



Issuance Date:	Tuesday, February 18, 2014
Public Webinar for Q&A:	See Section IV.A.11
Due Date for Written Questions:	See Section IV.A.11
Closing Date for Submission of Applications:	Thursday, May 15, 2014
Closing Time for Submission of Applications:	10:00a.m. Washington, DC Time

SUBJECT: Request for Applications (RFA) No. RFA-OAA-14-000009;
Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Sustainable Intensification

Pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) requests applications (proposals) from qualified and eligible organizations to manage and implement the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Sustainable Intensification (Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab). The applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number is 98.001, *USAID Foreign Assistance for Programs Overseas*.

Feed the Future Innovation Labs, formerly known as the Collaborative Research Support Programs (CRSPs), are authorized under Title XII of the FAA. Feed the Future Innovation Labs (Labs) are USAID-funded long-term, multi-disciplinary applied research and training efforts to address the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition in developing countries. Managed by U.S. universities, Innovation Labs support students and researchers in the U.S. and around the world to work with leading scientists in seeking scientific solutions to overcome hunger and poverty, while building the capacity of the institutions with which they collaborate. The principal partners in this research and training are scientists from U.S. universities, working in collaboration with scientists in developing country universities, national and international research centers, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to jointly pursue scientific investigations to overcome critical agricultural constraints facing today's global food systems. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, for which applications are requested by this RFA, will engage U.S. university capacity to address key issues related to the sustainable intensification of small-holder farming systems. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab is described in more detail in Section I of this RFA.

Applications in response to this RFA may only be submitted by eligible U.S. colleges and universities as defined under Section 296(d) of Title XII of the FAA. See Section III.A (Eligibility Information) of this RFA for more details. The successful applicant will, as the prime recipient of the award resulting from this RFA, serve as the Management Entity (ME) of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab. The ME will be responsible for the overall management of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, including the solicitation, review, negotiation, and selection of competitive proposals from, and the execution and administration of

sub-awards and/or contracts with, collaborating institutions to conduct approved research activities. The institution in which the ME is based is not necessarily precluded from competing for some of the research activities – which, if selected, might preclude the need for a sub-award or contract – but a process must be in-place to preclude any favoritism and avoid, neutralize, or mitigate any potential organizational conflict of interest that the ME may have with respect to research proposals from the same institution in which the ME is based. For this reason, the applications submitted in response to this RFA are not expected to be a fully designed research program. Additional instructions are set forth in Section IV.B of the RFA. Actual research activities will be defined in competitively selected research proposals and annual-work-plans (see Section VI.C. of this RFA) which must be approved by USAID as described in Section II.B.2(a) of this RFA.

USAID anticipates making one Leader Award under a Leader with Associates (LWA) arrangement. An LWA arrangement involves the issuance of a grant or cooperative agreement (“Leader Award”) that covers a specified worldwide activity. The Leader Award includes language that allows a USAID Mission or other USAID bureau or office to award a separate grant or cooperative agreement to the recipient of the Leader Award without additional competition and which supports a distinct local or regional activity that fits within the terms and scope of the Leader Award. This is called an “Associate Award.” The competition under this RFA covers both the Leader Award and all subsequent Associate Awards, although applications submitted in response to this RFA are related to the worldwide activity to be supported under the Leader Award only. Separate applications specific to each Associate Award will be submitted after the Leader Award is in place, if and when a USAID Mission or other USAID operating unit decides to finance an Associate Award.

The estimated life-of-project budget for the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab is \$50 million for the five-year period beginning not later than September 30, 2014 (see Figure 2), of which the Leader Award will be up to \$32 million and the cumulative amount of Associate Awards issued during those five years will not exceed \$18 million. It is estimated that up to \$5 million will be obligated to the Leader Award from USAID’s Bureau for Food Security for each of the five years, subject to availability of funds, for a total of \$25 million of “core support” to the program. USAID Missions, regional bureaus, and other offices may additionally transfer funding in a total amount of up to \$7 million for “buy-ins” to the Leader Award over the life of the project, none of which may exceed \$500,000. Additional information is in Section II.A. of the RFA. The buy-in and Associate Award figures are estimates, and there is no guarantee regarding the number of buy-ins or Associate Awards or the amount(s) thereof. Associate Awards may be for up to five years in duration and, while they must be awarded during the period of the Leader Award, may extend beyond the end of the Leader Award. The Leader Award is expected to be made between August and September 2014.

Cost-sharing (matching) is not required under this RFA but USAID nevertheless encourages cost-sharing to the maximum practicable extent, and any proposed cost-sharing (matching) will be assessed by USAID as part of determining which applications offer the greatest value. See Section III.C of the RFA for additional information on cost-sharing (matching).

The award resulting from this RFA will be administered in accordance with 22 CFR 226, Chapter 303 of USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS-303), relevant U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars, and the USAID standard provisions for U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations. Further details and internet links may be found in Section I.A of the RFA.

This RFA consists of this cover letter and the following documents:

RFA Section	Title
I	Funding Opportunity Description
II	Award Information
III	Eligibility Information
IV	Application and Submission Information
V	Application Review Information
VI	Award and Administration Information
VII	Agency Contacts
VIII	Other Information

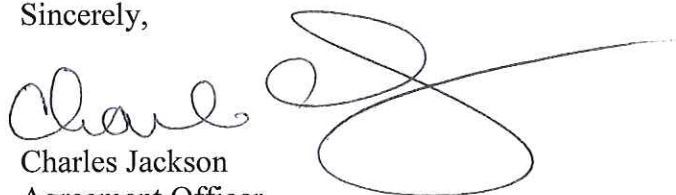
If your organization decides to submit an application, it must be received no later than the time and date set forth above in accordance with the instructions set forth in Section IV of the RFA. Applications received after the closing date and time may not be considered, except as described in Section IV.A of this RFA.

Applicants should retain a copy of their application, and any enclosures thereto, for their records.

An open and public, internet-based question and answer session will be hosted by USAID as described in Section IV.A.11 of the RFA). Questions must be submitted as described in Section IV.A.11.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute a commitment by USAID to make an award, nor shall USAID pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any application. Further, USAID reserves the right to reject any or all applications received.

Sincerely,



Charles Jackson
Agreement Officer
Office of Acquisition and Assistance
M/OAA/BFS

SECTION I – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Sustainable Intensification

I.A. INTRODUCTION

I.A.1. Authority

Pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), the United States Government (USG), as represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Food Security (BFS), is seeking to support or stimulate the activities described below, and requests applications from eligible U.S. Title XII universities (see Section III.A of this RFA) to manage and implement the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Sustainable Intensification (Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab).

I.A.2. Administration of Award Resulting from this RFA

The prime award and subsequent sub-awards resulting from this RFA will be administered in accordance with the following:

- Code of Federal Regulations, [22 CFR 226](#)
- Chapter 303 of USAID's Automated Directives System ([ADS-303](#)).
- [2 CFR 220](#) Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (formerly OMB Circular A-21).
- Office of Management and Budget's Grants Management Circular, [OMB Circular A-133](#).
- USAID Mandatory and Required-as-Applicable Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations found in [ADS-303](#).
- Geographic data will be submitted to USAID in accordance with the following:
 1. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-16, Executive Order 12906;
 2. Automated Directives System (ADS) 507 (Freedom of Information Act);
 3. Automated Directives System (ADS) 557 (Public Information).

I.B. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I.B.1. Background and Context

(a) The Feed the Future Initiative

The [Feed the Future](#) initiative seeks to sustainably reduce global poverty and hunger, recognizing the need to increase global agricultural production by 70% by the year 2050 to provide sufficient food for the world's growing population. The initiative sets out two high-level objectives: ***inclusive agricultural growth*** and ***improved nutritional status of target populations***. Increased agricultural growth will be achieved through productivity gains, more effective management of natural resources, market and trade access and efficiency, investment opportunities, and employment generation. Both high-level objectives are supported by efforts to improve the resilience of households and communities.

Agricultural research investments figure prominently in the Feed the Future initiative and are described in the Feed the Future [Global Hunger and Food Security Research Strategy](#). These research investments are designed to produce a pipeline of outputs and knowledge to address current and future needs of small-holder producers to advance agricultural productivity and sustainability.

The Feed the Future Food Security Innovation Center (FSIC) leads USAID's implementation of the Feed the Future Research Strategy through seven interlinked research and capacity programs aimed at sustainably transforming agricultural production systems. To achieve these goals, the Center's programs work with small-holder farmers as well as global, regional, and national research partners to identify and adapt promising strategies and technologies for local farming systems, and to intensify and diversify major production systems where the poor and undernourished are concentrated.

(b) Feed the Future Innovation Labs

Feed the Future Innovation Labs, led by U.S. Title XII Universities (with one U.S. Title XII university serving as the Management Entity [ME]/prime recipient of a USAID grant or cooperative agreement) and formerly known as [Collaborative Research Support Programs \(CRSPs\)](#), are collaborative research activities between U.S. universities and host-country universities or research institutions as well as other partners. The Feed the Future Innovation Labs contribute to the FSIC's research and capacity programs discussed in paragraph (a) above. A recent report, [Review of the Collaborative Research Support Program \(CRSP\) Model](#) commissioned by the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) provides an analysis of the CRSP model and recommendations for their future development as Innovation Labs. The BIFAD is a presidentially-appointed federal advisory committee established by Title XII of the FAA, whose primary role is to advise USAID on agriculture, rural development, and nutrition issues related to global food insecurity. USAID's mission is international assistance and outreach; however the collaborative nature of the Innovation Labs also brings benefits back to the United States. Through the establishment of strong relationships with national agricultural research institutions overseas, U.S. researchers gain access to international knowledge and expertise in crops produced in those countries. Partnering with host country NGOs, international and national agricultural research centers, and/or private sector practitioners is also encouraged.

Under all of the Innovation Labs, research activities should use a systems approach that considers the social, political, economic, and environmental influences that ultimately affect adoption of policies, practices, tools, and technologies. The systems approach requires that scientists integrate multiple elements including livelihoods, production landscapes, policies, and markets. Research activities should contribute to social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

While some research may focus on a farm or enterprise scale, linkages must be made to potential positive or negative impacts at a broader spatial scale. To this end, Innovation Labs are encouraged to adopt technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS) that are capable of integrating a wide range of influential factors and assessing the effects of geography and geographically overlapping factors and create products (reports, studies, tools, etc) that account for these conditions. Although Innovation Labs are designed primarily as a vehicle for agricultural scientific research, interdisciplinary approaches within the agricultural sciences, and collaboration with disciplines outside the agricultural sciences, are encouraged.

(c) The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will, in part, replace the current [Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management](#) (SANREM) Innovation Lab when it concludes its final phase in September 2014. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will contribute to the [Program for Sustainable Intensification](#), one of the seven research areas under the [Feed the Future Food Security Innovation Center](#) (FSIC). The FSIC, housed within USAID's Bureau for Food Security, leads USAID's implementation of the Feed the Future [Global Hunger and Food Security Research Strategy](#).

The 2013 [Montpellier Panel Report](#) examines the processes and elements of sustainable intensification and provides practical examples being used by some in Sub-Saharan Africa. By definition, sustainable intensification increases farm productivity from existing croplands, improves nutrition, and raises net incomes while reducing overreliance on pesticides and fertilizers and lowering emissions of harmful greenhouse gases. It also leads to efficient and resilient farming systems that contribute to or conserve the stock of natural environmental capital. Strategies are comprised of techniques of ecological and genetic intensification, within enabling environments created by processes of socio-economic intensification.

Although genetic intensification, such as through the use of improved crop varieties, and socio-economic intensification, such as through farmer-to-farmer training workshops, are important components of a holistic view of sustainable intensification, the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be well-positioned to particularly advance strategies, technologies, and tools for ecological intensification. In many food insecure regions, farmers need to more effectively capture solar, water, and soil resources to ensure that improved varieties and costly fertilizers are profitably used. Often managing degraded or inherently poor soils, farmers must often restore the health of their cropfields while also increasing the yields of their staple food crops and meeting the multiple other needs of their farm such as fuelwood, livestock fodder, biologically fixed nitrogen, and building materials. Strategies, including intercropping, perenniation, [conservation](#)

[agriculture](#), [integrated soil fertility management](#), and water harvesting, can help farmers ecologically intensify their farms and meet multiple needs.

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) provides another conceptual framework overlapping with that of sustainable intensification and defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) (2013) as agriculture that: 1) sustainably increases agricultural productivity and income; 2) adapts and builds resilience to climate change; 3) reduces and/or removes greenhouse gas emissions, relative to business-as-usual practices.

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab should be an integrated research program in the biophysical and social sciences that can contribute technologies, knowledge, and scientific direction to a wide array of stakeholders supporting or directly involved in small-holder agricultural production in targeted regions (see Section I.B.2 below) and supporting the ***inclusive agricultural growth objectives***¹ of the Feed the Future Initiative. In support of Feed the Future goals, the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab must contribute knowledge, technologies, and other research outputs that can directly or indirectly ***reduce poverty*** and ***malnutrition*** in small-holder households, and particularly for women and young children. The innovation lab should also contribute to capacity development in developing countries, through long-term degree training (MSc and PhD) and substantive collaborations with national agricultural research systems.

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab's design should reflect recommendations provided in the BIFAD report, [Review of the Collaborative Research Support Program \(CRSP\) Model](#). It is important to note that the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be responsible for some activities spanning the focal countries of a specific region, such as possibly mapping yields of important farming systems across the three South Asia countries. It will also be responsible for more narrowly focused activities within specific areas of targeted countries within the three identified regions (e.g., Dedza District, Malawi). Thus, it is likely to have some characteristics of BIFAD's Model 1 and Model 2 strategies.

BIFAD also convened a panel discussion on sustainable intensification research priorities, the results of which were used in the development of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab and which can be viewed on-line at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joe6igjTjg>. USAID's "[e-consultation: Examining Sustainable Intensification Research Priorities](#)" provides additional information that was used in the development of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab.

The purpose of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab is to identify, characterize, and develop pathways out of hunger and poverty for small-holder families through sustainable intensification. Specifically, by the end of the award period, the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab should have identified proven strategies for critical, prioritized small-holder farming systems that will produce the greatest overall impacts on improving nutrition, income, and productivity goals while conserving natural resources. This innovation lab should add value

¹ See <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/approach/Inclusive--Agriculture--Sector--Growth#focus-areas>.

to, closely engage with, and leverage the activities of the many related programs supported by USAID and other development partners. These include, but are not limited to, the International Food Policy Research Institute and relevant USAID-funded projects such as [Africa RISING](#), the USAID GeoCenter, the Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab (a new Innovation Lab expected to begin October 2014), [SERVIR](#), the [AidData Center for Development Policy](#), the [Small-Scale Irrigation Innovation Lab](#), and the Cereal Systems Initiative in South Asia ([CSISA](#)). To the extent possible, the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will also engage with and leverage relevant research activities supported by other development community partners. Examples include [HarvestChoice](#) and Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Systems ([SIMLESA](#)). These and many other research and development projects carry-out relevant or complementary activities in the same or overlapping regions as those in which the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be working. It will be crucial – especially for the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium described below – to utilize relevant activities and information from these projects, avoid unnecessary duplication, and identify critical information or research gaps. This innovation lab should ensure that a solid foundation has been set for long-term improvements in livelihoods and natural resources management; and significantly contribute to the capacity of host countries to build on and sustain the innovation lab's efforts.

Success will require a well-organized effort drawing on a range of disciplines capable of meeting the needs of small-holder families. These small-holder families often manage multiple horticulture, crop, and livestock (including fish) enterprises within the context of multiple, complex natural and human systems, which include specific biophysical, socioeconomic, programmatic, and policy conditions.

The distance between the definition of sustainable intensification and its on-the-ground realization is great. Moreover, a complex set of constraints and opportunities influence the options farmers can realistically adopt and determine the net impacts of adopting them. Multiple conditions, including agroecological, labor, natural resource, market, socio-economic, and government policy, operating at multiple scales, determine the constraints and opportunities. For sustainable intensification strategies to benefit significant numbers of small-holder households, agricultural research must produce strategies that large numbers of farmers can successfully adopt and that have large effects when adopted. It is important that impacts are documented and described, including through the use of econometric and geographic tools and information systems.

Under the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, a **Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium** will be established to take stock of, map, analyze, and provide guidance on sustainable intensification constraints and opportunities, and on developing and implementing the research agenda. The Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium will be developed in large part to address the Stocktaking, Mapping, Analysis, and Guidance area of inquiry described in Section I.B.3(a) below, and should be sufficiently diverse in expertise as to address the wide range of agronomic, livestock, socio-economic, climatic, ecological, and socio-economic issues covered by sustainable intensification. It should comprise a world-class group of partners, including representation from developing country (national) partners, capable of significantly expanding efforts to utilize remote sensing, geospatial analysis, and farming

systems modelling and analysis for sustainably increasing food security and reducing poverty and malnutrition. (See important note in fourth bullet of Section IV.B.3[a] of this RFA.)

This consortium, which will necessarily include, but may or may not be led by, the ME, will be a critical component of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab. Its activities should include, but not necessarily be limited to, mapping the complex landscape of conditions, constraints, and opportunities in which small-holder farmers operate; identifying sustainable intensification opportunities for impact across the field, farm, household, community, landscape, and regional scales; engaging and collaborating with the necessary partners critical to navigate the landscape; identifying activity and knowledge gaps that must be filled; providing technical support to the donor community, policymakers, and collaborative support to USAID sustainable intensification research programs; and oversee the implementation of focused activities.

