



REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA)

Number: SOL-268-14-000002

Title: Improved Basic Education Services Project (IBESP)

Issuance Date: June 4, 2014

Application Submission Date: July 7, 2014, 4:00 p.m. Cairo Local Time

Deadline for Questions: June 11, 2014 , 8:00 a.m. Cairo Local Time

Dear Sir/Madam:

On behalf of USAID/Lebanon, the Regional Procurement Office of USAID/Egypt is seeking Assistance Applications from any of the following to implement the program description explained below:

U.S. or non-U.S. organization, non-profit, or for-profit entity.

Applicants may submit applications individually or in partnership with other institutions.

This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and may be amended. As the Request for Application (RFA) may be amended, potential applicants should regularly check the site to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this RFA. Questions and answers will be posted through www.grants.gov

Only **electronic** applications will be considered received. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all required information in its application, including the requirements found in any attachments to this Grants.gov opportunity.

This RFA consists of this cover letter plus the following Sections:

Section I - Funding Opportunity Description

Section II - Award information

Section III - Eligibility Information

Section IV - Application and Submission Information

Section V - Application Review Information

Section VI - Award and Administration Information

Section VII - Agency Contacts

Section VIII - Other Information

Section IX – Special Provisions

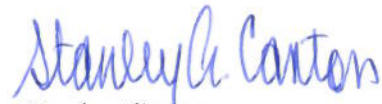
Each section is provided as an attachment except for the two which are provided below:

SECTION VII. AGENCY CONTACTS: Please send all questions or comments concerning this funding opportunity to the following e-mail address: **slebanon@usaid.gov**.

SECTION VIII. OTHER INFORMATION: USAID retains the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Eligible organizations interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this RFA thoroughly to understand the type of program sought and the application submission and evaluation process.

Sincerely,



Stanley Canton
Agreement Officer

SECTION I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Authorizing Legislation:

This is a discretionary Cooperative Agreement opportunity to be competed and awarded pursuant to the authority of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, and the applicable sections of USAID regulation 22CFR226.

Program Eligibility Requirements:

Applicants must be U.S. or non-U.S. organization, non-profit, or for-profit entity.

How the Award will be Administered:

For US organizations, USAID Regulation 22 CFR 226, OMB Circulars A-21 (for universities) or A-122 (for non-profit organizations), ADS 303, and USAID Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients will be applicable. For non-U.S. organizations, USAID Standard Provisions for non-U.S. non-governmental organizations would apply.

Further information including the referenced documents may be obtained via our agency website www.usaid.gov directly or via links in USAID Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter 303 on our agency web-site:

<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.

Copies may also be obtained from the listed agency points of contact for this RFA.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The following program description indicates the range of activities that might be involved and the goals of this activity which the successful applicant will be expected to meet.

This Program Description includes the following attachments:

I: Purpose

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Lebanon is issuing this request for applications (RFAs) from qualified institutions to implement education activities that will support continuing efforts to improve the quality and availability of public basic education in Lebanon. Applicants should develop technical and financial descriptions for a project beginning in September 30, 2014. Subject to the availability of funds, USAID anticipates awarding one, four-year award in the range from \$40 million to \$45.5 million. The applicant is to propose a cost share of at least 20% of the total project budget.

The purpose of the IBESP (“the project”) is to expand equitable access and improve learning outcomes for vulnerable students in Lebanese public schools. The project will also have an immediate focus on alleviating the strains to the system that are resulting because of the continuing inflow of Syrian refugee children into Lebanese public schools.

The Recipient/Implementing Partner (hereinafter called “the Recipient”) chosen by USAID will provide technical assistance and capacity building within the context of three project components (sub-Intermediate Results [sub-IRs] in the Mission’s draft Country Development Cooperation Strategy) focused on:

Sub-IR 1.1.1: Improving reading outcomes for primary level public school students
Sub-IR 1.1.2: Expanding access to safe and relevant education for vulnerable public school students
Sub-IR 1.1.3: Strengthening management (resilience) in education system to better direct and monitor education

There will be a strong emphasis on improving both access and learning outcomes, and on institutionalizing upgrades across the sector including at the teacher, administrative, and ministerial levels. It is expected that as a result of project interventions, learning outcomes will improve, particularly in reading at the primary level. Better management and higher instructional standards will be institutionalized and sustainable. Improved facilities, services, and teaching – along with more effectively engaged communities and school councils – will not only improve learning but also increase the chances of youth remaining in the formal education system. Special efforts, particularly under the “learning environment” component (sub-IR 1.1.2 above), will address issues that have arisen as a result of the continuing influx of Syrian refugee children into the public education system, e.g., over-crowding, psycho-social challenges, and teacher overload.

