader Award holder to request an application for the Associate Award. Upon agreement to the terms for the additional activity, an Associate Award will be made containing a program description and funding specific to the additional activity. Associate Awards will be made only to the Leader Award holder, and the Leader Award holder is responsible for making the sub-awards necessary to perform the Leader Award and Associate Award activities.

19. If an institution is unsuccessful in its application for the Leader Award, what are the opportunities for future participation in the Program? What are the opportunities for this institution in the associate programs? Are opportunities for associate programs limited to institutions that are in a consortium with the lead institution?

Response: USAID expects to award one LWA Cooperative Agreement. Future decisions on participation of other institutions as sub-contractors or sub-awardees in the Leader Award and any Associate Awards will be the responsibility of the Leader Recipient in consultation with USAID. Associate Awards are made only to the holder of the Leader Award. The Leader Award holder will choose its own partners and implementers for any Associate Awards. The Leader Award holder would normally utilize institutions from within its consortium for implementation of Associate Awards, where possible, but is free to select other institutions for implementation of any Associate Awards, as appropriate. If there are many requests for Associate Awards or large Associate Awards, there may well be opportunities for other institutions to participate as sub-awardees/sub-contractors.

20. Are there priority countries for this program? Perhaps those countries identified by the USG as Phase 1 and 2 countries under the Feed the Future Initiative? Is there a specific list of priority for MEAS? If so please, point us to that list. Have you defined the priority countries for this RFA? Are those the same as the ones for Feed the Future?

Response: There is no specific list of priority countries for the MEAS Program. The Recipient may work in any USAID recipient country, as approved in Annual Work Plans, and may respond to Requests for Associate Award Applications for any country or region as requested by USAID. Some countries are priority for USAID and are likely to have greater funding, interest and need for extension and advisory development support. Priority countries under the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative include the 20 focus countries of: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia in Africa; Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Tajikistan in Asia; and Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and, Nicaragua in Latin America and four strategic partner countries of Brazil, India, Nigeria, and South Africa (See: <http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2010/pr100424.html>). Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq are also national interest priority countries. Other priority countries may be identified for global climate change or other development issues.

There is a wide range of countries in which the Recipient might work. Applicants should propose and justify selected countries and activities in their application and the draft work plan for the Program. For Program implementation, the Recipient, in consultation with USAID, shall agree in Program Work Plans on specific countries and activities on which to work.

21. What is the desired proportional weight for the three components (State of the art training modules; documenting lessons learned; Technical Assistance)?

Response: The RFA does not establish an expected allocation of budget or level of effort to the three proposed components of the Program (Mainstreaming Modern Approaches; Documenting Lessons Learned; and Designing Modern Extension and advisory Services programs). Applicants should propose and justify an appropriate allocation of resources to the different components in their application and the draft work plan for the Program. For Program implementation, the Recipient, in consultation with USAID, shall agree in Program Work Plans on allocation of resources to the different components.

22. What is priority for efforts with respect to level of effort (LOE) for national extension services, private advisory services, NGOs, producer organizations?

Response: The RFA does not establish an expected allocation of budget or level of effort for work with different types of extension and advisory service providers. Applicants should propose and justify an appropriate allocation of resources to the different types of service providers, as appropriate, in their application and the draft work plan for the Program. In recent years, many USAID programs have emphasized provision of services through NGOs and agribusinesses within specific value chains. There seems to be opportunity for expanded work with producer organizations, mass media and new communications technologies, and public extension and advisory service institutions. Likely many systems will involve multiple types of institutions. For Program implementation, the Recipient, in consultation with USAID, shall agree in Program Work Plans on allocation of resources to the different components.

23. Will program leadership be delivered by a single institution or can it be a partnership?

Response: Applicants must propose and justify their arrangements for Program leadership and management. USAID is open to varied arrangements for Program leadership as long as these provide for the necessary flexibility, responsiveness, and direction for the Program. As a point of clarification the Leader Award will be addressed to only one entity, which will have overall programmatic management responsibility.

24. Must the application actually be submitted by all four methods specified?

Response: No. USAID will modify this requirement and request that application be submitted in just one way through grants.gov. Hard copies or CDs are not required, but may be submitted if the Applicant so wishes. All submissions may be electronic. Anything in the application that must be signed must be submitted in a PDF format with signature (pg 27).

25. Is component A.3.1.3 “Designing Modern Extension and Advisory Services Program” (page 13) designed for associate awards? If not, what guidance for overall LOE through leader award?

Response: No. Leader Award resources shall not be used for design of Associate Awards. As to the level of effort for this Component, see the Question above regarding weighting of components. The Recipient may propose assistance to some countries and institutions for work on extension and advisory service program design, with this to be approved in Program Work Plans in consultation with USAID. Applicants may also propose analytical studies and background feasibility studies under this Component that would be input to final program/project designs. Another possibility is that USAID Missions may issue Associate Awards for extension and advisory service system design in specific countries.

26. Would past performance references from consortium members with less than 30% budget be accepted? (pg. 23) Could we use past performance references for consortium partners along with those for the lead institution to better reflect consortium capabilities?)