There is no pre-determined ideal number of institutions that should be included in the consortium but it should be sufficient to provide cutting-edge, global leadership on the broad range of issues included in geospatial and farming systems analysis and research relevant to sustainable intensification. Such a consortium would likely provide opportunities for new USAID partnerships. However, given the increased number of other projects and organizations covering this area in recent years, it will be critical to complement and leverage these other efforts but avoid unnecessarily duplicating them.

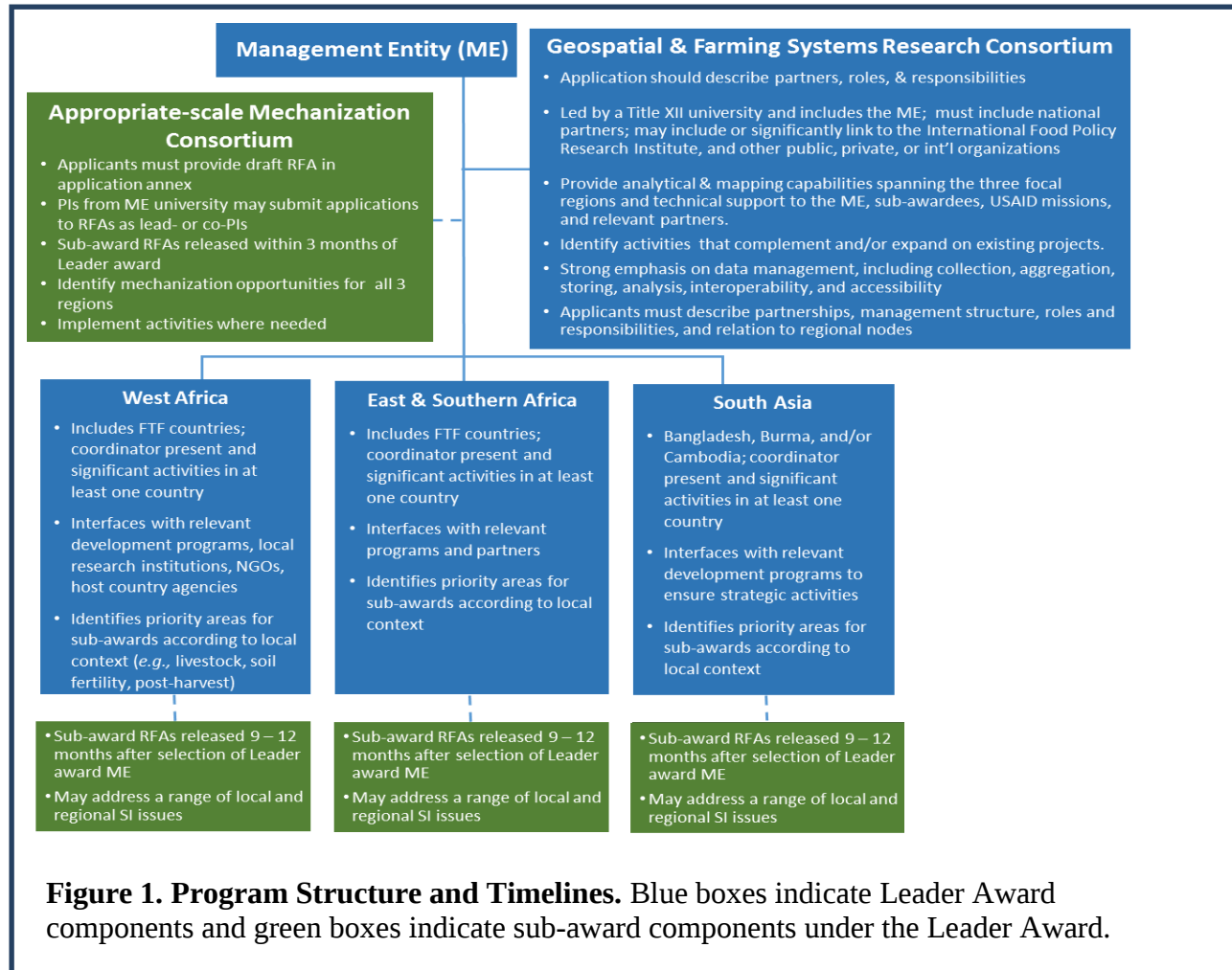
Previous surveys of research needs in the area of sustainable intensification identified appropriate-scale agricultural mechanization as a specific topic in need of research and development investments. Under their Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, an **Appropriate-Scale Mechanization Consortium**, led by a Title XII university, will be competitively selected to:

- Assess, for each of the focal regions, opportunities for and constraints to mechanization of small-holder farming systems;
- Identify entry points in ongoing projects for mechanization research activities (*e.g.*, with Africa RISING);
- Implement country-specific activities that support USAID Mission objectives.

Research on appropriate-scale mechanization should consider whether the implementation is robust (for example, from locally available materials), elegant, simple, intuitive, obvious, scalable, culturally suitable, considerate of gender issues, sustainable, and has the right amount of redundancy. This consortium will include or significantly link to other organizations with extensive strengths in this area, such as the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

To address research gaps in other relevant areas, the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will support a portfolio of competitively selected collaborative research activities (sub-awards) that generate technologies, knowledge, and recommendations in the areas of inquiry discussed in Section I.B.3 below. The research activities should be participatory and collaborative – even at the design stage – so that research questions are driven by practical needs and priorities of the host country, including food security needs, and are not simply a reflection of the interests of the

U.S. researchers. Research activities should focus on areas where there is a comparative advantage, should link to and leverage the work of other relevant projects, and avoid unnecessary duplication in the geographic focal areas. Figure 1 below illustrates the program structure for the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab.



USAID strongly encourages applicants to include qualified Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) which include, but are not limited to, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American Native Alaskan and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) in all activities.

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will support the following key positions:

- The full-time Innovation **Lab Director**, an employee of the ME institution, who **will** have overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the program and

will be the principal point of contact for USAID for issues regarding program planning and implementation; and

- **Three Full-Time Regional Coordinators, stationed in a regional coordination country, one in each of the three regions** (as described in Section I.B.2. below), who will help ensure that decisions and analyses are consistent with on-the-ground realities, that activities are aligned with USAID country and region priorities and geographies, and that critical partners are engaged from the beginning of the project.

See Section I.C.2 below for additional details on these key personnel positions.

I.B.2. Geographic Focus

The program will work across three broad geographic regions (see Figure 1), West Africa, East and Southern Africa, and South Asia, and maintain a significant presence (including the presence of a regional coordinator) in at least one country within each region. In East Africa, potential countries include the Feed the Future focal countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (www.feedthefuture.gov/countries). In West Africa, these include the Feed the Future focal countries of Ghana, Liberia, Mali, and Senegal. In South Asia, applicants should consider only Bangladesh, Cambodia, and/or Myanmar (Burma). Although some activities will be regional or trans-regional in nature, on-the-ground activities in specific countries should be within priority zones of influence identified by USAID Missions.

I.B.3. Areas of Inquiry

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab is expected to cover each area of inquiry described below. The Innovation Lab's Management Entity (ME), described in Section I.C, will be expected to craft a coherent program of high-quality research activities, focusing on areas where there is a comparative advantage for the Innovation Lab approach.

Research activities should be relevant to ongoing development issues (*e.g.*, climate change adaptation/resilience) and result in applicable recommendations for policy reforms, institutional innovations, or development programming relative to these debates. As with all Feed the Future Food Security Innovation Labs, an important objective of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab is to conduct prioritized, focused research that is relevant and necessary to achieve development impact. The innovation lab should engage with national research partners, policy-makers, private sector representatives, and other stakeholders as appropriate, including in the early stages of research design. Only after the award has been made should the ME, in consultation with the project's representatives in the Bureau for Food Security, engage with the relevant USAID missions to further refine research topics and priorities (see Section IV.A.11[b] of this RFA).

(a) Stocktaking, Mapping, Analysis, and Guidance

Several studies have pointed out the need to better utilize information to identify opportunities and guide decision-making processes. Investments in agricultural development are often only

poorly linked and information is poorly transmitted between projects, development partners, governments, and farmers. This has resulted in duplication of efforts in some areas, while information gaps remain in others. The innovation lab should utilize its Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium, three country coordinators, and sub-awards to develop an effective platform for analysis and guidance.

A range of activities for the focus regions might include, but should not be limited to:

- Remote sensing of vegetative cover and agricultural activities.
- Map and analyze potential, attainable, and actual crop and livestock yield gaps.
- Map use of agricultural inputs, technologies, and extension, overall and by sex.
- Map and characterize agro-ecological, host-country policy, and market conditions.
- Map and characterize natural resource use trends (*e.g.*, afforestation) and opportunities (*e.g.*, water harvesting strategies).
- Visualize and analyze sustainable intensification research and development projects within USAID and across the development community.
- Link sustainable intensification research and development projects within USAID and across the development community.
- Ground-truth proposed agronomic and livestock management practices.
- Provide guidance to the international agricultural research community on sustainable intensification pathways.
- Develop strategies for scaling proven technologies and strategies across target regions.
- Map and characterize constraints to and opportunities for adoption of practices/technologies, including social, governance, and market factors.
- Map gendered participation in different farming and natural resource systems.

(b) Farming Systems Research

Farming systems research approaches are several decades old, but new opportunities in data collection and analysis, computer modeling, and information communication can improve results. The challenges are greater than ever, though, to simultaneously increase productivity while better utilizing and conserving natural resources and do so in the face of changing climatic conditions. Farming systems scientists can work with farmers to identify technologies, opportunities, and strategies, of which the farmers may be unaware, and help to test and adapt them in on-farm conditions. On-the-ground understanding of the livelihoods and production conditions are critical to reliable and effective mapping efforts at larger scales.

Issues to address could include:

- Mechanization options for increasing labor productivity, reducing drudgery and ensuring timely farm operations.
- Strategies and gender roles for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Effective natural resource management strategies, including for sustainable water use and forest and biodiversity conservation.
- Utilizing perennial crops, nitrogen-fixing legumes, and organic residues for soil fertility improvements.
- Increased livestock diversification and productivity.
- Integration of high-value horticulture, aquaculture, and tree crop enterprises
- Research and development platforms to improve sustainable intensification opportunities.

(c) Linking Sustainable Intensification Impacts Across Spatial Scales

The concept of sustainable intensification includes community- and landscape-scale considerations of agricultural production. Linking changes in field- and farm-scale production practices in a timely and reliable manner that can predict larger-scale impacts is difficult. Models for doing this exist, such as the USAID-supported Community Markets for Conservation ([COMACO](#)) in Zambia, but it is unclear how context-specific such success stories are, and questions remain about how well they address the full range of issues.

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab has a unique opportunity to combine remote sensing, geospatial analysis, and farm-scale agricultural research efforts to investigate these linkages and questions. Related issues include:

- Effects of increased productivity on wildlife poaching.
- Impacts of improved on-farm rainfall capture and use on watershed conditions.
- Identification of conditions under which sustainable intensification increases cropland expansion.
- Impacts of integrating perennial crops on deforestation.
- Climate change impacts on yield stability and management options.
- Effects of increased use of technology by women farmers or closing the gender-input gap on local groundcover and crop diversity or local vulnerability to climate change.

(d) Sustainable Intensification Impacts on Gender and Nutrition Issues

(i) Gender

The adoption of new technologies, practices, or enterprises may depend on gendered roles, constraints, and opportunities and can also have dramatic effects on gender issues in small-holder

farming systems. This innovation lab will provide a unique opportunity to assess the impacts that sustainable intensification may have on gender issues in rural households and communities.

Implementing partners are expected to follow the Feed the Future research strategy as well as comply with USAID policies on gender, including consideration of gender roles in sustainable intensification. Research activities should take into account the gender dimensions noted below, both in terms of how technologies and research questions can be better designed by incorporating information on gender, and in terms of program impacts on women and men. The program must integrate gender considerations into all activities. Especially, it should be structured to promote equitable participation of men and women in research trials and other activities, as well as equitable access to and adoption and diffusion of technology relevant to women and men farmers and processors.

Issues related to sustainable intensification that may affect men and women farmers and processors differently include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Land tenure, access to land and other assets, and property rights;
- Climate change impacts on gender roles in rural households;
- Access to and use of agricultural inputs or access to credit necessary to obtain these inputs;
- Decision-making related to adoption of technologies and agricultural practices;
- Distribution of income, food, and other benefits derived from changes in production practices, enterprise diversification, and from changes in traditional practices.

The program must document, characterize, and mitigate the impact of labor requirements for sustainable intensification on other activities of men and women. In addition, the program must consider the different gender impacts of climate change and food security, and conduct research to contribute to the development of gender-appropriate climate adaptation/resilience technology aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women. The program must also consider the impact of gender on adoption of climate adaptation/resilience technologies.

(ii) Nutrition

As with gender roles, the nutritional status of farm households can change with changes in farm practices and enterprises. Increased productivity or enterprise diversity does not necessarily result in improved access, availability, or utilization of nutritious foods in the household. Improved nutrition can be a motivating factor for adopting new, improved varieties or practices that improve productivity and natural resource management.

As discussed in Section I.B.1 above, although the areas of inquiry described herein are primarily geared toward the Feed the Future objective of reducing poverty through inclusive agricultural growth, Feed the Future's nutrition goals are also critical to the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab. There is need to consider how agricultural activities can contribute toward improved nutritional status. Though not all agricultural approaches to improve nutrition have

been validated with a deep evidence base, critical examination of the linkages and interactions of agriculture, the environment, gender, and outcomes of nutrition and health can yield potential areas for inquiry. The Feed the Future [Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Nutrition](#) is one example of how USAID is investing in research on nutrition and agriculture linkages. There are many ways to integrate nutrition considerations into this program. Dr. Kimberly Chung provides additional information on ways to frame agriculture-nutrition linkages for research in, “[An Introduction to Nutrition-Agriculture Linkages](#).”

Although it is outside of the scope of this innovation lab to carry out purely nutrition research, there is a critical need to address nutrition and agriculture questions in an interdisciplinary fashion. Many agricultural development projects focus only on the technical aspects of a production problem. A thorough, interdisciplinary understanding of the complex production-consumption-nutrition chain, including gender roles and issues, is needed to identify appropriate sustainable intensification strategies. It is important to consider more than a single approach or value chain and to instead think about building a larger, coherent strategy that might include a range of options.

(e) Cross-Cutting Issues

Additional cross-cutting issues will necessarily be considered, when relevant, in identifying and implementing research activities. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

(i) Natural Resource Management, Including Environmental Impacts

The program will be subject to environmental review by USAID and the recipient of the award(s) resulting from this RFA will need to comply with any environmental requirements resulting from USAID’s environmental review. These requirements also relate to biosafety measures related to the use of genetic engineering. See Section III.F of this RFA.

In addition to the mandatory environmental compliance under 22 CFR 216, sound environmental stewardship, including protection or enhancement of ecosystems services, is critical to the success of sustainable intensification of agriculture. To achieve sustained agriculture sector growth in landscapes with agriculture, appropriate natural resource management that improves soil fertility, water quality, natural flora and fauna, must be entrenched. Hence the research activities envisioned here ought to provide practical pathways to secure the environmental flows while meeting food security goals through sustainable intensification.

(ii) Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Climate change poses special challenges in agriculture. Various agricultural practices can worsen the trend and impacts of climate change, but the sector is also uniquely suited to stall or reverse climate change based on climate-smart agriculture principles. Research activities should enhance climate resilience and contribute to USAID’s [Global Climate Change and Development Strategy](#) with an overarching strategic objective to help developing countries speed their transition to

climate resilient, low emission, sustainable economic growth. To address climate change and mitigation, the research program should:

- Identify the technologies and practices farmers are already undertaking to adapt to current vulnerability and climatic changes and whether these should be scaled-up or are maladaptive;
- Explain why farmers do (or do not) adopt existing sustainable intensification or climate-smart agriculture practices, such as farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) in West Africa; which technologies and practices not only work well now, but also under potential future climate conditions, with an emphasis on technologies that are flexible to adapt to a wide range of potential future climate scenarios;
- Explore how the resources of the agricultural systems (such as extension and private sector providers) can be harnessed to promote climate-smart practices and technologies;
- Quantify the climate change mitigation potential of proposed technologies and practices via reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and increases in carbon sequestration.
- Determine the conditions under which sustainable intensification strategies reduce deforestation and land conversion.

I.C. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

I.C.1. Management Entity (ME)

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be comprised of a portfolio of research activities involving collaboration between U.S., host country, and international institutions participating in the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab. Effective management, communication, and coordination are critical to optimizing results from a multi-faceted global integrated research program. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab's research portfolio is overseen by the Management Entity (ME), which is the prime recipient of the Leader Award and any subsequent Associate Awards resulting from this RFA. A streamlined management structure that minimizes administrative costs in order to maximize research, outreach, and capacity-building activities is preferred. The ME's responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

(a) Development of a Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium

The ME will be responsible for developing and supporting the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium described in Section 1.B.1(c) above.