II: Background

A. Context for USAID Assistance

U.S. foreign policy strongly supports a sovereign, stable, prosperous, and democratic Lebanon. Reflective of this policy, the U.S. Government (USG) has pledged well over \$1 billion since 2006 in assistance for relief, recovery, rebuilding, and security. A significant portion of these resources have been provided through USAID. Currently, USAID programs focus on the private sector, civil society, sub-national public institutions, and – in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education – on basic education initiatives. The latter initiatives have recently taken on enhanced importance, as the public education system is challenged by a continuing influx of Syrian refugee children into Lebanese schools. IBESP responds to the desire of the USG to assist Lebanon in meeting this challenge. At the same time, the project will help in strengthening the public education system for the longer term – particularly at the primary level – recognizing that education is foundational to human development, critically linked to broad-based growth and economic development, and supportive of robust and stable democratic governance.

USAID/Lebanon’s 2014-2018 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) has not yet been formally approved. The Mission’s stated goal for the new CDCS period is “Improved accountability and credibility of public institutions, and broader economic prosperity”.

IBESP promotes achievement of the Development Objective (DO) “Improved capacity of the public sector in providing transparent, quality services across Lebanon”, and of the corresponding Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1 “Expanded equitable access and improved learning outcomes for vulnerable students in Lebanese public schools”. Improving the quality of the Lebanese public education system will help build popular confidence in the system, aid the Government of Lebanon (GOL) in delivering on their promise of education for all, and promote the outcomes indicated above.

IBESP will support both Goal One and Goal Three of the USAID education strategy (*Education, Opportunity through Learning*, February 2011). The project will contribute to Goal One – “Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015” – by boosting literacy levels of children in the early grades. The project will contribute to Goal Three – “Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015” – by assessing and helping to address needs in those schools most affected by refugee pressures.

The Lebanese National Plan for Education includes the following five priorities: (1) education available on the basis of equal opportunity; (2) quality education that contributes to building a knowledge society; (3) education that contributes to social cohesion; (4) education that contributes to economic development; and (5) good governance of education. The three components of IBESP complement these reform objectives, particularly at the primary level and in terms of student access and outcomes, teaching quality, administrative oversight, and social cohesion.

The GOL, together with the United Nations and World Bank, has released a “Roadmap” for stabilization (*Lebanon Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian Conflict*, November 15, 2013). For education, the Roadmap prioritizes several needs, including the strengthening of the GOL ability to oversee and monitor the quality of education. In the short- to medium-term, the Roadmap calls for specific improvements in “teaching quality and learning” in the formal education system. Informed by this Roadmap, the components of IBESP will specifically address these priorities.

B. Challenges and Opportunities

Lebanon has been affected by numerous wars and civil unrest in recent decades, and its diverse religious makeup, fragile social cohesion, and complex political setup continue to render the country vulnerable to conflicts and prone to instability. Not surprisingly, this instability has had an adverse effect on the entire public education system, which recently has come under even greater negative pressures because of the large number of Syrian refugees fleeing into Lebanon, nearly half of whom are children in need of early education.

USAID support for basic education programs in Lebanon began after the 2006 conflict in response to Lebanon’s physical infrastructure and other education needs. These efforts were carried out under the Lebanon Education Assistance for Development (LEAD) project. LEAD (2006-2010, \$11.6 million) benefitted over 300 schools in all six of Lebanon’s governorates through school renovations, provision of equipment, and support for after-school activities. Building on the LEAD project, USAID initiated phase one of the Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement project (D-RASATI, 2010-2013, \$49.3 million). In its first phase, D-RASATI renovated 183 public schools across the country, equipped secondary schools with science laboratories, and trained teachers.