Response: No. Past performance references will be reviewed only for those consortia members with 30% or more of the proposed Program budget implementation responsibility. Past performance and capabilities of other consortia members can be reflected in tables or narratives in the text of the Application.

27. Can associate awards be made for regional activities? Can associate awards be made only for activities in countries with USAID missions?

Response: Associate Awards are proposed by USAID through Requests for Applications for Associate Awards issued to the Leader Award holder. The Leader Award holder does not propose Associate Awards. Associate Awards may be made for country or regional or global activities. Associate Awards can be made for any country or region for which USAID has funding available and for which an Associate Award is appropriate.

28. Will Associate Awards for strategic partner countries be awarded with mission authorization and regional authorization or just upon authority of the mission?

Response: Requests for Applications for Associate Awards are the responsibility of USAID. Missions, Regional Programs, or Global Bureaus may issues such Requests following their usual administrative approval procedures. The Leader Award holder does not propose Associate Awards.

29. The number of CVs is limited to PI (principal investigator) and 20 Co-PIs (co-principal investigator). How do we account for other participants?

Response: With respect to Section C.4.3.4 (page 23), in order to fully demonstrate capabilities, Applicants may list all extension and advisory experts available and committed to working on the Program, as needed. Brief CVs may be included for only up to 20 of the available experts. **“Brief” CVs shall be not more than 2 pages in length.** [Note: PI and co-PI may not be the most appropriate terminology for extension and advisory services specialists engaged on the Program, though this may be appropriate to some Program activities.]

30. I’ve had trouble accessing the RFA Amendment 1 on grants.gov – both PDF and zip. Is there somewhere else I can find this?

Response: For any difficulties accessing the RFA and amendments, please contact Anne Sattgast (asattgast@usaid.gov) or Vann Rolfson (VRolfson@usaid.gov). Additionally, the Grants.Gov Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed at support@grants.gov or by calling 1-800-518-4726.

31. Does MEAS represent a new approach/mechanism for US universities to contribute to foreign assistance in addition the CRSP? How unique is the MEAS?)

Response: This is something of a new approach to applying university resources to development problems. It seems to have merit and might be applied to other needs for building human and institutional capacity. But, there is no general strategy for this as a new approach.

32. Are there expected links between the Feed the Future and MEAS? What will the mechanism be for implementation of Feed the Future?

Response: There are clear but in-direct linkages between the MEAS Program and the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative (“Feed the Future”). The Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative will require increased attention to extension and advisory services in many countries and will require that USAID staff, implementing partners, and host country individuals better understand, design and implement extension and advisory service programs. The MEAS Program supports this. The MEAS Program may receive some funding from the food security initiative. In addition, countries participating in the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative will have increased resources for extension and advisory services and may request Applications for Associate Awards under the MEAS LWA.

33. What is the allowed indirect cost for the budget? Is there a limited rate?

Response: There is no ceiling for indirect cost rates. Applicants should propose indirect costs in accordance with their established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements (NICRAs).

34. Depending on country, there may be a need for both marine resources related extension and agricultural extension. Would an applicant be expected to provide a program with both areas, marine and agricultural focus?

Response: Yes. This is one reason why a consortium may be best suited for MEAS Program implementation to ensure a robust capacity to respond with resources and capability to address different types of extension and advisory service needs in different countries and geographic regions. An additional reason for a consortium may be to facilitate dissemination of information and extension and advisory services approaches and strategies to multiple stakeholders and development practitioners in different regions and agencies.

35. Is it allowable to utilize illustrative travel budget details since we will not know all the actual trip destinations?

Response: Yes, the travel budget may be illustrative but should be based on, and match up with, the work proposed in the application.

36. What is the vision or justification for the Director being part time given the level of responsibility in the program?

Response: It would be desirable to have the Program Director position be full time. A part-time assignment is allowable and should be considered given the potential limitations in Program budget. Applicants may consider in-kind contribution of staff time to enable the Program Director or other Program staff to serve full-time.

37. What are the limits or maximum number of members allowed in a consortium? From experience what is the successful size of a consortium?

Response: There are no fixed limits and no specific guidelines or expectations. In practice, in many projects, fewer members in a consortium may make for more efficient and streamlined management. Given the nature and objectives of the MEAS Program and the need for capability to respond to varied needs for extension and advisory service development challenges, a larger and more diverse consortium may be appropriate. The size and composition of any consortium is up to the Applicant to propose and justify.

38. Extension has traditionally been done with close linkages to research programs, not just as stand alone extension programs. Is this acceptable?

Response: Extension and research linked programs have often been effective in the past. Extension services clearly need a source of potential innovation and technical support. Still, extension programs (generally public sector programs), founded entirely on the basis of linkages with research programs, have been somewhat discredited for various reasons. Such a model clearly is acceptable and is a very important option for extension and advisory services in some situations. New approaches to extension and advisory services generally must consider a broader range of functions and technical support to effectively provide clients with needed information and knowledge services.