(b) Development, Selection, and Management of Research Portfolio

The ME is expected to craft and organize a coherent program of high-quality research activities, focusing on areas where the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab has a comparative advantage. This Innovation Lab will include an Appropriate-Scale Mechanization Consortium

(as described in Section I.B.1[c] above) to be selected through a competitive process managed by the ME. The ME will also competitively select additional sub-awards as needed to meet other specific research needs. The ME, its three regional coordinators, the consortia, and sub-awardees will need to coordinate closely and efficiently to ensure effective integration of the research portfolio within each of the selected countries and across the program. The ME must conduct the competitive process in an impartial and transparent manner, including the solicitation, review, negotiation, and selection of competitive proposals from, and the management of sub-awards and/or contracts with, collaborating institutions to conduct approved research activities. PIs from the institution in which the ME is based are not precluded from competing for some of the research activities – which, if selected, might preclude the need for a sub-award – but a process must be in-place to preclude any favoritism and avoid, neutralize, or mitigate any potential organizational conflict of interest that the ME may have with respect to research proposals from the same institution in which the ME is based. Research activities should include partnerships with host-country universities or national research institutions, except in situations where such partnerships are not practical or possible. The ME will also establish and support advisory bodies, including a technical advisory committee for the program’s research and capacity development portfolio (also see Section II.B.2(a)(4) of this RFA).

(c) Training and Capacity-Building

The ME is responsible for developing a comprehensive human and institutional capacity development (HICD) plan to ensure that the capacity-strengthening needs of host-country partner organizations are considered by the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab. The ME must ensure that each research activity includes capacity-building, training, and/or institutional strengthening, if needed and relevant, to enhance skills and expertise among the host country scientists, universities, national agricultural research institutions, and/or NGOs it engages. This includes maximizing opportunities for long-term degree training for host-country students shorter-term training for developing country researchers and practitioners, and direct research collaborations with national agricultural research systems.

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab should incorporate a variety of approaches for building capacity, including degree programs, distance learning, and use of innovative methods to strengthen human and institutional capacity of host country partners. Efforts should be made to ensure balance in access to training and capacity-building opportunities in terms of men and women trainees and other participants, and promote equal participation of men and women in all activities. The ME is encouraged to consider ways that the HICD strengthening agenda can complement other USAID investments in human and institutional capacity development. For example, there are USAID Mission-level investments in countries relevant to this Innovation Lab, such as the Senegal-based program [Education and Research in Agriculture](#) (ERA), and the Tanzania-based program [Innovative Agricultural Research Initiative](#) (iAGRI) and centrally (Washington)-funded programs such as InnovATE.

Further, the recent study, [Agricultural Long-Term Training—Assessment and Design Recommendations: Final Report](#) (2010) by Andrew Gilboy, Cornelia Flora, Ron Raphael, and

Bhavani Pathak can provide additional insights on the development of the HICD strategy for the program.

(d) Knowledge-Sharing and Learning

To help share the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab's knowledge and drive impact at national, regional, and global levels, the ME must ensure that it shares and makes available information and insights to multiple audiences that could include but are not limited to the following: producers, processors, and consumers; government policy-makers; the scientific community; and rural development practitioners. **To ensure that this is a sufficiently supported component, roughly 7% of the central funds (see Figure 2) should be budgeted to this area.** Knowledge-sharing activities should include extending information on best practices and strategies within the innovation lab regions and outward to relevant partners and projects, developing collaborations and partnerships, and sharing "lessons learned" with a wide range of stakeholders. The ME should engage with and leverage existing knowledge-sharing platforms and resources in order to further their reach and impact. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: USAID's [Agrilinks](#) website, the [AidData Center for Development Policy](#) and IFPRI. For insights and examples on knowledge management under Feed the Future programs please visit <http://agrilinks.org/>.

(e) Performance Monitoring

(1) Performance Management Plan (PMP)

Performance management requires access to useful and timely information on a broad range of factors throughout the life of a program. Without planning how and when this information will be obtained, it will be difficult or impossible, once activities start, to put systems in place to ensure adequate information flow to enable ongoing decision-making and to meet performance reporting requirements (see Section VI.C.1 of this RFA). The ME must take adequate steps to plan and institutionalize a process for collecting performance information as part of everyday work. This performance information consists of the indicators that will measure progress toward intermediate and final results, with baseline data and periodic and final performance targets.

The Management Entity (ME) must develop and maintain an overall Performance Management Plan (see Section VI.C.1.[b] of this RFA) which will serve as a tool to plan and manage the process of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting progress toward achieving the desired results. Appropriate gender-sensitive methodologies must be used. The PMP should include a plan and schedule to establish a baseline for the indicators, and a process for setting performance targets and monitoring for performance and impacts, including the following:

- Performance indicators that will measure progress toward achieving the desired results and account for gender dimensions as relevant. The PMP must use appropriate Feed the Future indicators. Mandatory indicators, necessary to use when relevant, are defined under the Standard Program Structure (SPS) indicator categories, from the Feed the Future [Handbook of Indicator Definitions](#). Indicators can include quantitative data (e.g.,

individuals receiving training) and qualitative information (*e.g.*, description of shifts in government policy).

- A plan and schedule to establish a baseline for the indicators which describes the value of a performance indicator before the implementation of USAID-supported activities that contributes to the achievement of the relevant result.
- Performance targets, with appropriate benchmarks and milestones of progress.
- Critical assumptions.
- The schedule for data collection, including the actual time period the data covers, and when data will be collected.
- The source of the data and the methods for data collection and analysis, recognizing that this information will be refined once the sub-awards are made.
- Disaggregation of all people-level performance indicators by sex. If disaggregated data are not feasible, the PMP (including performance indicators) must assess impact on disaggregated populations indirectly.
- Documentation of known data limitations of each performance indicator by explaining any data quality limitations and what steps will be taken to address them.
- Description of the data quality assessment procedures that will be used to verify and validate the measured values of actual performance of all the performance information.
- The estimated costs of collecting, analyzing, and reporting performance data in the budget.
- A calendar of performance management tasks (*e.g.*, reviewing performance reports, conducting site visits, updating and revising the performance management plan as may be necessary, etc.) that must be conducted over the expected duration of the program, with approximate timeline for the completion of each task, recognizing there will be modifications necessary based on the sub-award portfolio.
- An Evaluation Plan that identifies planned evaluations, which should include possible evaluation questions, ideas for evaluation design, and methodologies to be used. Also see Section VI.C.1(d) of this RFA.
- Use of a web-based geospatial mapping interface to visualize results from multiple partners, including project activities, results, and basic analyses on sustainable intensification.

As defined in the USAID Policy Framework (2011-2015), USAID is committed to strategically allocating resources through geographically targeting aid investments, monitoring and evaluating overall aid effectiveness, and upholding the Agency's open data and transparency goals. Utilizing geographic information systems (GIS) technology, geographic data, and analysis is essential to effectively achieving these objectives. Accordingly, the ME (and its partners) must include geospatial methods using GIS technology to support USAID's effort to incorporate geographic data and analysis into the Agency's overall development planning, design, and monitoring and evaluation. The PMP must include geographic data collection, geographic analysis, and data submission methods as a separate section. Three types of geographic data will be collected in a standardized manner:

- **Project and Activity Location Data:** Project and Activity Location Data refers to data that records a discrete point location for project and activity sites. Project and Activity Location Data is essential in establishing an effective method for managing, analyzing, and communicating project and activity information.
- **Thematic Data:** This refers to data such as demographic and health indicators, land use, land cover, hydrology, and transportation infrastructure. Thematic Data is essential for USAID's development planning and project design purposes.
- **Project Specific Data:** This refers to data such as the analytical output of a geographic analysis that is conducted while implementing a project and is useful to USAID's development planning and project design purposes.

(2) Impact Assessment

Impacts denote change from one condition, status, or behavior to another as a consequence of the activities conducted; they should not be confused with outputs. While the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab is not responsible for delivery and broad scale-up of technologies, the program is responsible for building the horizontal linkages within the selected focus countries to enable a hand-off of relevant technologies and knowledge to those best positioned to disseminate it to target beneficiaries. The ME must ensure that there are quantifiable and verifiable indicators of each activity's impact on USAID's goals and strategic objectives. The ME must have a strategy to document technology adoption and program impact. The ME must ensure that detailed operational plans for each research activity are developed which describe: (a) the specific problems to which the research activity can be applied; (b) the means by which the research activity can help solve those problems; and (c) a strategy to ensure the research activities are linked throughout the time period of the program to relevant actors who are positioned to take up and advance the outputs of research. The impact assessments commissioned or conducted by the program should examine its role in making relevant connections, within the manageable interest of the program, how those actions have led to actual impact on target beneficiaries, and what the impact has been. All research activities should be structured to answer the following questions before, during, and after the development and dissemination of research outputs:

- How does the research activity advance USAID-supported goals and strategic objectives (e.g., increasing food production, improving food access, preserving environmental quality)?
- How does the research activity address the agronomic, economic, and environmental needs of target beneficiaries, both men and women, as they define those needs? Is the research accessible to both men and women and marginalized groups?
- How does the research activity address climate adaptation/resilience issues? How does it address or impact greenhouse gas emissions?
- How does the research activity address food security issues?
- How does the research activity help to develop or inform policies that increase whole farm profitability and productivity and safeguard the resources upon which future generations will depend?

(f) Program Planning, Reporting, and Evaluation

The ME will be responsible for fulfilling the program planning and reporting requirements described in Section VI.C.1(a) and (c) of this RFA, as well as the financial reporting requirements described in Section VI.B of this RFA. The ME (and all sub-awardees/contractors) will be responsible for cooperating with and facilitating the work of the external evaluators discussed in Section VI.C.1(d) of this RFA.

(g) Management of Associate Awards

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be implemented under a Leader with Associates (LWA) mechanism, as described in the cover letter and Section II.A of this RFA. Funding from the USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) will be obligated under the Leader Award to support the core program focused on sustainable intensification research and development (see figure 1). The buy-ins to the Leader Award and Associate Awards under the LWA will allow USAID Missions and other USAID operating units to exploit the core technical expertise under the Leader Award to carry-out activities to further the specific objectives of the Mission. Thus, the ME must have the ability to manage the core program under the Leader Award, and to address research and capacity-building activities related to sustainable intensification that are funded by USAID Missions under Associate Awards.

I.C.2. Key Personnel

The Key Personnel positions for the Leader Award, whose appointments will be subject to USAID approval (see Section II.B.2[a] of this RFA), will be the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab Director and the three Regional Coordinators.

(a) Lab Director

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab Director shall have overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the program, and shall be the principal point of contact for USAID for issues regarding program planning and implementation. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab Director will be responsible for activity coordination, planning, work-plan development, program reporting, overall program monitoring and evaluation, and coordination and representation of the program with USAID and other stakeholders. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab Director's minimum qualifications should include: an advanced university degree in a subject relevant to international agricultural development, relevant technical expertise, and program management competency, including experience with integrating gender, environmental, and nutritional considerations into international agricultural development projects. Experience in managing partnerships between international, national, and local partners, and at least ten years of experience in international development is highly preferred. The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab Director is envisioned as a full-time position.

(b) Regional Coordinators (3)

Three full-time Regional Coordinators, stationed in a regional coordination country, one in each of the three regions covered by the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab (see Section I.B.2) to help ensure that decisions and analyses are consistent with on-the-ground realities, that activities are aligned with USAID country and region priorities and geographies, and that critical partners are engaged from the beginning of the project. The Regional Coordinators will be responsible for ensuring effective communication and coordination between the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab and relevant partners, projects, USAID Missions, and national government institutions and agencies across the regions they represent. Each will also be expected to effectively communicate and coordinate with the other Regional Coordinators, and other innovation lab components including the consortia and sub-awarded projects. Regional Coordinators should, at minimum, have bachelor's degrees in international development, agricultural and/or plant science, natural resource management, agricultural economics, geography, or related fields relevant to the objectives of the project. They should also be knowledgeable about local agricultural, policy, and cultural conditions of the regions in which they will work; have strong institutional or government connections in the region; and extensive experience in international agricultural research and development. Experience with geospatial information systems is highly preferred. (See important note in Section IV.B.3(b) of this RFA.)

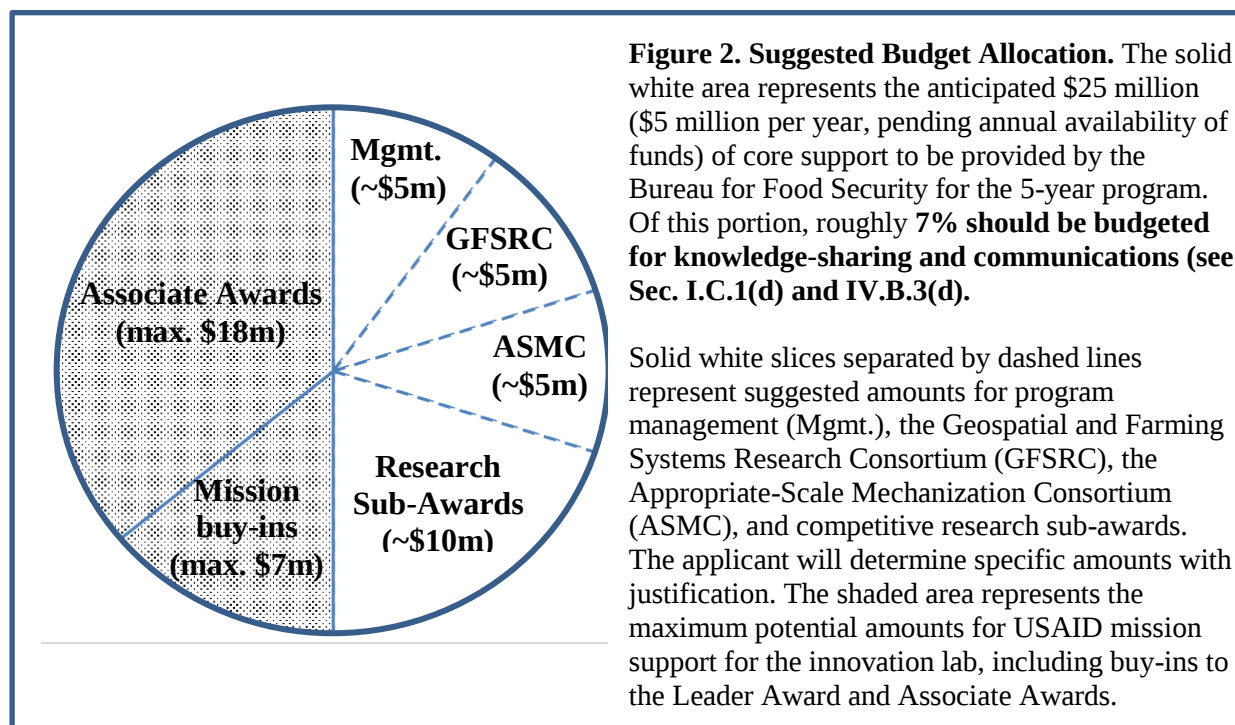
SECTION II – AWARD INFORMATION

II.A. NUMBER OF AWARDS, FUNDING, AND PERFORMANCE PERIODS

As indicated in the cover letter of this RFA, USAID anticipates making one Leader Award under a Leader with Associates (LWA) arrangement. An LWA arrangement involves the issuance of a grant or cooperative agreement (“Leader Award”) that covers a specified worldwide activity. The Leader Award includes language that allows a USAID Mission or other USAID bureau or office to award a separate grant or cooperative agreement to the recipient of the Leader Award without additional competition and which supports a distinct local or regional activity that fits within the terms and scope of the Leader Award. This is called an “Associate Award.” The competition under this RFA covers both the Leader Award and all subsequent Associate Awards.

The Leader Award will be effective not later than September 30, 2014 and extend for five years, with a maximum USAID funding level of up to \$32 million, to be provided incrementally over that five-year period. Of this amount, \$25 million is expected to be core funding from the Bureau for Food Security, and up to \$7 million represents potential buy-ins from USAID Missions and other operating units, each of which will be less than \$500,000. Suggested budget allocations for the Leader Award are set forth in Figure 2 below. In addition, the cumulative amount of Associate Awards issued during those five years will not exceed \$18 million.

The following describes the anticipated five-year life-of-project funding for the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab:



The above figures are estimates, and there is no guarantee regarding the number of buy-ins or Associate Awards or the amount(s) thereof. Associate Awards may initially be for up to five years in duration and, while they must be awarded during the period of the Leader Award, may extend beyond the end of the Leader Award. The Leader Award is expected to be made between August and September 2014.

II.B. AWARD TYPE AND SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

II.B.1. Award Type

USAID intends to award a cooperative agreement for the Leader Award to the responsible applicant whose application, conforming to this RFA, offers the greatest value in furthering the goals of the program described in Section I of this RFA. A cooperative agreement is distinguished from a grant by virtue of USAID having substantial involvement (beyond that which is permitted under a grant) in the implementation of the program.

II.B.2. Substantial Involvement

(a) Leader Award

USAID will be substantially involved in the implementation of the core program described in Section I of this RFA under the Leader Award described in Section II.A above. The intended purpose of the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) involvement during the implementation of the program is to assist the recipient in achieving the supported objectives. It is expected that the Agreement Officer will delegate the following approvals to the AOR, except for changes to the Program Description or the approved budget, which may only be approved by the Agreement Officer.