Currently, USAID is supporting the second phase of D-RASATI (2013-2015, \$24.5 million). It focuses on training English teachers, providing computers to schools, promoting extra-curricular activities and psycho-social support in those schools most affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, conducting leadership training, and implementing a small grants initiative that enables schools to undertake modest improvements through, for example, equipment purchases and enhanced after-school activities. Collectively, LEAD and D-RASATI have yielded quite positive results, and, importantly, helped USAID establish a close collaborative partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Yet despite these project achievements and the MEHE's own efforts, there remain urgent additional pedagogical and institutional needs that must be addressed if the GOL's education objectives are to be achieved and refugee-related circumstances are to be dealt with in a manner that will reach the maximum number of displaced children. The grim reality is that years of unrest have contributed to an overall diminution of progress in Lebanon's public education system. The resulting deterioration has caused flight from the system for families who can bear the considerable financial burden of private education.

Approximately 67% of Lebanese children now attend private schools, particularly at the primary level, leaving the public school system – largely synonymous with poor quality education – to Lebanese families with limited means and to Syrian refugees. About 33% of the estimated one million school-aged students in Lebanon attend public schools. Out of the approximately 2,800 schools in Lebanon, 1,274 (or 46%) are public, including KG, primary, intermediate and secondary schools. Generally, Lebanon's intermediate and secondary public schools enjoy a better reputation for quality than primary schools.

Teacher professional development, recruitment, placement, and monitoring systems are weak as well. The public system has an estimated 50,000 teachers, but not all of them are actively instructing. The excess teachers, inactive but still on official payrolls, constitute a significant burden on the Government and indicate inefficiencies within the system. Very few teachers in public schools are appropriately qualified; 54% of teachers have no post-graduate degree and only 4% have a specialized degree (French Agency for Development, *Education Sector Assessment*, October 2010). This negatively affects the quality of instruction in the classroom as teachers specialized in one subject often teach in another, with minimal MEHE oversight or corrective action. At the same time, MEHE offers few professional development incentives for teachers and school staff. Conscientious and hard-working teachers have the same limited opportunities as those who demonstrate less skill and professionalism. The problem of underpaid teachers persists, especially at the primary level (grades 1-6), as the government hires contracted teachers without specialized degrees at lower rates in order to avoid paying pensions. Of the 35,000 primary teachers, some 15,000 (approximately 43%) are hired on a contract basis. The influx of Syrian refugee students further exacerbates these challenges, as they increase demands on teachers' and administrators' attention without a corresponding increase in teaching resources.

The early grade curriculum in Lebanon is also complex. Lebanon has a dual language education system, with schools teaching English or French in addition to Arabic starting in Grade 1. Early grade subjects taught in English or French include basic math and exploratory science. The public system, however, cannot find a sufficient number of qualified teachers to instruct mathematics and science in the two foreign languages. Though there are reported to be low teacher-student ratios (1 teacher for about every 6 students), there are large disparities in how this average is applied across the system, and many primary school teachers are charged with overcrowded classrooms with little support. For example, most schools – and especially primary level ones – still do not have library books or sufficient teaching and educational materials. Such conditions are strong contributing factors to high dropout and repetition rates (dropout rates are the most severe in grades 4 and 7).

The current conditions also lead to low learning outcomes. There is no standardized measure of quality used in the early grades in Lebanese public schools; thus there is no monitoring system to serve as a gauge for student progress, or to identify those students who need extra support to

learn how to read. Though nearly 60% of primary students taking part in an assessment achieved an international minimum standard in reading, the country faces increasing challenges related to equitable access to quality instruction and learning environments that affects academic achievement. For example, for the poorest children in the country only 29% achieve an international minimum standard in reading (data from World Bank, Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems [PASEC] 2010; only children in school; and UNICEF, Net Enrollment Rate (NER), 2008-2011). Unfortunately, many of the Syrian refugees are hosted in poor communities (such as in the North and Bekaa) where under-resourced schools are further strained.

