

Research on School Meals Project in Africa – NOFO Open Call-in December 10, 2020 – 17:00 EST

Offered for prospective applicants to anonymously ask questions and/or hear about the NOFO. Callers will not be asked to identify themselves or their institutions.

POC on the call:

- Debra Pfaff: USDA AED
- Paul Alberghine + Lindsay Carter: USDA McGovern Dole
- Koli Banik: USAID Africa Bureau/Education
- Ellie Morefield+ Collin Bradley: USDA/FAS Monitoring & Evaluation Staff
- Jim Suits: USDA/FAS Contracting

Agenda:

- Debra Pfaff to welcome those on call
- Debra Pfaff to provide summary of NOFO/research questions
- Debra Pfaff to review questions asked to date (details below)
- Open the floor to questions (POCs for each subject area will field questions)
- Closing

Questions Received Prior to the Call:

- 1) Question: Should a successful proposal address all 3 questions, or just choose one to focus on?
[Answer: The strongest proposals will address all three questions.](#)
- 2) Question: Does the 10% cap on indirect costs also apply to sub-recipients/subcontractors under this agreement instrument? Specifically, would this 10% cap apply to subs that are expected to perform work estimated to be \$25,000 or more?
[Answer: The statutory language stipulates "indirect costs of performance, not exceeding 10 percent of the direct cost." For that reason, we have consistently held that this applies to any cost-type subawards.](#)
- 3) Question: Is this an annual grant?
[Answer: No, this opportunity is solely available for this Fiscal Year.](#)
- 4) Question: Can a private company in the United States apply?
[Answer: While only Universities/appropriate learning institutions may apply, sub-awards to private companies are allowable \(see Contractual section, bullet f, page 13 of the NOFO\).](#)

Questions During the Call:

- 1) Question: "Can Nigeria be considered for these research questions?"
[Answer: The countries listed in the NOFO are initial suggestions of those countries and projects most relevant to the priorities of USAID and USDA. However, countries are not limited to this list and applicants may suggest additional countries in their application.](#)
- 2) Question: "Do we need to address all suggested countries listed in the NOFO?"
[Answer: No, applicants do not need to select/cover all countries. The countries listed in the NOFO are initial suggestions where there are active MGD projects and therefore where USDA and USAID](#)

have vested interest, but the list is not definitive.

- 3) Question: “Do the countries need to be countries with McGovern-Dole project?”

Answer: On page 2 of the NOFO, under Scope, the purpose of this project is to “enhance USDA’s and USAID’s understanding of the factors that contribute to school feeding sustainability post-project [and] help inform future project funding, design, implementation, and evaluation.” But the countries for this project are not specifically limited to McGovern-Dole countries.

- 4) Question: “Can the applicant use non-McGovern-Dole countries as models to understand sustainability?”

Answer: This is allowable.

- 5) Question: “I see the first deliverable is the country selection. But I would think it makes sense to select the countries as part of the application, at least provisionally, given the tight timeline between award and start of the work.”

Answer: This is certainly a viable approach and would be allowable. However, we do not wish to imply that it is mandatory. On page 11 of the NOFO, in the section titled “Content and Form of Application Submission”, it is stated that the technical approach for research and learning activities should include, “...the initial suggestions on countries that will be researched,...”. This confirms that USDA expects the application to include these initial or provisional selections.

- 6) Question: “Can we propose conducting primary data collection in the countries (on educational outcomes, for example)?”

Answer: Page 2 of the NOFO in the Scope section states: “This research will incorporate existing data **and the collection of primary data as feasible and appropriate**” (highlight added). It is therefore up to the applicants to propose whether primary data is appropriate for their strategy in addressing the research questions.

- 7) Question: “What is your suggestion for getting the work done when no travel is probably allowed?”

Answer: It is recognized that international travel during this time may or may not be realistic, and that the bulk of the work will most likely be desk-based research. However, per bullet C on page 12 of the NOFO, travel expenses are in fact allowable. Additionally, bullet f on page 13 (titled “Contractual”) indicates that sub-contracts can be awarded. Sub-awardees can be firms or entities located in foreign countries.

- 8) Question: “Have USAID/USDA conducted M&EL work for these projects?”

Answer: Yes, M&E work is conducted for all MGD projects. Evaluations of projects are posted publicly online on USAID’s [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) (DEC). USAID and USDA will make additional secondary data available to the winning applicant.

- 9) Question: “Where can I find information on what [secondary project data] will be available to the award winner?”

Answer: Please see the following resources:

- a. FAS’s [Monitoring and Evaluation Policy](#) and [Guidance on Standard Food Aid Program Standard Indicators Handbook](#) are both available online via the McGovern-Dole homepage. This will give you an idea of the M&E systems that FAS uses and the data projects collect.
- b. The McGovern-Dole learning agenda:
(<https://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/resources/school-meals-learning-agenda>)

- c. The McGovern-Dole evaluations posted on USAID's DEC:
(<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/search/SearchResults.aspx?q=RkFTVVNEEQ==>)

10) Question: "In quantitative analysis, is it expected that we would adhere to the "standard indicators", or can we build on those /extend them to capture more complexity?"

Answer: Your analysis should not be limited to the standard indicators found in the indicator handbook (publicly available).

11) Question: "I'm looking for information on the changing geography of school meal programs over time in Malawi (in order to craft a research plan). Is that the sort of information USDA could provide?"

Answer: This information can be provided to the chosen applicant, but not ahead of making the selection/award. All are encouraged to gather information online via google search etc.

12) Question: "Will the evaluation of the proposals be [conducted] by both USAID and USDA?"

Answer: Applications will be evaluated by a team that may consist of personnel from multiple U.S. Government agencies. We do not anticipate using outside reviewers at this time.

13) Question: "I'm assuming the strength of proposers may be for one of the questions and not necessary all 3. Why not [accept] proposals for an individual question and link up with other question proposals?"

Answer: This was considered, and ultimately the major challenge is a very rigid end-date (as indicated in NOFO). Having separate proposals would have resulted in further delays that we felt were not appropriate for the timeline.

14) Question: "Given the three-pronged analysis here (with expertise necessary across all three fields: education, nutrition, and economics/agriculture), is there any mechanism to help potential partners find one another if we have expertise in just one of these fields?"

Answer: USDA is not legally authorized to facilitate connections, as this may constitute "direction", but we certainly encourage you to utilize all networks you may have at your disposal, and also to utilize online resources such as Google or LinkedIn searches.

15) Question: "Given the uncertainties relating to the COVID pandemic, is the no-cost extension a possibility?"

Answer: Per section H, part 1 on page 22 of the NOFO, extensions are technically allowed. However, the September 30th end date is quite solid, and an extension is very unlikely to be granted.

16) Question: "I just wanted to be clear and question to that when you say "local" you mean National as there a difference between local food systems and national/regional food systems (international vs. local) (Question 2 [in the NOFO])"

Answer: This question identifies "local, regional, and/or national" in comparison to "international." "Local" is used as a general term and can include regional, national and sub-national sources or models of procurement.