Substantial involvement will be limited to:

- (1) Review and Approval of Annual Implementation Plans (Work-Plans) for the Leader Award.
- (2) Approval of Specified Key Personnel – Lab Director and Three Regional Coordinators.
- (3) Approval of the Recipient's overall Performance Management Plan (PMP) for the Leader Award.
- (4) Collaborative involvement in selection of members of the technical advisory committee for the program's research and capacity development portfolio, and membership on such committee, if applicable.
- (5) Concurrence on the substantive provisions of sub-awards and contracts for research and capacity development activities.

- (6) Review and approval of Program Descriptions for proposed Associate Awards.

(b) Associate Awards

Associate Awards may be a grant or a cooperative agreement. If an Associate Award will be a cooperative agreement, specific substantial involvement provisions will be identified for that Associate Award. These provisions may include (a) approval of recipient's implementation plans; (b) approval of specified key personnel; and (c) Agency and recipient collaboration, joint participation or approvals (*e.g.*, collaborative involvement in selection of advisory committee members and membership on such committee, if applicable; concurrence on the substantive provisions of sub-awards; approval of the recipient's monitoring and evaluation plans; and/or monitoring to authorize specified kinds of direction or redirection because of interrelationships with other projects).

SECTION III – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

III.A. Types of Entities That May Apply

This program is authorized under Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. Applications may only be submitted by eligible U.S. colleges and universities as defined under Section 296(d) of Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended:

“... those colleges or universities in each State, territory, or possession of the United States, or the District of Columbia, now receiving, or which may hereafter receive, benefits under the Act of July 2, 1862 (known as the First Morrill Act) or the Act of August 30, 1890 (known as the Second Morrill Act), which are commonly known as ‘land-grant’ universities; institutions now designated or which may hereafter be designated as sea-grant colleges under the Act of October 5, 1966 (known as the National Sea Grant College and Program Act), which are commonly known as sea-grant colleges; Native American land-grant colleges as authorized under the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note); and other United States colleges and universities which— (1) have demonstrable capacity in teaching, research, and extension (including outreach) activities in the agricultural sciences; and (2) can contribute effectively to the attainment of the objectives of this title.”

The Title XII university-led Feed the Future Innovation Labs involve multiple partners, principal of which are U.S. universities, working in collaboration with scientists in developing country universities, national and international research centers, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to jointly pursue scientific investigations to overcome critical agricultural constraints facing today’s global food systems. All types of U.S. and non-U.S. entities are eligible as collaborating partners (*e.g.*, sub-recipients or contractors at various tiers), provided that they are not excluded from U.S. Government (USG) acquisition and assistance awards (this may be verified through the U.S. Government System for Award Management [SAM] at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>, by checking the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) [List of Specially Designated Nationals \(SDNs\) and Blocked Persons](#), and by checking the [United Nations Security designation list](#). In preparing the application, it is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that no individuals or organizations proposed for participation in the program are excluded by the USG. After award, it is the Recipient’s responsibility to ensure that no transactions are conducted with excluded parties.

USAID strongly encourages applicants to include qualified Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) including, but not limited to, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American Native Alaskan and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) in both the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium and in all collaborative research activities (including the Appropriate-Scale Mechanization Consortium).

Collaborating partners may be contractors or sub-recipients, and applicants should be aware of the distinction between procurement contracts (acquisition) and sub-awards (assistance), as the terms are defined in 22 CFR 226.2 (also see §____.210 of OMB Circular A-133). Contracts are subject to 22 CFR 226.40-49 and the USAID standard provision entitled "USAID Eligibility Rules for Goods and Services" (see Section III.D below). Sub-awards are subject to 22 CFR 226.5 and the USAID standard provision entitled "Applicability of 22 CFR Part 226."

The recipient's and sub-recipients' contractors and subcontractors at all tiers must also meet USAID's supplier nationality requirements described in Section III.D below. Please note that it is USAID policy that no profit (*i.e.*, any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs) is payable under the prime award or under any sub-award (*i.e.*, sub-grants and sub-cooperative agreements, but excluding procurement contracts). However, profit is payable by the prime recipient or a sub-recipient to a contractor/vendor if the recipient or sub-recipient is procuring goods or services in furtherance of the program being supported by the award or sub-award. Please refer to the following for additional information: (<http://transition.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303sai.pdf>).

III.B. USAID ENCOURAGES APPLICATIONS FROM POTENTIAL NEW PARTNERS

USAID strongly encourages applications from potential new partners. Awards to potential new partners may be significantly delayed if USAID must undertake necessary pre-award reviews of these organizations to determine their "responsibility" (see Section III.E below). These organizations should take this into account and plan their implementation dates and activities accordingly.

III.C. COST-SHARING (MATCHING)

III.C.1. Leader Award

There is no mandatory level of cost-sharing (matching) for this program; however, USAID 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. Cost-sharing or matching means that portion of project or program costs not borne by the U.S. Government. Cost-sharing includes cash and in-kind contributions, and is subject to 22 CFR 226.23 and the USAID standard provision for U.S. NGOs entitled "[Cost-Sharing \(Matching\)](#)" which, *inter alia*, requires that cost-sharing be verifiable from the Recipient's records. Cost-sharing or matching is normally associated with contributions from the same prime and sub-recipient sources that also receive USAID funds under an award, but can include contributions from third parties. Failure to meet a cost-sharing requirement can result in the Recipient having to make refunds to USAID or a reduction in future funding.

III.C.2. Associate Awards

Cost-sharing requirements, if any, will be established for each Associate Award by the USAID Mission which finances the Associate Award.

III.D. ELIGIBILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR USAID FINANCING

III.D.1. Leader Award

(a) Applicable Rules

The recipient must comply with USAID's *Rules for Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID* in [22 CFR 228](#) in the procurement and long-term lease (as defined in 22 CFR 228.01) of goods and services with USAID funds. These rules govern the *source* of USAID-financed commodities and the *nationality* of suppliers of USAID-financed commodities and services, which must be in a country that is included in the authorized geographic code (see Section III.D.1[c] below). These rules apply to the recipient's procurement contracts (as defined in 22 CFR 226.2) with vendors (see paragraph [c] of §____.210 of [OMB Circular A-133](#)), and to subcontracts at all tiers under the recipient's procurement contracts.

(b) Sub-Awards

These rules do not apply to sub-awards (as defined in 22 CFR 226.02), but do apply to the procurement and long-term lease of goods and services by sub-recipients (as defined in 22 CFR 226.2, and as described in paragraph (b) of §____.210 of [OMB Circular A-133](#)) at all tiers, and to those sub-recipients' procurement contracts and subcontracts with vendors at all tiers. These rules do not apply to procurement or long-term lease of goods and services with cost-sharing or program income funds.

(c) Authorized Geographic Code

For the award(s) resulting from this solicitation, the authorized geographic code for the *source* of USAID-financed commodities (other than "restricted commodities," as discussed below), and for the *nationality* of suppliers of USAID-financed commodities (other than restricted commodities) and services (other than ocean and air transportation, construction, and engineering services, as discussed below), is Geographic Code 937. Geographic Codes are described in 22 CFR 228.03 and the Internal Mandatory References to Chapter 310 of USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS 310) entitled "[List of Developing Countries](#)", "[List of Advanced Developing Countries](#)", and "[List of Prohibited Source Countries](#)"

(d) Restricted Commodities

"Restricted Commodities" are certain agricultural commodities, motor vehicles (excluding driver services, as defined in 22 CFR 228.19[b]), pharmaceuticals, condoms and contraceptives, pesticides, used equipment, and non-local purchase of fertilizer. Special rules apply to restricted commodities, and are described in [ADS 312.3.3](#).

(e) Ocean and Air Transportation Services

Ocean and air transportation services will be subject to the requirements of the USAID [Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations](#) entitled “Ocean Shipment of Goods” and “Travel and International Air Transportation,” respectively.

(f) Construction Contracts with Foreign-Owned Local Firms

When the estimated cost of a contract for construction is \$10 million or less and only local firms will be solicited, a local corporation or partnership which is a foreign-owned local firm (*i.e.*, owned or controlling interest by individuals who are not citizens or permanent residents, or equivalent immigration status, of the U.S. or the cooperating/recipient country) will be eligible only if it is determined by USAID to be an integral part of the local economy (however, such a determination is contingent on first ascertaining that no U.S. construction company with the required capability is currently operating in the cooperating/recipient country or, if there is such a company, that it is not interested in bidding for the proposed contract). A foreign-owned local firm is an integral part of the local economy if: (1) it has done business in the host country on a continuing basis for at least three years prior to the issuance date of invitations for bids or requests for proposals; (2) it has a demonstrated capability to undertake the proposed activity; (3) all, or substantially all, of its directors of local operations, senior staff, and operating personnel are lawfully resident (or equivalent immigration status to live and work on a continuing basis) in the host country; and (4) most of its operating equipment and physical plant are in the cooperating/recipient country.

(g) Engineering and Construction Services from Advanced Developing Countries

Advanced developing countries, as defined in 22 CFR 228.01, which USAID has determined to have attained a competitive capability in international markets for construction services or engineering services are not eligible to furnish USAID-financed construction and engineering services unless specifically approved by USAID.

III.D.2. Associate Awards

The authorized geographic code for each Associate Awards will be established by the USAID Mission which finances the Associate Award.

III.E. APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY

In order for an award to be made, the USAID Agreement Officer must make an affirmative determination that the applicant is “responsible,” as discussed in ADS 303.3.9. This means that the applicant must possess, or must have the ability to obtain, the necessary management and technical competence to conduct the proposed program, and must agree to practice mutually agreed-upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided or funded by USAID.

The following criteria are used by USAID in determining an applicant's "responsibility:"

- (a) Adequacy of Applicant's Program Description, Budget, and Monitoring System.
- (b) Adequacy of the Applicant's Financial Resources for Program Performance.
- (c) Applicant's Ability to Meet Award Conditions:
 - (1) Compliance of Applicant's Accounting and Overall Financial and Program Management Systems with 22 CFR 226.20-28.
 - (2) Compliance of Applicant's System of Reports and Records with 22 CFR 226.50-53.
 - (3) Compliance of Applicant's Internal Control Systems with Applicable USG Cost Principles.
 - (A) Internal Controls.
 - (B) Personnel Policy is Reasonable under Applicable USG Cost Principles.
 - (C) Travel Policy is Reasonable under Applicable USG Cost Principles and the U.S. Department of State's *Standardized Regulations (Government Civilians, Foreign Areas)* (<http://aoprals.state.gov/>), and Complies with Fly America Requirements.
 - (4) Compliance of Applicant's Property Management System with 22 CFR 226.30-37.
 - (5) Compliance of Applicant's Sub-Award Administration and Monitoring System with OMB Circular A-133 (U.S. NGOs) or the USAID Inspector-General's [*Guidelines for Financial Audits Contracted by Foreign Recipients*](#) for non-U.S. NGOs.
 - (6) Compliance of Applicant's Purchasing System/Contracting Procedures with 22 CFR 226.40-49.
 - (7) Applicant's Absorptive Capacity Given Other Existing and Potential Work Commitments.
- (d) Satisfactory Record of Performance by Applicant.
- (e) Satisfactory Record of Business Integrity by Applicant.

- (f) Applicant is Otherwise Qualified to Receive an Award under Applicable Laws and Regulations (*e.g.*, Nondiscrimination, Lobbying, Debarment/Suspension, Terrorist Financing, etc.).

In the absence of an affirmative “responsibility” determination, an award can ordinarily not be made, unless the Agreement Officer includes Special Award Conditions designed to minimize the risk to USAID posed by high-risk organizations (see ADS 303.3.9.2 and 22 CFR 226.14). Awards to potential new partners may be significantly delayed if USAID must undertake necessary pre-award reviews of these organizations to determine their “responsibility.” These organizations should take this into account and plan their implementation dates and activities accordingly.

III.F. ELIGIBILITY OF ACTIVITIES UNDER USAID’S ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

III.F.1. Leader Award

(a) Section 117 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, requires that the impact of USAID’s activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying-out its development programs, as codified in [22 CFR 216](#) and in USAID’s [Automated Directives System \(ADS\) Part 204](#), which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. The environmental compliance obligations of the Recipient of the award(s) resulting from this RFA under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs.

(b) In addition, the Recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

(c) No activity funded under the award(s) resulting from this RFA may be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Such documents are hereinafter described as “approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.”)

(d) To this end, the Environmental Analysis in the technical application (see Section IV.B.2[c][5] of this RFA) will be reviewed by USAID for the purpose of conducting an IEE of the proposed program. Depending on the results of the IEE, USAID may:

- (1) Approve an RCE.

(2) Determine that a Negative Determination with Conditions applies to one or more of the proposed activities. This indicates that if these activities are implemented subject to the specified conditions, they are expected to have no significant adverse effect on the environment. Such conditions shall be stipulated in the award, and may require: (a) the development of an Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP), a Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan (PERSUAP), or other documentation; and/or (2) certain activities (*e.g.*, monitoring, prevention, and mitigation) to be undertaken during program implementation. The Recipient will be responsible for implementing all IEE conditions pertaining to activities to be funded under the award.

(3) Determine that a Positive Determination applies to one or more of the proposed activities. This indicates that these activities have the potential for significant adverse effects on the environment. In such cases, the Recipient may be required to prepare and submit an Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the environmental concerns raised by such activities. No activity identified under a Positive Determination can proceed until Scoping (as described in 22 CFR 216.3[a][4]) and an EA (as described in 22 CFR 216.6) are completed and approved by USAID. (Note: The completed Scoping Statement is normally submitted by the Mission Environmental Office [MEO] to the BEO when the project originates in a Mission. The Statement may be circulated outside the Agency by the BEO with a request for written comments within 30 days and approved by the BEO subsequently. Approval of the Scoping Statement must be provided by the BEO before the EA can be initiated.) Accordingly, the technical and cost/management applications would need to reflect IEE or EA preparation costs and approaches.

(e) As part of its annual work-plans, the Recipient, in collaboration with the AOR and BEO, shall review all ongoing and planned activities under the award to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation. If the Recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments. Any activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received.

(f) The Recipient will be required to use an Environmental Review Form (ERF) or Environmental Review (ER) checklist using impact assessment tools to screen sub-award and contract proposals to ensure the funded proposals will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify monitoring and reporting. Use of the ERF or ER checklist is required when the nature of the proposals to be funded is not well enough known to make an informed decision about their potential environmental impacts; yet, due to the type and extent of activities to be funded, any adverse impacts are expected to be easily mitigated. Implementation of these activities cannot proceed until the ERF or ER checklist is completed and approved by USAID. The Recipient is responsible for ensuring that mitigation measures specified by the ERF or ER checklist process

are implemented. The Recipient will also be responsible for periodic reporting to the AOR, as specified in the award.

(g) The costs of environmental compliance will be reimbursable under the award(s) resulting from this RFA provided that they are otherwise in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award.

III.F.2. Associate Awards

Environmental requirements for Associate Awards will be specified in the solicitation for each Associate Award and/or in each Associate Award.

SECTION IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

IV.A. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

1. *Definitions.*

As used herein:

“Discussions” are negotiations that occur that may, at the Agreement Officer’s discretion, result in the applicant being allowed to revise its application.

“In writing,” “writing,” or “written” means any worded or numbered expression that can be read, reproduced, and later communicated, and includes electronically transmitted and stored information.

“Application modification” is a change made to an application before the RFA’s closing date and time, or made in response to an RFA amendment, or made to correct a mistake at any time before award.

“Revised application/addendum” is a change to an application made after the RFA’s closing date, at the request of or as allowed by the Agreement Officer as the result of negotiations.

“Time,” if stated as a number of days, is calculated using calendar days, unless otherwise specified, and will include Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. However, if the last day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the period shall include the next working day.

2. *Amendments to RFA.*

(a) If this RFA is amended, all terms and conditions that are not amended remain unchanged. Applicants shall acknowledge receipt of any amendment to this solicitation by the date and time specified in the amendment(s).

(b) As of November 1, 2005, the preferred method of distribution of USAID assistance solicitations (*i.e.*, RFAs and Annual program Statements [APSS]) and amendments to such solicitations is electronically via <http://www.grants.gov> (“Grants.gov”), which provides a single source for USG-wide competitive grant opportunities. Any future amendments to this RFA can be downloaded from that website. In order to use this method, an applicant must first register on-line with Grants.gov. If the applicant has difficulty registering or accessing the RFA or related documents, the applicant should contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via e-mail at support@grants.gov for technical assistance. It is the responsibility of the recipient of this RFA and any related documentation to ensure that it has been received from Grants.gov in its entirety and USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion

processes. It is important that interested organizations sign-up for e-mail updates with Grants.Gov so that as changes are posted to this and other USG (including USAID) assistance solicitations, alerts will be received.

3. *Submission, Modification, Revised Applications/Addenda, and Withdrawal of Applications.*

(a) All applicants must have a DUNS number and must be registered in the U.S. Government's System for Award Management ([SAM](#)). USAID cannot fund organizations that do not comply. A DUNS number may be obtained at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>, and is required for registration in SAM.

(b) Applications, application modifications, and/or revised applications/addenda consist of a technical application and a cost/management application which must be submitted in two separate volumes, each of which must be organized by the headings set forth below and must include the information described below.

(c) Unless otherwise indicated, applications shall cover only the Leader Award. Separate applications will be submitted for Associate Awards when and if they arise.