The GOL spends just over 7% of its national budget on education including management costs and salaries, maintenance, rehabilitation and building of new schools, operation and expansion of the Lebanese University, support to semi-private schools (these are private schools typically associated with a religious establishment or a non-governmental organization and serving students almost for free), and on special services such as drop-out prevention programs. Though this percentage of the national budget that is set aside for education is the norm in many countries, it is not enough to address the crumbling Lebanese public school system. Limited budgets constrain already-complicated allocations among competing priorities.

Given the MEHE's numerous structural weaknesses, it is unable to effectively monitor the quality of education that it provides in all its 1,274 public schools, let alone correct deficiencies. As a result, the quality of education in public schools is generally poor as well as inconsistent from one area to another. As elsewhere, factors such as socio-economic conditions in the community, the level of parental involvement, and the dedication of school leadership play a major role in the quality of education being offered from school-to-school. Many public schools are seriously deficit and struggle to place qualified teacher who can offer children even basic learning opportunities.

Several entities within the MEHE are responsible for training teachers and observing teachers in the classroom; namely, the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), the Department d'Observation Pédagogique Scolaire (DOPS, Department for Guidance and Counseling), and the Inspectorate Department. While these three units work towards the same goal, the relationships among them and their individual effectiveness need to be vastly improved. For instance, while the CERD is responsible for teacher training, it is not mandated to observe teachers in the classroom, this being the official domain of DOPS and the Inspectorate. Such "structural weaknesses" – combined with staffing shortages and budget constraints and, generally, a lack of necessary skills – constitute major challenges to effective monitoring and achievement of long-term improvements in the system.

As previously mentioned and exacerbating these core development challenges, the public schools are now being asked to accommodate overwhelming numbers of Syrian refugee children, resulting in ever more crowded classrooms and often double shifts. According to the United Nations, as of December 2013 there were approximately 300,000 school aged refugee children in Lebanon, of whom about 53,000 were enrolled in Lebanese public schools (first and second shift classes). The overall enrollment of Syrian refugee children remains critically low amongst registered refugees; 38% for primary school-aged children during the 2012-2013 academic year. Yet, according to World Bank and UN estimates, Syrian refugee enrollment could reach as high as 100,000 during the 2014-2015 school year. This would amount to over 30% of all public school students in Lebanon, and might even call into question the viability of

the GOL policy of “open access” to public schools for refugees, given that the MEHE has announced it cannot accommodate much more than this figure for refugee children in public schools due to space and other constraints.

The double shifts reduce class time for current students and put considerable stress on those teachers being tasked with two cycles of instruction each school day. Despite the GOL open door policy, as tensions mount between refugee and host communities – including in classrooms and between children – there is concern and some evidence that *both* Lebanese and Syrian children are dropping out of school.

Against this challenging backdrop, USAID/Lebanon has the opportunity to build on the achievements it and its counterparts have realized in earlier projects. This new initiative takes advantage of a strong relationship with the MEHE, and reflects USAID’s desire to continue to assist Lebanon in building a strong basic education foundation that will improve early learning outcomes on a continuing basis. With improved learning outcomes, students will be better positioned to succeed at higher levels of education and be better prepared for jobs, civic engagement and family life. It is also an opportunity to assist a ministry for whom learning outcomes are a priority but for which little or no data exists. The MEHE, now facing a multitude of increased service demands, requires an empirical basis for prioritizing its scarce resources. Indeed, without such information, particularly at the early grades, progress will continue to be seriously hampered.

III: USAID, Government of Lebanon, and other Stakeholders

A. USAID

Under IBESP, USAID will focus its assistance at the primary level, where the needs are greatest in terms of the shortcomings indicated above and relative to the intermediate and secondary levels. In the Lebanese public school system, the elementary or primary level is grades 1 to 3 (Cycle One) and grades 4 to 6 (Cycle Two). Intermediate level is grades 7 to 9 (Cycle Three). Secondary education is grades 10 to 12 (Cycle Four). This project will focus primarily on grades 1-6 (Cycles One and Two), collectively referred to herein as the “primary” level.

