



RE: USAID Notice of Funding Opportunity 7200AA18RFA00023 Sustainable E-Waste Management and Battery Technologies for the Off-Grid Solar Sector

**Amendment: 01 - Questions & Answers from Q&A Period: May 22 – June 8, 2018
(5:00PM EST)**

Issue Date: June 19, 2018

UMBRELLA - <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=305471>

AMENDMENT #01

TECHNICAL AND CLARIFYING QUESTIONS:

1. What is the total USAID funding to be allocated to this program under this RFA, including implementing partner overhead and grant sub-awards?

USAID Response:

USAID is contributing up to \$1.4M for total program costs and is seeking co-funding from other donor, philanthropic, and corporate partners.

2. Would you consider a proposal that offers a renewable energy solution?

USAID Response:

This current RFA is not for specific technology solutions. It is a solicitation for a third party implementing partner to administer this grant program. Further details will be published regarding the eligibility requirements for the grant program once the program has initiated.

3. Does this program scope apply solely to the solar home system market, or may it also include pico solar products?

USAID Response:

The program scope is specific to solar home systems, and applications must address this. Relevant technologies and business solutions may be applicable to both pico and solar home systems (SHS), but application materials focused on pico systems will be viewed as non-responsive to the scope.

4. Could USAID please clarify expectations as to what will be achieved during the program’s nine month period of performance? As well as completion of the processes leading up to the award of the grants, is it expected that they will all be fully spent by the grantees in this period

USAID Response:

The grant program duration is estimated to span a minimum nine month period. This timeframe does not include pre-award programming (including a call for proposals and award administration) nor post-award activities (including compiling key learnings from program sub-awardees to disseminate to the sector). These awards will be administered as short-term project grants to allow teams to convene in a concentrated timeline to address key company and research barriers around the topic.

5. On Page 4, paragraph 4, it states that the implementing partner will be expected to work with the SOGE team on advocacy activities. Please can be more concrete on your expectations here, to enable bidders to formulate activity budgets?

USAID Response:

A portion of the implementing partner (IP) budget should be set aside for marketing and event coordination with the SOGE team for information dissemination across the off-grid energy sector in sub-Saharan Africa on key findings of program results.

6. On Page 7, paragraph 3 [“(4) Monitor...”] is somewhat unclear. Please could you further elaborate, and also outline what “other projects” you have in mind

USAID Response:

We are open and willing to work with other donor partners, and can modify this programming to accommodate additional donor capital and technical assistance as available.

7. Page 8, item 2 [“Cost Sharing...”] identifies the attractiveness of applications that can offer co-funding. This message is repeated elsewhere in the document. However, on page 42 [“B. Cost Evaluation”], the indication is that the level of proposed cost share is a part of the cost evaluation, which itself is less important than the technical evaluation. Please could you provide a more concrete steer on the weighting in the evaluation to be given to cost share.

USAID Response:

This is not explicitly required for the implementing partner to directly contribute to the budget, but a IP’s capacity to leverage additional grant capital is highly desirable.

8. Also in relation to cost share: Please can you elaborate on the level of contractual commitment by co-funders you would expect applicants to be able to secure within the timeframe of this proposal?

USAID Response:

There is no minimum requirement at this time.

9. In the event that co-funders are interested but would prefer to operate over a longer period than 9 months, please could you elaborate how you will calculate the co-funding % offered – as a % of the first 9 months of costs, or as % of total anticipated cost?

USAID Response:

If supplemental funding is available contingent on a longer timeline beyond the initial proposed timeline, this co-funding contribution would be based on the total cost of the program.

10. Page 12, first paragraph, final sentence refers to “the same order as they appear below”. Please could you clarify if this is correct.

USAID Response:

The only additional information to be included in technical component of the proposal is the applicant’s response to the environmental compliance requirements outlined in P12, paragraph 2.

11. Page 14, item 16: Can you indicate what are your expectations in relation to levels of a) admin & support costs, and b) all operational costs (non-grant) as a % of the overall programme?

USAID Response:

If an organization does not have an approved NICRA an organization may apply for a NICRA prior to award or may elect to request the 10% indirect cost de minimus amount for indirect costs, consistent with 2 CFR 200.414 Indirect (F&A) costs (for administrative cost guidelines). We expect a minimum budget of at least \$500,000USD to be allocated directly towards the grant sub-awards.

12. Pages 14-16. Where the items on these pages refer to requirements for documentation about the applicant organization, will these, in the case of consortia with a single lead organization who would serve as the prime contractor, apply only to the lead organization?

USAID Response:

USAID will consider all eligible applicants, but a lead organization needs to be identified if the applicant is a consortium.

13. Page 42. Please can you provide the detail on the relative weightings of the different criteria in both the technical and costs evaluations, and be more specific on the relative weightings of the overall technical evaluation versus the cost evaluation?

USAID Response:

No weightings will be provided on evaluation criteria.

14. On page 10 of the RFA, USAID mentions that “Applicants may upload applications to <http://www.grants.gov>,” but also mentions separate instructions for applications sent by email. Can USAID confirm that the applicant should submit the application only via email?