(d) Applications, application modifications, and revised applications/addenda must be submitted electronically to the e-mail address noted in Section VII of this RFA, and may (but are not required to) be submitted through www.grants.gov. An applicant must first register on-line with www.grants.gov, and should allow sufficient time to do so. If the applicant has difficulty registering, the applicant should contact the www.grants.gov Help Desk at 1-800-518-4726 or via e-mail at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

(e) Applications, application modifications, and revised applications/addenda must include a cover letter which, at a minimum, includes: (A) the RFA number; (B) the name, address, and telephone and email address of the applicant; and (C) names, titles, and telephone and e-mail addresses of persons authorized to negotiate and sign on the applicant's behalf.

(f) Applications, application modifications, and revised applications/addenda in response to this RFA must be in English or with accompanying English translations, and in U.S. dollars.

(g) Applicants may submit application modifications at any time before the RFA closing date and time, and may submit application modifications in response to an RFA amendment, or to correct a mistake at any time before award.

(h) Applicants may submit revised applications/addenda only if requested or allowed by the Agreement Officer.

(i) Applications may be withdrawn by written notice received at any time before award. Applications may be withdrawn in person by an applicant or an authorized

representative, if the representative's identity is made known and the representative signs a receipt for the application before award. Withdrawals are effective upon receipt of notice by the Agreement Officer.

4. *Late Applications, Application Modifications, and Revised Applications/Addenda.*

(a) Applicants are responsible for submitting applications, and any application modifications or revised applications/addenda, so as to reach the Government office designated in this RFA by the following dates and times. If no time is specified, the time for receipt is 5:00p.m.

(i) Any application received at the office designated in the cover letter of this RFA after the exact date and time specified for receipt of applications is “late” and will not be considered unless: (A) it is received at the initial point of entry to the Government infrastructure not later than 5:00 p.m. one working day prior to the date specified for receipt of applications; (B) the Agreement Officer determines that accepting the late application would not unduly delay the award(s); and (C) it is received before award is made.

(ii) Any application modification is subject to the same conditions as described in paragraph (4)(a)(i) above, except that it will be considered “late” if it received after the dates and times specified in paragraph (3)(e) above.

(iii) Any revised application/addendum is also subject to the same conditions as described in paragraph (4)(a)(i) above, except that it will be considered “late” if it is received after the date and time specified in the Agreement Officer’s request for the revised application/addendum.

(b) Notwithstanding paragraphs (4)(a) above, a late application, application modification, or revised application/addendum of an otherwise successful application that makes its terms more favorable to USAID will be considered at any time it is received and may be accepted.

(c) If an emergency or unanticipated event interrupts normal Government processes so that applications cannot be received at the office designated for receipt of applications by the exact time specified in cover letter of this RFA, and urgent Government requirements preclude amendment of the RFA, the time specified for receipt of applications will be deemed to be extended to the same time of day specified in the cover letter of this RFA on the first work day on which normal Government processes resume.

5. *Application Expiration Date.*

Applications, application modifications, and revised applications/addenda in response to this RFA will be valid for 90 days unless a different period is proposed by the applicant.

6. *Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data.*

(a) Applicants that include in their applications data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose, or used by the Government except for evaluation purposes, shall:

(i) Mark the title page with the following legend:

This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed—in whole or in part—for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant or cooperative agreement is awarded to this applicant as a result of—or in connection with—the submission of this data, the Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets [*insert numbers or other identification of sheets*];

and

(ii) Mark each page containing restricted data with the following legend:

Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application.

(b) Applicants are advised that it is anticipated that the successful technical application, application modification, and/or revised application/addendum will become the Program Description of the grant awarded as a result of this RFA. Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act of 1981, the public is entitled to request information from Agency award files. As a general rule, information will be disclosed except:

(i) Information submitted in response to this RFA, prior to award of the grant, or modifications or revisions thereto.

(ii) Information properly classified or administratively controlled by USAID.

(iii) Information specifically exempted from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

(c) Upon award of the cooperative agreement resulting from this RFA, USAID will disclose, use, or duplicate any information submitted in response to this RFA to the extent provided in the award and as described in Section VI.A of this RFA, and as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

7. *Award.*

USAID intends to award a Leader Award under an LWA, as described in Section II of this RFA, to the responsible applicant whose application, application modification(s), and/or revised application(s)/addendum(a) is responsive to this RFA and represents the greatest value after evaluation in accordance with the evaluation criteria in Section V.B of this RFA. USAID may reject any or all applications and may accept more than one application if such action is in USAID's interest. USAID may waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received. Award is expected to be made between August and September 2014.

8. *Responsiveness to RFA and False Statements.*

The applicant shall follow the instructions contained herein and supply all information as required. Failure to furnish all information requested, or to submit an application directly responsive to the terms, conditions, specifications, and provisions of this RFA may disqualify an application. Applicants must set forth full, accurate and complete information as required by this RFA. The penalty for making false statements to the Government is prescribed in 18 U.S.C. 1001.

9. *Pre-Award Audits/Surveys and Discussions.*

USAID reserves the right to perform a pre-award audit/survey which may include, but is not limited to: (1) interviews with individuals to establish their ability to perform award duties under project conditions; (2) a review of the applicant's financial condition, business and personnel policies and procedures, etc.; and (3) site visits to the applicant's institution. However, it must be understood that USAID undertakes no obligation to perform any of the foregoing elements. Accordingly, applicants should submit their best and most complete application initially.

10. *Interviews/Discussions/Oral Presentations in Washington.*

While it is not anticipated, USAID nevertheless reserves the right to request the applicant and the applicant's key personnel to travel to Washington, DC for interviews, discussions, and/or oral presentations. USAID will not pay any travel costs associated therewith.

11. *Submission of Questions and Explanation to Prospective Applicants.*

(a) Webinar

An open and public, internet-based question and answer session will be hosted by USAID on Thursday, March 6th from 11:00am to 1:00pm Washington, DC Time. USAID's website, https://kdad.adobeconnect.com/si_rfa/event/registration.html, will post a video of the webinar.

(b) Written Questions

Written questions concerning this RFA must be received no later than Tuesday, March 18th at 10:00am Washington, DC time. Questions must be in writing and should be e-mailed only to the e-mail address specified in Section VII of this RFA. Please note that all questions, without attribution to the organization, and answers will be posted online at grants.gov as an amendment to this RFA. Sensitive or proprietary information should not be included in the questions.

(c) Contact with USAID Missions

In order to maintain the integrity of the competitive process, USAID Missions and other USAID operating units will be unable to advise or provide information to potential applicants that would be used in preparation of the application. Therefore, applicants are advised not to contact USAID Missions regarding this RFA. Information on Mission strategies and programs can be accessed from <http://feedthefuture.gov/countries> and Mission websites (<http://transition.usaid.gov/missions/>).

12. *Unnecessarily Elaborate Applications.*

Unnecessarily elaborate brochures or other presentations beyond those sufficient to present a complete and effective response to this RFA are not desired and may be construed as an indication of the applicant's lack of cost consciousness. Elaborate art work, expensive paper and bindings, and expensive visual and other presentation aids are neither necessary nor wanted.

13. *Inconsistencies between this RFA and 22 CFR 226/ADS 300.*

In case of any disagreements or discrepancies between the terms and conditions of this RFA and 22 CFR 226 or ADS-303, the latter shall prevail unless any such conflicting terms and conditions of this RFA are expressly and specifically stated to be an approved deviation from 22 CFR 226 or ADS-303 .

14. *Failure to Conform.*

The USAID evaluation committee may consider any failure to conform to these instructions and rules, and any attempt to evade these specifications and rules on the basis of technicalities, as indications of the kind of behavior that it may expect from the applicant during award performance/implementation. The committee will take this into account when making its evaluation. If an applicant does not understand these instructions, it should follow the instructions in paragraph 11 above.

15. *USAID Obligation.*

USAID is not obligated to make an award or pay for any costs incurred by the applicant in preparation and submission of an application in response hereto.

16. *Authority to Commit USAID.*

The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit USAID to the expenditure of public funds. No costs allocable to the proposed award(s) will be reimbursed by USAID before receipt of either a fully executed grant or cooperative agreement, or a specific written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

17. *Pre-Award Costs.*

USAID will not reimburse any applicant for pre-award costs unless specifically authorized by the Agreement Officer, who may, at his/her sole discretion, authorize the selected applicant, at its own risk, to begin program implementation and the incurrence of costs prior to a signed award as of a specified date, with no commitment to reimburse costs in the event that the award is not subsequently signed.

IV.B. TECHNICAL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

IV.B.1. General

The technical application must be typed on standard 8-1/2" x 11" paper with one-inch top/bottom and left/right margins, single spaced, with each page numbered consecutively. The technical application must be in 2010 or earlier versions of MS Word, and must use Times New Roman font in 10-point or larger size. Scanned PDF documents may be used for information requiring signatures and copies of documents. All technical applications should include the sections and content below. With reference to Section II.A above, the technical application should describe the core program to be conducted under the Leader Award, except as may otherwise be specified.

It is anticipated that the successful application (as may be revised) will become the Program Descriptions for the award resulting from this RFA. Thus, applications submitted in response to this RFA should, in addition to being responsive hereto, be written in the active voice and in results-oriented terms in order to address what is proposed to be done, why it is proposed to be done, how it is proposed to be done, who will do it, where it will be done, when it will be done, and the anticipated results and impact.

The technical application must have a definitive strategy and plan, and must set forth in detail the applicant's approach, methodology, procedures, techniques, for the design, management, implementation, and monitoring of the proposed program. The application must also demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the

proposed program. The application must define the technical resources, capabilities, and expertise of the applicant's organization and other institution(s) involved, and of the professional personnel proposed. The information presenting the capabilities of the implementing organization(s) and of the individuals to be assigned should spell-out clearly the pertinent work experience and accomplishments in developing and conducting activities of the type being proposed, as well as the specialized skills, professional competence, academic training, and relevant achievements of the personnel. It is important that the technical application furnish verifiable, objective supporting evidence of successful program management, implementation, and monitoring. The technical application should be specific, detailed, and include appropriate benchmarks or milestones. Applicants are encouraged to refer to the BIFAD report, [*Review of the Collaborative Research Support Program \(CRSP\) Model*](#), for further guidance in the development of their proposed program.

The technical application will be the critical item of consideration in selection of an applicant for an award. The information provided in the technical application must be specific, complete, and presented concisely. The technical application must demonstrate how it contributes to achieving the program's goals and objectives, including specific results anticipated. The weightings in the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.B of this RFA indicate the relative order of importance of the evaluation criteria, so that applicants will know which areas require emphasis in the preparation of the technical application. Applicants are advised that lack of completeness or superficiality of the application may constitute grounds for excluding it from consideration.

The technical application may not exceed 30 pages, excluding table of contents, attachments, annexes, and appendices. Unless otherwise indicated, a page in the technical application which contains a table, chart, graph, etc. will be counted as a page within the page limitation. Information which exceeds the page limitations will not be furnished to the USAID technical evaluation committee.

In addition, the technical application shall be divided into sections corresponding to, and following the order of, the evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.B of this RFA and as described below. Each section of the technical application should be clearly identified, using the title of the appropriate technical evaluation criterion and divided by sub-criteria. This requirement is not intended to prohibit or discourage applicants from submitting technical data in addition to what is required herein and by the evaluation criteria.

IV.B.2. Technical Approach

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the necessary technical expertise to design, implement, and monitor the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, as described in Section I of this RFA, by providing the following information:

(a) Background and Context

With reference to Section I.B.1 of this RFA, the application must include a summary statement that demonstrates, relative to sustainable intensification efforts, an understanding of: (1) the use

of geospatial and farming systems research tools; (2) current conditions and relevant trends in focal geographies, including mechanization opportunities; and (3) the role that the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, relative to other relevant development projects and initiatives, can serve in sustainably intensifying production systems, including considerations of on- and off-farm natural resource management and socio-economic needs. The applicant should also articulate a collaborative, multi-scale, multi-component vision for the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab and how it can improve developing country research and institutional capacities.

The application should demonstrate an understanding of the Feed the Future Initiative, and describe how the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will contribute to the *Inclusive Agricultural Growth* and *Improved Nutrition* objectives of [Feed the Future](#).

(b) Geographic Focus

With reference to Section I.B.2 of this RFA, the application should identify the three countries (regional coordination countries), one in each of the focal geographic regions, where regional coordinators will be stationed. Specific justification should be included for the selection of the regional coordination countries over other possible countries in the focal geographic region. Information might include (but not necessarily limited to) descriptions of:

- Severity of need as indicated by poverty and malnutrition rates.
- Potential for impact based on agricultural productivity potential, access to markets, populations dependent on agriculture.
- In-country research capacity and/or ME connections in the country.

In addition, the application should, to the extent possible, identify the other countries within each region where on-the-ground activities are planned or are likely. Additional information should be provided on the reasons for selecting other countries in the focal geographic regions for specific on-the-ground activities from among the broader set of potential countries. The application should justify geographical targeting with such information as characteristics and numbers of potential target populations, including poverty and nutrition status; primary types and size of farming systems; and how representative they are of small-holder farmers and systems in the other focal countries in the region.

(c) Areas of Inquiry

With reference to Section I.B.3 of this RFA, the applicant should describe how it would develop an integrated research program in the biophysical and social sciences that can contribute technologies and knowledge to enhance the adaptation, resilience, and profitability of sustainable intensification strategies and build human and institutional capacity. The application should provide a concise summary of the applicant's program description, program methodology, and expected results. Applicants shall describe an overall vision and approach for implementing a global research program that includes a portfolio of high-quality, innovative research activities designed to achieve long-term development impact on host country beneficiaries.

The application should describe the primary research areas to be undertaken under the Leader Award, what will be done, and how those activities will be implemented. The application should include a conceptual framework that shows the interrelationships between the substantive areas, establishes some priorities for direction of the research program, and articulates a vision and strategy for addressing the areas of inquiry described in Section I.B.3 of this RFA.

The application should clearly demonstrate how program activities will be relevant to the goal of improving lives and that they will be tightly linked. Applicants are encouraged to identify challenges to sustainably intensifying production, both within and beyond the manageable interest of the program, and explain how the proposed program will contribute to addressing these challenges and contribute to the realization of development impacts. Where relevant, a strategy to document technology adoption and program impact, including collection of baseline data, should also be part of the application.

The application must include a strategy for achieving long-term development impacts through the completion of intermediate results and benchmarks. These indicators should be general at this time, but should serve as a framework for more specific indicators and targets that will be developed once the research activities are selected after the award has been made. The applicant should indicate the process by which the more specific indicators will be developed. The application should show an understanding of the Feed the Future [Global Hunger and Food Security Research Strategy](#) and the relationship of Feed the Future objectives to the areas of inquiry in sustainable intensification. The application should outline a strategy for dissemination of knowledge in a manner that leads to engagement of, and influence on, USAID field Missions and Bureaus, host-country policy-makers and practitioners, as well as other development and donor organizations.

The application should describe the impact pathways for the research proposed, demonstrating how the proposed research and subsequent technology transfer could contribute to host-country capacity development, household food security of small-holder farmers and increase income-generating opportunities and/or nutrition outcomes of women and children. Applicants should describe how projects will demonstrate progress, *e.g.*, through the use of counterfactuals, and how host-country scientists and students will be integrated as research partners throughout the process. Methods for monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment should be clearly described.

(1) Stocktaking, Mapping, Analysis, and Guidance

With reference to Section I.B.3(a) of this document, the application should explain how the proposed program will capitalize on the lessons learned from relevant past and current research and development programs (*e.g.*, [SANREM Innovation Lab](#)); collect, manage, analyze, and disseminate information; and identify, adapt, and provide guidance on scaling-up sustainable intensification strategies. Applicants should demonstrate awareness of other relevant programs and the scope of their efforts. The application should also describe how the proposed research can complement USAID-funded activities focusing on remote sensing and geospatial analysis, as well as the [Feed the Future Learning Agenda](#).

(2) Farming Systems Research

With reference to Section I.B.3(b) of this RFA, applicants should describe the overall approach for identifying key farming systems that will be targeted to complement, without duplicating, the efforts of other relevant agricultural research programs; how field- and farm-scale research will likely be used to identify and develop sustainable intensification strategies scalable across regions; the use of farming system modeling tools to simulate impacts of changes in farm practices on nutrient cycling, soil conditions, productivity, labor demands, and/or livestock fodder production. Consideration should be given to how off-farm socio-economic factors, such as market access, governance issues, and input availability, will be incorporated into the farming systems research approach.

Applicants should demonstrate their relative strength in advancing farming systems research (including in the areas of natural resource management, gender issues, climate change, and systems modeling) and describe how those strengths will be used to identify and oversee research necessary to achieve high-level development goals of increased food security, reductions in poverty and malnutrition, and ecological sustainability. Applicants should provide an overall vision for the future trajectory of farming systems research, how they will contribute to that trajectory, and how the livelihoods of small-holder farmers will benefit.

(3) Linking Sustainable Intensification Impacts across Multiple Scales

With reference to Section I.B.3(c) of this RFA, the application should describe proposed approaches to linking farmer behavior and farm practices to community- and landscape-scale issues, as well as how conditions at the larger scales affect farmer decision-making and management opportunities and constraints. Applications should include a strategy for utilizing the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium, the three Regional Coordinators, and focused field- and farm-scale research efforts to elucidate linkages between multiple scales and how to create opportunities and/or overcome constraints using those linkages. The application should also include a discussion of other relevant projects (*e.g.*, COMACO) that have attempted to link farm-level practices to larger-scale ecosystem impacts and how those efforts will be complemented and/or improved-upon.