Generally, Lebanon’s intermediate and secondary public schools enjoy a better reputation for quality than primary schools. Most donor assistance has focused on supporting these levels, which has resulted in better equipped schools and a better trained and compensated cadre of teachers. The primary level enjoys less attention and budget support from the GOL, and consequently suffers from an especially severe lack of qualified and well-paid teachers. It also hosts the largest proportion of Syrian refugee students.

USAID has identified specific areas of opportunities to focus on; namely, improving reading outcomes for primary level public school students (Component 1 or sub-IR 1.1.1), expanding access to safe and relevant education for vulnerable public school students (Component 2 or sub-IR 1.1.2), and strengthening management (resilience) in the public education system to better direct and monitor education (Component 3 or sub-IR 1.1.3). It is component 2 that will address most directly the complex issues that arise as a result of the increasing influx of refugee children.

B. Government of Lebanon

In the context of the five GOL education priorities mentioned above, the focus of MEHE reform efforts is in the following areas: (1) prevention of dropouts; (2) capacity building for teachers and staff; (3) pre-school education; (4) mobilizing school life (including extra-curricular activities); (5) assessment of education and curriculum development; (6) national qualification and competency; (7) citizenship education; (8) information and communication technologies (ICT) for education; (9) support for an automation system to manage all schools; (10) institutional development; and (11) administrative follow-up of all schools, including performance-based budgeting and monitoring and evaluation (Government of Lebanon, *Lebanese National Plan for Education*, 2005-2015). The three IBESP components will complement these reform objectives, particularly at the primary level and in terms of student access and outcomes, teaching quality, administrative oversight, and social cohesion.

In the context of the Syrian conflict, the GOL issued a commendable “open door” policy ruling for Syrian refugee children to enter Lebanese public schools. This policy – which extends to other services as well – has not been without costs. In September 2013, the World Bank released an Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) that outlined and quantified the effects of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. It estimated the total fiscal impact of the crisis on Lebanon’s economy from 2012-2014 at \$2.6 billion. It further projected that Lebanon would require \$1.6 billion in assistance to return its social safety net, health and education services to pre-crisis levels (World Bank and United Nations, *Lebanon: Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Crisis*, September 17, 2013).

Based on this assessment, the GOL, together with the United Nations and World Bank, released a “Roadmap” for stabilization (Government of Lebanon, World Bank, and United Nations, *Lebanon Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian Conflict*, November 15, 2013, updated). This Roadmap outlines a set of prioritized interventions to alleviate the impact of the crisis on government budgets and stabilize deteriorating public services to host communities. These priorities correspond to “tracks”, i.e., a range of interventions with immediate, short-, medium-, and long-term impacts. For education, the Roadmap prioritizes several needs, including the strengthening of the GOL ability to oversee and monitor the quality of education. In the short- to medium-term, the Roadmap calls for specific improvements in “teaching quality and learning” in the formal education system. This includes the provision of basic education materials for teachers, regular in-service training of teachers, strengthening of foreign language instruction, and improvement of school monitoring mechanisms.

Informed by this Roadmap, IBESP will specifically address these priorities.

C. Other Stakeholders

USAID/Lebanon coordinates closely with other donors involved in the education sector in Lebanon and, as a result, where respective project activities are related there are close complementary efforts. The Recipient will be expected to play a major role in maintaining relationships with other donors, in order to assure continuing complementarity.

Apart from USAID, the most prominent of these other donors are the World Bank, the European Commission (EU), *L’Agence Française de Développement* (AFD, French Development Agency), and UNICEF. During the summer of 2013, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) funded nation-wide text book distribution and seeks greater involvement in the sector in the coming years.

The objective of the World Bank's *Education Development Project* (EDP II) loan is to improve teaching quality and the learning environment with a focus on the pre-school/early childhood level, as well as on increasing the policy formulation, governance, and managerial capacity of the MEHE and in the public schools. The project is funded at \$40 million from 2012 to 2017. In developing IBESP, special care has been taken to assure complementary and avoid overlap with World Bank activities. EDP II activities focus on the pre-school and early childhood levels, while IBESP will focus on the primary level.