USAID Response:

Both submission options will be received by the same USAID point of contact, either directly on [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) or via email.

15. On page 14 of the RFA, the solicitation states that “Past Performance References requested in the certifications and representations should be attached to the technical application.” The certifications and representations on page 31 state that the applicant is supposed to “provide past performance information requested in the RFA.” Can USAID provide instructions for submitting Past Performance and confirm that Past Performance does not count toward the 10-page limit for the technical application?

USAID Response:

Documentation of the applicant’s past experience in performing and delivering efficient grant administration in other donor partnerships should be included as an appendix to the technical application and does not adhere to the 10 page limit, but please be as concise.

16. While the solicitation states on page 8 that cost share in the amount of 50%-100% is suggested and not required, the evaluation criteria for the cost application states on page 42 “applications will be evaluated for cost effectiveness including the level of proposed cost share.” Since cost share is not required, will USAID confirm that it will not be a part of the evaluation criteria for the cost application??

USAID Response:

- a. While cost share would be an added benefit when evaluating proposals, this is a voluntary contribution to the program and not required. If cost share is proposed, sources of funding require a letter of intent (a statement of funding source and donor/corporate commitment on organization letterhead) from the contributing organization.

- b. Regarding cost effectiveness, our top priority is in seeking an implementing partner sensitive to minimizing overhead and administrative costs so that the majority of this program budget can be directly administered through project grants

17. On page 11 of the RFA, USAID asks for a table of contents that “follows the technical application format outlined herein.” Can USAID provide instructions regarding the format of the technical application?

USAID Response:

- a. The technical application format should address all the relevant evaluation criteria included in the “Selection Criteria” section on P5. Per this section, proposed formatting includes the following sections:
 - i. Proposed implementing plan (compatible programming approach based on cooperative agreement objectives, including grant administration timeline)
 - ii. Institutional capacity (Implementing partner's capacity and efficiency in effectively administering the program)
 - iii. Key personnel (necessary expertise for efficient implementation). Please note that any attached CVs are not included in the total page restriction, and can be included as supplemental information at the end of this proposal component.
 - iv. Past performance (demonstrated expertise in efficient management of prior grant programs). Please note that this does not need to specifically be USAID-funded programs in the past, and specific past program descriptions can be added as supplemental information at the end, not included in the total page restriction.

18. USAID provides selection criteria in two sections of the RFA on pages 5 and 41-42. Moreover, page 41 and 42 provide two separate sets of evaluation criteria. Can USAID clarify the evaluation criteria that applicants should follow for both the technical and cost applications?

USAID Response:

P5 and P41 provides an overall summary of the technical and cost evaluation criteria and review. The technical application component will be evaluated based on the outlined categories in P42, Section A, “Technical Evaluation”. The cost application component will be evaluated based on P42, Section B.

19. Can USAID please clarify whether the applicant is supposed to propose key personnel as part of its application? If so, please provide instructions regarding the key personnel to be proposed. If not, can you please remove key personnel from the evaluation criteria?

USAID Response:

Yes. This section should identify the lead point of contact and relevant senior leadership to be overseeing the proposed programming, including relevant background and past performance. As the SOGE team is seeking to implement this program as quickly as possible, time constraints will

not allow for extensive external recruiting and hiring for a lead role on the implementing partner side.

20. In USAID's vision for the addendum, what would be characterized as a reasonable amount of collaborative partners for the project?

USAID Response:

Key personnel includes senior management on the technical and operational aspects of proposed programming. Key personnel CVs are to be attached as an appendix to the technical application and are not constrained to the 10p limit.

21. Can you please confirm that graphics, tables, and text boxes can use smaller font than 12pt provided they are legible?

USAID Response:

Table captions and content can be smaller than 12pt font within reason.

22. Can USAID please confirm that signatures are only required on the cover page of the technical and cost applications?

USAID Response: Correct.

23. On page 12, the solicitation makes a passing reference to "submitted paper copy application." Can you please confirm that the application should be submitted only via email and that hard copy submission is not required?

USAID Response:

Correct. Electronic submission requirements can be found on P9: Application and Submission Information.

24. Can you please confirm that the branding strategy and marking plan are not required as part of the initial application submission?

USAID Response:

Correct- this will be discussed with the implementing partner at the time of recommendation. Detailed guidelines for this branding strategy and marketing plan are outlined on P32.

25. Will the Applicant to this proposal be expected to disburse funds/grants to beneficiary organisations/companies directly or will USAID do this?

USAID Response:

Yes, the grant funds and administration itself will be managed by the implementing partner.

26. Will the Applicant to this proposal be expected to; a. undertake financial due diligence or assessment of organisations receiving grants before grants are issued?

USAID Response: Yes, the implementing partner's role includes a financial due diligence component as part of the evaluation process of the grant program as would any distributor of grant sub-awards under a USAID grant. Due diligence requirements are primarily to efficiently evaluate grant applicants' capacity for optimal project management and performance. Strong financial and operational performance is expected of grant sub-awardees of USAID as required of direct awardees.