(4) Sustainable Intensification Impacts on Gender and Nutrition Issues

The application should describe how the proposed program will contribute knowledge, technologies, and other research outputs that directly or indirectly support Feed the Future goals of reducing poverty of small-holder farmers through inclusive agricultural growth and reducing malnutrition in women and young children via sustainable intensification pathways. Applicants

should provide a description of the impact pathways² for the proposed program of research and its relation to either/both of these Feed the Future goals.

(i) Gender

With reference to Section I.B.3(d)(i) of this RFA, USAID policy requires that gender issues be addressed as appropriate in all USAID-funded activities. USAID requires that gender differences and inequalities be integrated into the project design and into the criteria used to evaluate applications (see Section V.B of this RFA).

Gender analysis is a tool for examining the differences between the roles that women and men play in communities and societies, the different levels of power they hold, their differing needs, constraints and opportunities, and the impact of these differences on their lives. Gender analysis should identify root causes of existing gender inequalities or obstacles to female empowerment in that context, so that they may be addressed in the project design and opportunities may be sought to promote women's leadership and participation. It addresses the following two issues: (A) how the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household (*e.g.*, roles in decision-making and different access to and control over resources and services) will affect the work to be undertaken; and (B) how the anticipated results of the work affect women and men differently. Because male and female groups are not homogenous, gender analysis should also, to the extent possible, disaggregate by income, region, caste, race, ethnicity, disability, and other relevant social characteristics, and explicitly recognize the specific needs of young girls and boys, adolescent girls and boys, adult women and men, and older women and men.

The application must present a gender analysis which discusses important gender issues relevant to sustainable intensification; must explain how gender considerations will be integrated into the design, implementation, management, and monitoring and evaluation of the overall program and each specific activity as appropriate, must demonstrate how the proposed program will contribute to gender equality, and should clearly show how the program will develop knowledge, recommendations, tools, and strategies that recognize and account for the needs and multi-dimensional roles of both women and men in small-holder farming systems, as well as the potential impacts that shifts in technology, cropping patterns, resource allocation, etc., can have on the well-being of women and children. These opportunity costs should be examined in the context of gender considerations.

In addition, the application should discuss opportunities in gender-focused research in sustainable intensification and how they will be related to the range of other research activities. If appropriate, discuss opportunities for mapping and characterizing gender-related issues and conditions and the role that the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium may play in more fully developing gender as a key issue in sustainable intensification.

² To assist in the development of impact pathways linking the proposed sustainable intensification research program to nutrition outcomes, frameworks illustrating how agriculture can contribute to nutrition outcomes can be found at <http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/mozambique/WP72Chung.pdf>.

(ii) Nutrition

Applicants should discuss how nutrition considerations will be integrated into their proposed program and addressed in nutrition-sensitive research activities (possibly including geographical mapping and analysis). With reference to Section I.B.3(d)(ii) of this RFA, the application should describe how the proposed research, approaches and/or knowledge/technologies produced by the program will contribute to the nutrition goals of the Feed the Future Initiative. As with gender roles, the nutritional status of farm households can change with changes in farm practices and enterprises. Increased productivity or enterprise diversity does not necessarily result in improved access, availability, or utilization of nutritious foods in the household. Improved nutrition can be a motivating factor for adopting new, improved varieties or practices that improve productivity and natural resource management.

(5) Cross-Cutting Issues

Based on which production systems and locations are selected as the focus of the program, applications must describe how the environmental issues discussed in Section I.B.3(e) of this RFA will be addressed (or why certain issues are not addressed) and at which scales. With reference to Section III.F of this RFA, USAID anticipates that environmental compliance and achieving optimal development outcomes for the proposed program will require environmental management expertise. The application should, therefore, describe the applicant's approach to achieving environmental compliance and management, including but not limited to the following information:

- The applicant's identification and analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed program. This analysis should consider both broad environmental impacts that could result from the research, as well as specific localized impacts of the proposed activities (*e.g.* pesticide or fertilizer application, use of microbial products or inoculants, irrigation interventions, use of genetically modified organisms, *etc.*).
- The applicant's approach to providing necessary environmental management expertise, including examples of prior experience in environmental management of similar activities.
- Developing recommendations and tools that acknowledge and account for the direct linkages between agriculture and the drivers of climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation.

IV.B.3. Management Approach

With reference to Section I.C of this RFA, the application must describe the organizational structure and approach by which the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be managed, including the structure of the program's administrative and advisory bodies, and must

demonstrate that the applicant has the necessary technical expertise to manage and monitor the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, as described in Section I of this RFA. This proposed management approach should be consistent with the Management Entity (ME) responsibilities described in Section I.C of this RFA, and must include, but is not limited to, a discussion of the following:

(a) Management Plan

With reference to Section I.C.1 of this RFA, the application must:

- Describe and demonstrate an understanding of ME responsibilities;
- Describe the proposed ME structure. This should include the roles and responsibilities of proposed staff, proposed lines of responsibility, authority and communication, and procedures to ensure productivity as well as cost and quality control;
- Define the role and responsibilities of the ME and the relationship envisioned between the ME and other departments and offices within the recipient university and between the ME and members of the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium. The applicant should also describe the roles, responsibilities, relationships, and composition of any proposed advisory bodies;
- Demonstrate awareness of other relevant programs and the scope of their efforts, and describe how the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab – especially the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium – will significantly link to or engage with the efforts of relevant partners such as the International Food Policy Research Institute, Higher Education Solutions Network effort with the [AidData Center](#) on Development Policy, and SERVIR; and finally, the roles and responsibilities of consortium partners. **During the application process, applicants are not required to establish formal relationships with any potential members of the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium. Rather, applicants should describe how the applicant will, if selected for an award, identify and engage relevant projects and partners during the program launch phase. This does not preclude applicants from identifying formal members of the Consortium and demonstrating their commitment to participate in the program if the applicant is selected for an award, but applicants must not preclude such organizations from also agreeing to partner with other applicants if they are selected for an award resulting from this RFA. Any attempt by an applicant to secure an exclusive commitment from a partner of program will be viewed unfavorably by USAID.**
- Demonstrate the capacity of the applicant (proposed ME) to manage a multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary, international research, capacity-building, and outreach activity;
- Describe the plan for open and transparent competition and selection of research activities that will attract broad participation of U.S. universities (including Minority Served Institutions [MSIs]) and ensure a participatory process between host country

researchers and development partners, the U.S. university community, and other stakeholders in defining the research agenda and implementing research activities. Also included should be a specific discussion of how the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will encourage USAID Mission engagement (post-award) in selection and implementation of research activities and, at a minimum, will avoid awarding activities without Mission concurrence. The plan should include safeguards to eliminate potential conflicts of interest in selection of research activities and in the solicitation, submission, evaluation, and awarding of sub-awards and/or contracts for research activities.

- Include, in an annex that will not count against the page limitation, **a draft solicitation** which includes a one-page introduction, describes the overall solicitation and pre-award process envisioned by the ME for the formation of an **Appropriate-Scale Mechanization Consortium**, and illustrates how the ME would organize the areas of inquiry and ensure the research portfolio within each proposed country is effectively coordinated and integrated. It should also indicate how the ME will inform prospective sub-awardees (*i.e.*, transparency and openness) about the requirements for training, knowledge-sharing and learning, capacity-building, and development impact, and to promote Mission and developing country decision-maker engagement in project planning. The draft solicitation(s) should include cost formats and evaluation criteria;
- Describe and demonstrate the capacity of the ME university to implement Associate Awards; demonstrate a balance between the needs to minimize administrative costs and the needs for extensive capacity to respond to, and implement programs under, Requests for Applications for Associate Awards; and describe processes for promoting, developing, and implementing Associate Awards and the capacity to implement Associate Awards; and
- Include, in an annex to the technical application which will not count against the page limit, a work-plan and timeline covering the period from when the Leader Award is made until post-award submission of the annual work-plan for the first year of the Leader Award (see Section VI.C of this RFA). The work-plan and timeline in the application shall describe what tasks will be undertaken during that period, and when they will occur.

(b) Staffing Plan

With reference to Section I.C. of this RFA, the application must describe in detail, the specific staffing plan which the applicant proposes to ensure efficient use of resources and strong and effective management, administration, technical implementation/performance, and clerical support. The overall discussion must specify the nature of organizational linkages between the Recipient (ME), the Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium, the three Regional Coordinators, and any partners in the performance of ME functions. To the extent that the applicant anticipates that it will utilize sub-recipients/contractors for any ME functions, the application should describe which organizations are anticipated to perform which tasks/functions and include letters of commitment from such sub-recipients and/or contractors in an annex to the

technical application which will not count against the page limit. (Note: USAID does not require or seek commitments from proposed sub-recipients and/or contractors that are exclusive to the applicant, *i.e.*, organizations may be proposed as sub-recipients and/or contractors in more than one application.) This includes detailed identification of the roles and responsibilities of each entity, their relationships between each other, lines of authority and accountability, and patterns for utilizing and sharing resources. Of particular importance is the need to clarify the types of administrative and management adjustments which will be made to ensure that incompatible bureaucratic and scheduling requirements of participating institutions will not limit the Recipient's (or any sub-recipients'/contractors') ability to respond to program needs on a timely basis.

The proposed staffing plan should include specific position titles and level-of-effort for each position. The staffing plan should relate directly to the approaches, strategies, and interventions proposed for achieving the results, and include anticipated short-term technical assistance needs, home and field offices, etc., as deemed important by the applicant. The application should specify the nature of supervisory/reporting relationships between members of the Recipient's team, and between the Recipient and any sub-recipients/contractors. If the applicant proposes the use of sub-recipient/contractor personnel in any positions, the application shall explain how potential conflicts between on-the-job relationships and employer-employee relationships will be resolved. The application should also describe how the ME will involve or utilize Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), minority-controlled private and voluntary organizations, and/or small and minority-owned businesses in the performance of ME functions.

The staffing plan should include short bio-data summaries for each individual selected to fill staff positions (if known). Detailed CVs, limited to less than 5 pages, for proposed staff should be provided in an annex that will not count against the page limit. (The bio-data summaries will count toward the page limit while the CVs will not.) The bio-data and CVs must demonstrate the capacity of the proposed individuals to perform the described duties provided by the applicant for each proposed position. The application shall also describe how possible attrition of staffing (in particular, replacement of the Innovation Lab Director) will be addressed.

With reference to Section I.C.2 of this RFA, the application shall propose a full-time Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab Director, describe his/her role and responsibilities for program leadership and implementation, describe the individual's qualifications for this position, and demonstrate that s/he has the capacity to manage a multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary international research, training, and capacity-building program. The proposed Director's CV, and a letter of commitment from the proposed Innovation Lab Director, must be included in an annex to the technical application which will not count toward the page limit. (Note: USAID does not require exclusivity in the candidate for Innovation Lab Director, *i.e.*, the same candidate may be proposed in more than one application.)

Note: The application does not need to identify or propose candidates for the three Regional Coordinator positions, but may do so at the applicant's discretion. USAID will not evaluate the qualifications of any such candidates under the technical evaluation criteria set forth in Section V.B of this RFA. However, as indicated in Section II.B.2(a)(2) of this RFA, the three Regional

Coordinators, as key personnel, must be approved by the AOR. If candidates are proposed in the application and found to be acceptable by USAID when evaluating the applications, approval for such candidates will be included in the award resulting from this RFA, thereby facilitating program implementation and eliminating the need for post-award recruitment and approval. USAID does not require exclusivity from any candidates that may be proposed.

(c) Training and Capacity-Building Plan

With reference to Section I.C.1(c) of this RFA, the application must include a strategy to: (1) increase the capacity of host country universities and/or research institutions to design, implement and utilize research in the area of sustainable intensification; (2) increase the capacity of local cooperators, extension services, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to analyze, adapt, disseminate, and implement sustainable intensification strategies and/or technologies; and (3) ways that the HICD strengthening agenda can complement other USAID investments in human and institutional capacity development.

The application should also describe strategies to maximize long-term degree training for developing country nationals, as well as shorter-term training that will benefit host country researchers, decision-makers, extension agents, NGOs, producers, and other end-users in this agro-food system. The application should also articulate proposed approaches for building capacity, such as degree programs, distance learning, and use of innovative methods to strengthen human and institutional capacity of host country partners. Efforts should be made to ensure balance in access to training and capacity-building opportunities in terms of men and women trainees and other participants, and promote equal participation of men and women in all activities.

(d) Knowledge-Sharing Plan

With reference to Section I.C.1(d) of this RFA, the application must explain how the knowledge needs of Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab stakeholders and their preferred methods for accessing knowledge will be determined. **To ensure that this is a sufficiently supported component, roughly 7% of the central funds (see Figure 2) should be budgeted to this area.** While technology transfer is not the primary responsibility of the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, the application must describe a strategy for disseminating research results in a manner that leads to engagement of and influence on: (1) end-users (*i.e.*, producers, processors, and other end-users in this agro-food system); (2) host-country decision-makers, researchers, educators, and extension agents; (3) USAID Missions, Bureaus, and other offices; and (4) other stakeholders. The application should include a strategy to document technology adoption and program impact. The application should describe how the knowledge-sharing plan supports and integrates with the management, staffing, and training and capacity-building plans. The knowledge-sharing plan should describe how the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will leverage existing knowledge-sharing platforms in order to increase reach and impact of knowledge products.

(e) Plan for Monitoring and Evaluating Performance, Assessing Impact, and Reporting

With reference to Section I.C.1(e) of this RFA, the application should describe a plan to integrate planning, reporting, and synthesis across research activities, including the monitoring of both sub-awards and/or contracts and Associate Awards, that will result in ongoing improvement of activities and evaluation for lessons learned and reporting of results. Methods for monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment should be clearly described. This preliminary Performance Management Plan should also describe how the proposed program will advance USAID-supported goals and strategic objectives (*e.g.*, increasing food production, improving food access, and preserving environmental quality); how it will address the agronomic, economic, and environmental needs of target beneficiaries, both men and women, as they define those needs, and whether it will be accessible to both men and women; how it will address climate adaptation/resilience issues; how it will address food security issues; and how it will help to develop policies that support sustainable small-holder intensification and emphasize safeguarding the resources upon which future generations will depend. (Note: A more detailed PMP will be submitted after award in accordance with Section VI.C of this RFA. Indicators used to monitor program progress will be refined and made more specific once research activities are selected after award.)

IV.B.4. Past Performance

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 will be evaluated based on relevant programs/projects that are ongoing or were completed during the past five years, demonstrated technical and management accomplishments in international research, in a development context, on sustainable agriculture systems, and the applicant's use of strong partnerships, including funds management issues, with a range of research institutions/organizations, both in the U.S. and in host countries, for conducting research and promoting adoption of research results. As part of this review, USAID may contact some/all of the applicant's past or current customers and partners to determine if the applicant: (a) was capable, efficient, and effective in implementing the activity; (b) conformed to the terms and conditions of its contract/agreement/grant; (c) was reasonable and responsive to, and collaborative with, the client, sponsor, or partner during project implementation; and (d) was committed to customer satisfaction.

Past performance information shall be provided in an annex to the technical application which will not count against the page limit. This annex shall include a description of past or current work undertaken by the applicant which is relevant to the ME role in the proposed program.

The applicant and proposed partners (sub-recipients and/or contractors) for the ME and GFSRC must provide the past performance work descriptions and references for up to ten (10) programs currently underway or completed within the past five years. The applicant may use the past

performance references to demonstrate capacity for creativity and leadership, to deliver high-impact results, and to effectively partner with other organizations. The information for each program should not exceed one page, and should include: (a) the name of the client/donor; (b) the project/activity name; (c) a brief project/activity description and the results achieved; (d) the period of performance; (e) the place of performance; (f) the award amount; and (g) the name and telephone number (and e-mail address if known) of at least two contacts at the client/donor for which the service was performed/program was conducted and for relevant partners involved in the activity (if these people are no longer at the original organization, please provide their current contact information). It is recommended that the applicant alert the contacts that their names have been submitted and that they are authorized to provide past performance information when requested.

If problems were encountered on any of the listed awards, a short explanation and the description of the corrective action taken may be provided. General information on past performance should not be provided, but any quality awards or certificates that indicate exceptional capacity to implement the proposed project may be described.

USAID may use past performance information obtained from other than the sources identified in the application. USAID shall determine the relevance of similar past performance information. Past performance information will be used for both the responsibility determination (see Section III.E of this RFA) and the selection decision (see Section V of this RFA).

IV.C. COST/MANAGEMENT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The cost/management application must be typed on standard 8-1/2" x 11" paper with one-inch top/bottom and left/right margins, single spaced, with each page numbered consecutively. The cost/management application must be in the 2010 or earlier versions of MS Word and MS Excel, and must use Times New Roman font in 10-point or larger size. Scanned PDF documents may be used for information requiring signatures and copies of documents. The cost/management application will be evaluated in accordance with Section V.C of this RFA. The Cost or Business Application shall be submitted separately from the technical application.

The cost/management application must include the following. The following applies only to the Leader Award, and excludes any and all Associate Awards.

IV.C.1. Application for Federal Assistance

The cost/management application must include the applicable forms from the Standard Form 424 (SF-424) series, which includes the:

- (a) SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance
- (b) SF-424A Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs
- (c) SF-424B Assurances for Non-Construction Programs

- (d) SF-424C Budget Information for Construction Programs
- (e) SF-424D Assurances for Construction Programs

These forms are found on www.grants.gov.

IV.C.2. USAID Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient

The USAID website <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf> provides the necessary forms, which must be signed and dated by the applicant.

IV.C.3. Budget

Standard Form 424A should be supplemented by the following additional cost breakdowns and details, as described below. These supplemental budgets must be delineated by year (and five-year total), with each year (and five-year total) further delineated by USAID funding, other funding (cost-sharing), and total, as illustrated in the summary budget format set forth in paragraph (a) below. It is recognized that it may be difficult for the applicant to project actual needs and costs. Accordingly, estimates, based on assumptions, are acceptable. However, the applicant must indicate the basis of the estimate, and/or the assumptions on which the estimate is based. The budgets shall include whatever supporting schedules and narrative budget explanations as may be necessary to adequately support and/or explain proposed costs. This information is required in order to permit USAID to determine whether estimated costs are fair and reasonable, necessary, allowable, allocable, and realistic, which, in turn, is prerequisite for making an award. Please note that [22 CFR 226.25](#) provides a great deal of flexibility to the Recipient to make budget adjustments during the award period without the need to obtain prior approval from the USAID Agreement Officer.

(a) Summary Budget

A summary budget for the Leader Award should be included in the following format. Applicants should enter appropriate amounts in the blank cells, and may adjust the approximate amounts (~) if adequately explained and justified.

Activity	Year 1 (\$Million)			Year 2 (\$Million)			Year 3 (\$Million)			Year 4 (\$Million)			Year 5 (\$Million)			Total (\$Million)		
	USAID	Others	Total	USAID	Others	Total	USAID	Others	Total	USAID	Others	Total	USAID	Others	Total	USAID	Others	Total
Management Entity (ME), including Knowledge-Sharing and Learning																~5,0 ³		
Geospatial and Framing Systems Research Consortium (GFSRC)																~5,0		
Appropriate-Scale Mechanization Consortium (ASPC)																~5,0		
Other Research Activities																~10,0		
Sub-Total - BFS	5.0			5.0			5.0			5.0			5.0			25.0		
Mission Buy-Ins	1.4		1.4	1.4		1.4	1.4		1.4	1.4		1.4	1.4		1.4	7.0		7.0
Total Estimated Amount	6.4			6.4			6.4			6.4			6.4			32.0		

³ Includes approximately \$1.75 million for Knowledge-Sharing and Learning, per Sections I.C.1(d), II.A, and IV.B.3(d) of this RFA.

Detailed Management Entity (ME) Budget

A summary ME line item budget should be presented, followed by a detailed ME line item budget which provides complete cost breakdowns to enable cost analysis by USAID. The detailed ME line item budget must set forth the basis for all costs, and must provide the information described below. In accordance with Sections I.C.1(d), II.A, and IV.B.3(d) of this RFA, the ME budget must include approximately \$1,750,000 over the five-year period of the Leader Award for Knowledge-Sharing and Learning (see Section I.C.1(d) of this RFA).

(1) Direct Salaries and Wages

A detailed indication of level of effort, including the position titles, names of proposed individuals to fill each position (if known), number of units (days, months, FTEs) for each position, proposed unit rate(s) for each position, and the total direct salaries and wages. Anticipated salary increases during the term of the award may be included, but the percentage of increase and the anticipated date(s) of increase must be specified. The level of effort and position titles must be consistent with the technical application.

(2) Fringe Benefits

(A) Fringe benefits, if not included in direct salaries and wages or indirect costs, shall be shown as a percentage of salaries, and shall indicate the individuals to whom the fringe benefit rate(s) apply, the salary of each individual, the total fringe benefit costs for each individual, and the total fringe benefits.

(B) Unless the negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (see paragraph [3] below) specifies the fringe benefit rate(s), the proposed rate(s) shall be supported by a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (*e.g.*, unemployment insurance, retirement, workers' compensation, health and life insurance, FICA, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

(3) Indirect Costs (Overhead)

(A) Estimated indirect costs shall be in accordance with the USAID standard provisions entitled "Negotiated Indirect Cost Rates - Predetermined," "Negotiated Indirect Cost Rates - Provisional (Nonprofits)," or "Negotiated Indirect Cost Rates - Provisional (For-Profits)," as applicable.

(B) The budget shall be structured in such a way as to permit easy identification and application of home office/on-campus and off-site/off-campus rates, if applicable, the base to which the rate(s) is (are) applied, and the applicant's fiscal year (*e.g.*, October 1 through September 30).

(C) To substantiate the rate(s) and the base(s) of application, the applicant must submit a copy of its current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA), signed by the cognizant U.S. Government audit agency. The applicant shall also provide the name and address of the cognizant U.S. Government audit agency, and the name and telephone number of the cognizant auditor, if other than USAID.

(D) If the applicant does not have a cognizant U.S. Government audit agency and/or NICRA, the applicant must submit sufficient information to allow USAID to determine the reasonableness of the rates without a full-scale pre-award survey/audit, *e.g.*, audited balance sheets and profit and loss statements for the last two complete years and the current year to date (or such lesser period of time if the applicant is a newly-formed organization). The profit and loss statements should include the total costs of goods and services sold, including a listing of the various indirect administrative costs, and be supplemented by information on the applicant's customary indirect cost allocation method, together with supporting computations of the basis for the indirect cost rates proposed (*e.g.*, a breakdown of labor bases and overhead pools, the method of determining the rate, annual financial statements, etc.).

(E) Unless the subject is addressed in the NICRA, the applicant must describe when the home office/on-campus rate vs. the off-site/off-campus rate is applied.

(F) If the applicant proposes to charge less than its full indirect cost rate to the award, or proposes not to charge indirect costs, the applicant will still incur indirect costs at the full rate. In such circumstances, the difference between the rate to be charged to the award and the applicant's full indirect cost rate must be reflected as a cost-sharing (matching) contribution.

(4) Consultants

The budget must specify the position title(s), name(s) of proposed individual(s) to fill the position(s), if known, number of units (days, months, FTEs) for each position, proposed unit rate(s) for each position, and the total consultant costs. The level of effort and position titles must be consistent with the annex to the technical application.

(5) Travel, Transportation, and Per Diem

(A) Estimated travel and transportation costs shall be in accordance with the USAID standard provisions entitled "Travel and International Air Transportation" and "Ocean Shipment of Goods."

(B) The budget shall specify, for each traveler, the itinerary (in terms of locations, and, if possible, dates), the estimated airfares, class of travel, any transportation (*e.g.*, excess baggage, unaccompanied baggage, household effects, privately-owned vehicle) costs (to include the weights, mode of transportation [air, vessel], and unit prices), and the subtotal of all travel and transportation costs.

(C) Estimated lodging and subsistence costs must be in accordance with the applicant's established policies and practices which are consistently applied (however, the U.S. Government's per diem rates shall be used as the test of reasonableness if the applicant does not have established policies and practices), and should specify, for each traveler and for each trip, the location(s), the number of days in each location, the daily rate for each location, and the total lodging and subsistence costs. The lodging and subsistence costs must be consistent with the travel itinerary and the level of effort.

(D) For miscellaneous travel expenses such as ground transportation/taxis, airport taxes/transfers, or in-country travel, the basis for the estimate must be indicated, rather than a lump-sum amount. For example, ground transportation/taxis might be \$100, based on 2 round-trips @ \$50; airport taxes/transfers might be \$40, based on 2 round-trips @ \$20; and in-country travel might be \$500, based on 20 days @ \$25.

(E) The budget must distinguish between domestic (U.S.) and international travel.

(F) The budget shall also include the total travel, transportation, and per diem costs.

(6) Overseas Allowances

Overseas allowances (excluding per diem and shipping/storage allowances, which shall be budgeted under "Travel, Transportation, and Per Diem," above) shall be in accordance with the applicant's established policies and practices which are consistently applied. The Standardized Regulations (Government Civilians, Foreign Areas) shall be used as a test of reasonableness for overseas allowances if the applicant does not have established policies and practices.

(7) Nonexpendable Equipment

The detailed budget breakdown for purchases of nonexpendable equipment and other capital expenditures shall include the types and quantities of equipment to be purchased, the unit prices, and the total costs.

(8) Training

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.

(9) Other Direct Costs (ODCs)

ODCs include costs such as branding and marking, communications and postage, passports/visas, medical exams/inoculations (for international travel), insurance (extra insurance such as medical evacuation for international travel), expendable supplies and materials (as distinct from nonexpendable equipment), report preparation/reproduction, etc. Again, the basis for each estimate should be indicated. For example, communications costs might be \$600, based on 12 months at \$50. Report reproduction might be \$40, based on 4 reports of 100 pages each @ \$0.10 per page. Expendable supplies and materials must indicate the types of supplies, the quantity of each, the unit price for each, and total costs.

(10) Sub-Awards and Contracts

If any ME functions, as described in Section I.C of this RFA, will be performed by sub-recipients or contractors, the detailed ME line item budget shall include a lump-sum for each such sub-award and contract, and identify the purpose of the sub-award/contract and the sub-recipient or contractor, if known. This will be followed by a detailed line item budget breakdown for each such sub-award/contract, which provides the same information for each line item as described above.

The cost/management application must indicate whether the instrument will be a contract or sub-award, as the terms are defined in 22 CFR 226.2 (also see §____.210 of OMB Circular A-133). Contracts are subject to 22 CFR 226.40-49 and the USAID standard provision entitled "USAID Eligibility Rules for Goods and Services" (see Section III.D of this RFA). Sub-awards are subject to 22 CFR 226.5 and the USAID standard provision entitled "Applicability of 22 CFR Part 226."

(c) Detailed Geospatial and Farming Systems Research Consortium (GFSRC) Budget (Including ME's Indirect Costs Allocable Thereto)

A summary budget should be presented, showing the amount for each member of the consortium, followed by a detailed line item budget for each consortium member, which provides complete cost breakdowns to enable cost analysis by USAID. The detailed line item budget for each GFSRC member must set forth the basis for all costs and must provide the same level of information described in paragraph (b) above for the detailed ME line item budget. The detailed GFSRC budget should also include the ME's indirect costs allocable thereto.

In addition to the budget delineations described in Section IV.C.3 above (*i.e.*, by year and five-year total, and by source of funds), the detailed GFSRC budgets shall be further delineated by the approximate amount of funds designated for each of the three geographic regions described in Section I.B.2 of this RFA.

(d) Lump-Sum Amounts for Appropriate-Scale Mechanization Consortium (ASMC) (Including ME's Indirect Costs Allocable Thereto)

Since the ASMC activities will be competitively selected after award, the costs and the organization(s) implementing such activities cannot be known at the time the application is submitted. Therefore, with reference to Section II.A of this RFA, the budget should include a lump-sum for the ASMC. In addition to the budget delineations described in Section IV.C.3 above (*i.e.*, by year and five-year total, and by source of funds), the lump-sum ASMC amounts shall be further delineated by the approximate amount of funds designated for each of the three geographic regions described in Section I.B.2 of this RFA.

Similarly, different applicants may apply their indirect costs to different allocation bases. Since the ASMC activities will be competitively selected after award, the amount of the ME's indirect costs allocable thereto also cannot be known at the time the application is submitted. Therefore, the lump-sum amounts for the ASMC will include the ME's indirect costs allocable thereto. However, the applicant's allocation base (see Section IV.C.3[a][3] above) will be considered when evaluating cost-effectiveness (see Section V.C[a] below).

(e) Lump-Sum Amounts for Other Research Activities (Including ME's Indirect Costs Allocable Thereto)

Since other research activities will be competitively selected after award, the costs and the organization(s) implementing such activities cannot be known at the time the application is submitted. Therefore, with reference to Section II.A of this RFA, the budget should include a lump-sum for these other research activities. In addition to the budget delineations described in Section IV.C.3 above (*i.e.*, by year and five-year total, and by source of funds), the lump-sum amounts shall be further delineated by the approximate amount of funds designated for each of the three geographic regions described in Section I.B.2 of this RFA.

Similarly, different applicants may apply their indirect costs to different allocation bases. Since these other research activities will be competitively selected after award, the amount of the ME's indirect costs allocable thereto also cannot be known at the time the application is submitted. Therefore, the lump-sum amounts for these other research activities will include the ME's indirect costs allocable thereto. However, the applicant's allocation base (see Section IV.C.3[a][3] above) will be considered when evaluating cost-effectiveness (see Section V.C[a] below).

With reference to Section II.A of this RFA, the lump-sum amounts for the other competitively selected research activities should be the difference between the sum of amounts for the ME, the GFSRC, and the ASMC, subtracted from the total amount of BFS funding.

(f) Lump-Sum Amounts for Mission Buy-Ins (Including ME's Indirect Costs Allocable Thereto)

A lump-sum amount of \$1,400,000 per year for each of the five years (\$7,000,000 total for five years) should be included in the budget. No additional supporting details need to be included. This amount may include costs associated with the ME, the GFSRC, the ASMC, and/or other research activities, as well as the ME's indirect costs allocable thereto.

IV.C.4. Evidence of Responsibility

Applicants must submit sufficient evidence of responsibility for the USAID Agreement Officer to make an affirmative determination of responsibility, as described in Section III.E of this RFA. After award, the recipient (as the Management Entity) is responsible for ensuring the responsibility of collaborating partners/sub-recipients/contractors.

IV.C.5. Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP)

The applicant is required to comply (and ensure compliance by partners) with USAID's branding and marking requirements set forth in [22 CFR 226.91](#). Also see Section VI of the USAID Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient described in Section IV.C.2 above.

These regulations and provisions include the requirement for the apparently successful applicant to submit a BS/MP for pre-award review, negotiation, and approval by the Agreement Officer. Under these regulations and provisions, the BS/MP does not need to be submitted until the applicant is notified by the Agreement Officer that it is the apparently successful applicant, and is requested to submit the BS/MP by a time specified by the Agreement Officer. Thus, the initial cost/management application is not required to include a BS/MP.

Nevertheless, applicants are encouraged, but are not required, to submit their BS/MP with their initial cost/management applications. Applicants who choose not to include their BS/MP with their initial cost/management application will not be penalized during the evaluation process, but should be aware that, if the applicant is the apparently successful applicant, the applicant will be required to submit an acceptable BS/MP as a prerequisite for any resulting award. This would delay any such award, pending receipt, review, and, if necessary, negotiation of the applicant's BS/MP, with failure to submit or negotiate a BS/MP within the time specified by the Agreement Officer making the apparent successful applicant ineligible for award. Moreover, because USAID's branding and marking requirements have cost implications, such costs must be included in the detailed budget (see paragraph IV.C.3 above), even if the applicant does not submit its BS/MP with the initial cost/management application.

Failure to submit or negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time specified by the Agreement Officer will make the Apparent Successful Applicant ineligible for award.

The proposed Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP) will not be evaluated competitively. The Agreement Officer shall review for adequacy the proposed BS/MP, and will negotiate, approve, and include the BS/MP in the award.

IV.C.6. Waivers from or Approvals under USAID Procurement Requirements

If the applicant foresees the need for waivers from, or approvals required under, USAID's source and supplier nationality requirements (see Section III.D of this RFA), the application should

describe which goods and services need approval/waivers, and provide an explanation and justification for the same.

IV.C.7. Voluntary Survey on Faith-Based and Community Organizations

The applicant is encouraged, but is not required, to submit USAID's [Voluntary Survey on Faith-Based and Community Organizations](#).

IV.C.8. Demonstration of Eligibility

Applicants that are not “land-grant universities”, “sea-grant colleges” or “Native American land-grant colleges” under the statutory definition of Title XII “universities” may submit with their application an additional statement relating to their eligibility under the statutory definition of Title XII institutions in Section III.A of this RFA. This statement may contain references to other parts of the technical and/or cost/management application and to references readily available on the Internet, and may not exceed two pages in length.

SECTION V – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

V.A. SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section V.B below. To facilitate the review of the applications, applicants should organize their narrative sections of the application in the same order as the evaluation criteria. After evaluation of the applications, either: (1) the award will be made without discussions/negotiations; or (2) if deemed necessary or desirable by USAID, written and/or verbal discussions/negotiations will be conducted with applicants that submit the most highly rated applications. USAID hopes to evaluate applications and make an award without discussions with applicants (except clarifications, which are limited exchanges between USAID and applicants, such as the relevance of an applicant's past performance information and adverse past performance information to which the applicant has not previously had a chance to respond). Therefore, the applicant's initial application should contain the applicant's best terms.

If discussions are conducted with applicants, they will be conducted with all applicants that submitted the most highly rated applications. However, the Agreement Officer may limit the number of such applications to the greatest number that will permit an efficient competition among the most highly rated applications. Exchanges with applicants after receipt of an application do not constitute a rejection or counteroffer by USAID.