27. Will the Applicant to this proposal be expected to disburse all funding within a 9 month period?

USAID Response:

Yes.

28. Will USAID undertake monitoring of impact and final results outside of the 9 month period as it is not part of the TOR? Just wanted to check whether any monitoring by the Applicant is envisaged.

USAID Response: Project grant M&E reporting requirements will be determined with the implementing partner and the SOGE team at the time of award. The implementing partner's data collection and reporting requirements will be primarily around compiling and sharing key learnings from grant awardee research, execution, and findings.

29. It is clear that the technical is a maximum of 10 pages at 12 point. But what font if any is preferred?

USAID Response:

Arial or Times New Roman are ideal.

30. Are CVs of people to be counted within the 10 pages of the technical proposal or is this additional to the 10 pages?

USAID Response:

No, this is supplemental documentation to the technical application proposal requirement.

31. Should the technical and financial proposal be included in a single attachment or separate email attachments when submitted?

USAID Response:

Please submit as two PDF attachments in one email. One proposal may be submitted per organization.

32. As per the Announcement “ ... The Scaling Off-Grid Energy team is seeking an implementing partner to administer a grant and technical assistance program...” Our understanding is the Applicant will manage and administrate the grant. Please confirm.

USAID Response: This specific RFA is for applicants to administer a grant and technical assistance program that will lead to the creation of sub-grants. Further details will be published at the time of program launch.

33. Is there any existing management system (financial, technical, operation, maintenance , measurement and verification/evaluation etc.) in place or the Applicant should develop and administer their own?

USAID Response:

The implementing partner is expected to have deep expertise in grant program management and past performance to speak to with regard to program administration. Please refer to eligibility information on P8.

34. The financial support from USAID as per the Announcement sealing is \$1.4 million. Is this the financial support for management and administration of “ a grant “ to the Applicant or to the entire program of small grants supporting other Program activities?

USAID Response:

Please refer to Question 31.

35. It is written "applicants should ensure that proposals are in line with associated USAID Mission Region or Country Development Cooperation Strategy". So, we would like to know if Madagascar is eligible?

USAID Response:

Please refer to Question 3.

36. Is the number or size of grants to be disbursed to companies stipulated?

USAID Response:

The number and size of grants disbursed under this program will be dependent on total program budget, including any additional third party co-funding commitments to the program that may be secured as well as the overhead costs for implementing partner administration. USAID will provide up to \$1.4 M and external commitments are to be determined.

37. What should be ready after the nine months period? Is it the set-up of a Call for Proposals system? Is it the full set of grants awarded (and projects completed)?

USAID Response:

The grant program duration is estimated to span a minimum nine month period. This does not include pre-award programming including a call for proposals and award administration, and post-award activities including compiling key learnings from program sub-awardees to disseminate to the sector. These awards will be administered as short-term project grants to allow teams to convene in a concentrated timeline to address key company and research barriers around the topic.

38. Are we correct in assuming that (the awarded applicant) would receive the disbursement from USAID as a grant?

USAID Response:

Yes, this is a cooperative agreement in which the third party implementing partner manages the full budget allocated by USAID and provides sub-awards under this program.

39. The RFP states a ‘small grant or innovation prize component’- are we right in assuming that this is the main focus of the project?

USAID Response:

Yes, this is the project focus, with a built in marketing/advocacy minor aspect of the implementing partner’s budget allocated to working with USAID as needed to promote/circulate program results and research findings.

40. Co-financing – it is unlikely for us to be able to present solid co-financing commitments by mid-July – can these be developed on the back of an initial grant from USAID?

USAID Response:

The expectation is that applicants will be in advanced stages of negotiating commitments from co-funders at the time of application, if co-financing is to be secured. Please provide a letter of intent from each potential source of funding, including funding amount, on organization/company letterhead. It is understood that the expedited timeline prior to proposal

deadlines will not allow extensive solidification of co-financing commitments from other donors, and USAID can work with the implementing partner once a cooperative agreement is in place to further secure additional third party commitments as available.

41. Would investment from companies into e-waste operations or manufacturing design be considered?

USAID Response:

Public and private co-funding from external parties will be considered, provided no conflict of interest exists, and funding sources adhere to standard USAID guidelines.

42. Is it possible to use a portion of the grant fund for other market development activities such as research on consumer insights or the informal sector?

USAID Response:

This is not currently included in the implementing partner scope of work and would subsequently not be able to utilize USAID funds. This could potentially be an additive aspect of overall programming, pending availability of third party funding.

43. Is this facility to be seen as a potential first step into a larger programme?

USAID Response: *Please see response to Technical/Clarifying Question #9.*

44. Can a non-HEI or LMIC Board Member also provide services under the project (for example, by developing countermeasures to cyber-attacks)?

USAID Response:

This is subject to external partner interest and availability of funds.

[End of Amendment 01 of 7200AA18RFA00023]