After the conclusion of any such discussions, applicants with whom discussions were conducted will, unless otherwise advised, be required to submit a revised application or addendum to the initial application, which will be re-evaluated against the criteria set forth below. It is expected that an award will ordinarily be made after the first round of any such discussions and revised applications/addenda; however, USAID reserves the right to conduct subsequent rounds of discussions and revised applications/addenda, and to further limit the number of applicants with which such subsequent discussions would be conducted and from which a subsequent round of revised applications/addenda would be requested.

USAID intends to make an award(s) to the responsible applicant(s) whose application, application modification(s), and/or revised application(s)/addendum (a) represents the greatest value to USAID based on the evaluation of applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth below.

V.B. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The technical evaluation criteria presented below have been tailored to the requirements of this particular RFA. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which applicants should address in their applications (also see Section IV.B above); and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated. The Technical Evaluation Committee will evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the technical applications against the evaluation criteria listed in the following table.

Evaluation Criterion	Points		
Technical Approach (Ref: RFA Sections I.B and IV.B.2)			
Background and Context. Applicant’s demonstrated understanding, relevant to small-holder farming systems in the focal regions, of: (1) recent trends and critical issues affecting sustainable intensification; (2) the application of geospatial analyses in assessing needs and identifying opportunities for agricultural development and natural resource management; (3) sound strategies for aggregating, curating, and analyzing diverse data sets collected at multiple spatial scales and by different entities; (4) methods of farming systems research and analysis and how they may be used to identify farm-level constraints and opportunities for sustainable intensification; and (5) the role mechanization can play in sustainable intensification and how and when it can serve as a central pillar for sustainable intensification. Applicant’s demonstrated understanding of the Feed the Future Initiative and the role of the program within Feed the Future (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.1 and IV.B.2[a]).		6	
Geographic Focus. Soundness of applicant’s analysis of, and justification for, the geographic focus areas proposed (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.2 and IV.B.2[b]).		4	
Areas of Inquiry. Quality of the applicant’s overall vision and approach for implementing a global research program that includes a portfolio of high-quality, innovative research activities in the areas of inquiry described in Section I.B.3 of this RFA that contribute to Feed the Future goals and are designed to achieve long-term development impact on host country beneficiaries, and the quality of the applicant’s plan to develop an integrated research program in the biophysical and social sciences that can identify pathways out of poverty, low productivity, and malnutrition via sustainable intensification (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.3 and IV.B.2[c]).			
Stocktaking, mapping, analysis, and guidance (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.3[a] and IV.B.2[c][1]).	10		
Farming systems research (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.3[b] and IV.B.2[c][2]).	10		
Linking sustainable intensification impacts across scales (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.3[c] and IV.B.2[c][3]).	10		
Sustainable intensification interactions with and impacts on gender and nutrition (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.3[d] and IV.B.2[c][4])	10		
Quality of the applicant’s approach to the cross-cutting issues of natural resource management and climate change adaptation and mitigation that will affect all research activities (Ref: RFA Sections I.B.3(e) and IV.B.2[c][5]).	10		
Subtotal – Areas of Inquiry		50	
Subtotal – Technical Approach			60
Management Approach (Ref: RFA Sections I.C and IV.B.3)			
Management Plan. Quality, realism, and completeness of the applicant’s management plan (Ref: RFA Sections I.C.1. and IV.B.3[a]).		15	
Staffing Plan. Realism and effectiveness of the applicant’s staffing plan, and the qualifications and capabilities of proposed Lab Director (Ref: RFA Sections I.C.2 and IV.B.3[b]).		5	
Training and Capacity-Building, Knowledge-Management, and Performance Monitoring, Impact Assessment, and Reporting Plans. Quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness of the applicant’s Training and Capacity-Building Plan (Ref: RFA Sections I.C.1[c] and IV.B.3[c]), Knowledge Management Plan (ref: RFA Sections I.C.1[d] and IV.B.3[d]), and Plan for Monitoring and Evaluating Performance, Assessing Impact, and Reporting (Ref: RFA Sections I.C.1[e] and IV.B.3.[e]).		10	
Subtotal – Management Approach			30
Past Performance (Ref: RFA Section IV.B.4)			
Relevance and quality of applicant’s past performance.			10
Total			100

V.C. COST/MANAGEMENT EVALUATION

(a) Proposed costs are not a scored competitive factor, but will be evaluated for general reasonableness, effectiveness, realism, fairness, necessity, allowability, and allocability.

(b) Management information will be evaluated to: (1) determine the eligibility (see Section III.A of this RFA) and responsibility (see Section III.E of this RFA) of the applicant; (2) ensure compliance with USAID requirements; and (3) address/resolve issues which may impede performance and implementation, with an eye toward reducing post-award administrative requirements and burdens by resolving issues and providing approvals as part of the pre-award and award process.

(c) With reference to Section IV.C.5 above, the proposed Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP) will not be evaluated competitively. The Agreement Officer shall review for adequacy the proposed BS/MP, and will negotiate, approve, and include the BS/MP in the award.

(d) If the applicant provides an additional statement to demonstrate its eligibility under Title XII in accordance with Section IV.C.8 of this RFA, that statement will only be evaluated for the purpose of determining the applicant's eligibility under this RFA.

SECTION VI – AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

VI.A. NOTICE OF AWARD

The Leader Award is anticipated to be made between August and September 2014.

Although an earlier notification may be provided to applicants regarding their recommended selection for an award, only an award signed by the USAID Agreement Officer will constitute the USAID commitment of the selection of the applicant. USAID may, at its sole discretion, provide the award to the successful applicant's designated point of contact in hardcopy originals, by fax, or electronically. The signed award will authorize the selected applicant to begin implementation of the activities described in their technical applications or revised technical applications/addenda, and will obligate funds for payment to the recipient of the award for costs incurred in such implementation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, and as indicated in Section IV.A.17 of this RFA, the Agreement Officer may authorize the selected applicant(s), at its sole risk, to begin implementation and the incurrence of costs prior to a signed award as of a specified date, with no commitment to reimburse costs in the event that the award was not subsequently signed.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of their non-selection after the award(s) has been made. An unsuccessful applicant, upon its written request received by the Agreement Officer within 10 days after the date on which that unsuccessful applicant has received notification of non-selection, shall be debriefed and furnished the basis for the selection decision. To the maximum extent practicable, the debriefing will occur within 30 days after receipt of the written request. Unsuccessful applicants that fail to request a debriefing in a timely manner are not entitled to a debriefing, but such untimely debriefing requests may be accommodated at USAID's sole discretion. Debriefings may be done orally, in writing, or by any other method acceptable to the USAID Agreement Officer. At a minimum, the debriefing information shall include: (1) USAID's evaluation of the significant weaknesses or deficiencies in the applicant's application, if applicable; (2) the overall evaluated technical rating of the successful applicant(s) and the debriefed applicant, and past performance information on the debriefed applicant; (3) the overall ranking of all applicants; (4) a summary of the rationale for award; and (5) reasonable responses to relevant questions about whether selection procedures contained in this RFA, applicable regulations, and other applicable authorities were followed. The debriefing shall not include point-by-point comparisons of the debriefed applicant's application with those of other applicants. Moreover, the debriefing shall not reveal any information prohibited from disclosure by, or exempt from release under, the Freedom of Information Act ([5 U.S.C. 552](#)) including: (1) trade secrets; (2) privileged or confidential manufacturing processes and techniques; (3) commercial and financial information that is privileged or confidential, including cost breakdowns, profit, indirect cost rates, and similar information; and (4) the names of individuals providing reference information about an applicant's past performance.

VI.B. PAYMENT AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

Financial reporting requirements will depend on the method of payment. In accordance with 22 CFR 226.22, advance payments will be provided if the recipient meets the standards for financial management systems in 22 CFR 226.21; otherwise, payments will be on a reimbursement basis. Recipients will comply with the financial reporting requirements set forth in 22 CFR 226.52. If advance payments are provided, reporting periods are calendar quarters or parts thereof. Quarterly financial reports are due not later than 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. The final financial report is due not later than 90 days after the estimated completion date of the award. If payment is on a reimbursement basis, financial reports may be submitted monthly, but not less frequently than 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. The final financial report is due not later than 90 days after the estimated completion date of the award. The Recipient shall also comply with the USAID standard provision entitled “Reporting Host Government Taxes.”

VI.C. PLANNING, MONITORING, REPORTING, AND EVALUATING PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

VI.C.1. Leader Award

(a) Annual Work-Plans

The Recipient will be required to submit annual work-plans, covering the period October 1 through September 30 (or parts thereof), delineated by the reporting periods described in paragraph (c)(1) below, which describes all activities planned for the year, including activities planned under Associate Awards to the extent known at the time; the site(s) where they will be conducted, benchmarks/milestones and annual performance targets; the outputs/outcomes which the Recipient expects to achieve; and the input/support planned to be provided by the Recipient, during the work-plan period. Included shall be an explanation of how those inputs are expected to achieve the outputs/outcomes and benchmarks/milestones. The Recipient shall describe and use appropriate gender-sensitive methodologies and shall maintain gender-integration and -balance in all activities, targeting women and girls when necessary to achieve that balance. The work-plans must include geographic data collection, geographic analysis, and data submission methods as a separate section. With reference to Section III.F.1(d) of this RFA, the first-year work-plan will include the environmental documentation that may be required by the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation. An EMMP, PERSUAP, or other document which is approved by USAID as a requirement of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation will be integrated into subsequent-year annual work-plans, making any necessary adjustments to activity implementation in order to minimize adverse impacts to the environment. The annual work-plan for the first year will be submitted not later than 60⁴ days after the effective date of the award. Annual work-plans for subsequent years shall be submitted no later than 60 days prior to the start of the next year. As indicated in Section II.B.2 of this RFA, annual work-plans and significant revisions thereto are subject to USAID approval.

⁴ See Section IV.B.3(a), last bullet.

The work-plans will describe activities to be conducted at a greater level of detail than the Program Description of the award, but shall be cross-referenced with the applicable sections in the Program Description. All work-plan activities must be within the scope and objectives of the award. Work-plans shall not change such scope and objectives or any other terms and conditions of the award in any way; such changes may only be approved by the Agreement Officer, in advance and in writing. Thereafter, if there are inconsistencies between the work-plan and the Program Description or other terms and conditions of the award, the latter will take precedence over the work-plan.

(b) Performance Management Plan (PMP)

The Recipient will be required to submit a PMP, as described in Section I.C.1(e)(1) of this RFA, after the award is made. The PMP must include geographic data collection, geographic analysis, and data submission methods as a separate section. The PMP will be submitted at the same time as the first-year work-plan discussed in the previous paragraph. As indicated in Section II.B.2 of this RFA, the PMP and significant revisions thereto are subject to USAID approval.

(c) Performance Reports

The Recipient shall electronically submit all performance reports to the AOR in USAID/Washington. All country-level and global research activities implemented under the Leader Award shall be included in the annual report. Performance reports will consist of the following:

(1) Semi-Annual Reports

(A) Semi-annual reports covering the period October 1 through March 31 and April 1 through September 30 (or parts thereof), shall be submitted not later than 30 days after the end of the reporting period. The semi-annual report will include the following sections: Executive Summary; Program Activities and Highlights; Key Accomplishments; Research Program Overview and Structure; Research Project Reports; Associate Award Research Project Reports; Human and Institutional Capacity Development; Technology Transfer and Scaling Partnerships; Data Management; Governance and Management Entity; Future Directions. A copy of the semi-annual reports shall also be submitted to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse.

(B) The semi-annual reports shall be concise and present the following information:

- A comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives established for the period, the findings of the investigator, or both. Whenever appropriate and the output of programs or projects can be readily quantified, such quantitative data should be related to cost data for computation of unit costs.

- Progress made toward established benchmarks and result indicators of development impact, as discussed in the program description of this RFA and detailed in the Recipient's PMP.
- Reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate.
- Other pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.
- In addition, qualitative descriptions of success stories and achievements to illustrate impacts of the program must be included when possible.
- Summary information on capacity training investments to include, but not limited to, number of Ph.D. candidates and M.Sc. candidates, candidates' countries of origin, and institutional affiliations during training (U.S. host institution and host country partner institution[s] involved in student training).

(2) Final Report

The final performance report will replace the last semi-annual report, and shall include the information described in paragraph (c)(1) above. The final report shall include an executive summary of the Recipient's accomplishments overall and by country program in achieving results and impact; conclusions about lessons learned; future challenges and opportunities; an overall description of the Recipient's activities and attainment of results by country or region; an assessment of progress made toward accomplishing the development impact objectives and expected results; significance of these activities; important research findings; and comments and recommendations. The final report shall incorporate the findings and results that were included in previous annual reports, and is due no later than 90 days after the completion, expiration, or termination of the award. A copy of the final report shall also be submitted to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse.

(3) Notifications

The Recipient will be required to immediately notify the AOR and the Agreement Officer of developments that have a significant impact on the award-supported activities. Also, notification shall be given in the case of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the objectives of the award. This notification shall include a statement of the action taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.

(d) Evaluation

The Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab will be subject to a performance evaluation, per [USAID Evaluation Policy](#). USAID will arrange and pay for the evaluation outside of the award resulting from this RFA. The evaluation will assess the following: (1) the research program performance; and (2) overall management.

The performance evaluation will evaluate the implementation of the program, including incorporation of the core program components; the quality and progress of the research; the achievement of development targets; the degree to which the research activities achieve integration and are relevant to development in the host countries and more broadly; and overall progress on agreed-upon measurable research, training, outreach/dissemination, and institutional strengthening results of the program.

It will also evaluate the administrative and management effectiveness of the Management Entity (ME), including the relationship between the ME and sub-recipients/partners; the relationship and communication with USAID/Washington and Missions; and the outreach and intellectual leadership activities undertaken by the ME.

The performance evaluation is distinct from, but will complement, the impact assessment activities undertaken by the program itself that examine the program's impact (see Section I.C.1[e] of this RFA). The performance evaluation is generally conducted in the beginning of the fourth year of the five-year award.

(e) Geographic Data

In accordance with 22 CFR 226.36 (as well as Executive Order 12906, OMB Circular A-16, ADS 507 and ADS 557), the Recipient shall make geographically referenced data available to USAID, as follows:

(i) Project and Activity Location Data (see Section I.C.1[e][1] of this RFA) will be provided as latitude and longitude coordinates in Decimal Degrees (DD.MMMM) format as derived from Global Positioning System (GPS) units, GPS-enabled mobile devices, or a digital map interface, such as Google Earth or Google Maps. When providing exact latitude and longitude coordinates poses sensitivity issues, another geographic resolution for reporting Project and Activity Locations will be agreed-upon with the AOR. In accordance with USAID data requirements, additional attribute data such as project name, project description, activity name, IP name, project start- and end-dates, beneficiaries, etc., will be submitted along with Project and Activity Location Data.

(ii) Thematic Data and Project Specific Data (see Section I.C.1[e][1] of this RFA), and any other geographic data or satellite imagery generated under this award with USAID funds, will be provided to USAID.

(iii) All Geographic Data must be submitted in industry standard formats such as Esri Shapefile or Esri Feature Class and include metadata. Metadata is a summary document providing content, quality, type, creation, and spatial information about a data set. It represents who, what, when, where, why, and how of the resource. It can be stored in any format such as a text file, Extensible Markup Language (XML), or database record. Metadata records include core library catalog elements such as Title, Abstract, and Publication Data; geographic elements such as Geographic Extent and Projection Information; and database

elements such as Attribute Label Definitions and Attribute Domain Values. The suggested metadata format is the XML schema, ISO 19139, which was developed to provide a consistent manner for presenting the ISO 19115 standard. All Geographic Data must be projected to the Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic system 1984 (GCS WGS 1984). All data must use the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 1984) datum. The selection and use of subnational administrative boundary datasets must be done in consultation with the AOR.

VI.C.2. Associate Awards under LWAs

Reporting requirements and evaluation plans for Associate Awards will be specified in such awards. The Recipient will be required to provide an electronic copy of all reports produced under Associate awards to the AOR for the Leader award.

VI.D. TITLE TO PROPERTY

Title to property financed by USAID under the award(s) will vest in the Recipient, and will be subject to 22 CFR 226.30-37.

VI.E. PROGRAM INCOME

Any program income generated under the award(s) will be added to USAID funding (and any cost-sharing that may be provided) and used for program purposes. Program income will be subject to 22 CFR 226.24.

SECTION VII – AGENCY CONTACTS

The point of contact for this RFA and for any questions during the RFA process is:

Christine Dwulet
Agreement Specialist
USAID/Washington
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
Email: cdwulet@usaid.gov

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this RFA must request it in writing by the date listed on the cover letter to allow a reply to reach all prospective applicants before the submission of their applications. Oral explanations or instructions given before award of a Cooperative Agreement will not be binding. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this RFA will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment of this RFA, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

SECTION VIII – OTHER INFORMATION

(a) In accordance with 22 CFR 226.81, no funds under the award(s) resulting from this RFA shall be paid as profit to any recipient or sub-recipient. Profit is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. This does not preclude payment of profit to the recipient's or sub-recipients' vendors (contractors) under procurement contracts and subcontracts for the acquisition of goods and services, which are subject to 22 CFR 226.40-49, as well as the USAID standard provision entitled "USAID Eligibility Rules for Goods and Services." Guidance on distinguishing between vendors/contractors and sub-recipients may be found in §____.210 of OMB Circular A-133. Also see <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303sai.pdf>.

(b) As indicated in Section IV.A.(7) of this RFA, USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted in response to this RFA.