The EU's *Support to Education and Public Finance Management (PFM) Reforms Program* aims to strengthen the capacity of the MEHE to implement its "Dropout Prevention of Students" and "Citizenship in Education" programs, as well as establish a school information management system (SIMS). The project is funded at €7.7 million from 2010 to 2015.

L'AFD's program focuses on constructing new school buildings, training teachers, and providing technical assistance to the MEHE in the areas of general management, audit, and evaluation. The program is funded at €46.5 million from 2014 to 2017.

UNICEF's program seeks to ensure equity to quality education for pre-school and Cycle One school students. The program conducted a *National Study on Human Rights-based, Equity-focused Analysis of Education for Children and Adolescents*, undertook a number of interventions in the Akkar area (a poor northern region with heightened security issues), and developed Geographic Information System (GIS) layers for schools and universities. The project was funded at \$400,000 from 2012-2013. Any future funding by UNICEF for public education in Lebanon is dependent on bilateral contributions and is uncertain at this time.

In response to the influx of Syrian refugee children into Lebanon, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education organized a high level side meeting during the September 2013 United Nations General Assembly. An appeal went out from this gathering to the international community for a quick and substantial response to the education-related needs in Lebanon occasioned by the refugee crisis. Largely based on an August 2013 report by the Overseas Development Institute on the impact of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese education system, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) were called upon to follow-up by developing – under the guidance of the Government of Lebanon and in close collaboration with UNHCR, the World Bank, and all partners active in the education sector in Lebanon – an expanded and well-coordinated response to the education crisis. As a result, in December 2013, UNICEF issued an education proposal addressing the crisis (UNICEF, *Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon*, December 13, 2013).

However, donors in Lebanon have yet to make firm commitments towards funding the initiatives called for in this UNICEF document. At this time, and without further clarity on the viability of the proposal, USAID itself does not plan to participate formally in a pooled arrangement. While certainly considering the findings and recommendations for action in this report, USAID/Lebanon decided to design IBESP largely within the framework of the GOL/World Bank/United Nations' *Lebanon Roadmap of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian Conflict*, as it relates to education needs. As noted above, USAID already coordinates its education sector programming with all stakeholders, and certainly UNICEF and UNHCR will continue to be especially important partners, given their engagement related to the Syrian refugee situation and the inclusion of Syrian children in the Lebanese school system. USAID/Lebanon will depend on the Recipient facilitating continued

and close coordination with UNICEF, UNHCR, and perhaps other partners, in order to respond effectively to rapidly changing circumstances and assure targeting of schools in especially dire need of support.

Also, the Recipient will be asked to seek other partnerships during project implementation in order to maximize USAID education investments, with regard both to Syria-related circumstances and to other longer term institutional issues. These potential partners may include for-profit private sector entities, local community groups, and members of the Lebanese Diaspora. Such public-private alliances will be useful in building momentum around the public school system, and in getting communities and individuals seriously involved through active contributions. Project areas where opportunities for partnerships exist include but are not limited to the following: development and provision of early grade educational materials, community outreach activities, psycho-social support activities, and provision of new and additional seating in crisis-affected schools. Guidance will be taken during implementation from USAID's *Building Alliances Series: Education* (February 2009) and from best practices of relevant education partnership models and approaches successfully developed and implemented by USAID and other donors to increase impact and sustainability of USAID education investments.

IV. Program Description

A. Purpose

The purpose or objective of IBESP is to expand equitable access and improve learning outcomes for vulnerable students in Lebanese public schools (IR 1.1. in the Mission's draft CDCS).

The three components of the project encompass several cross-cutting themes which support achievement of this objective:

- **Institutional Strengthening**: The success of IBESP will depend to a large extent on skill-based achievements related to the policy-making, administrative, management, monitoring, and service delivery capacity of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Center for Educational Research and Development. Given that these two entities are responsible for the proper functioning of the entire public education system, strengthening the overall organizational and individual capabilities of units and officers within MEHE and CERD will be central to accomplishing component-wise results. The success of the public school system's ability to cope with the overwhelming challenges imposed by the refugee crisis ultimately will hinge to a large degree on MEHE and CERD organizational strength and their ability to provide exceptional support. Recipient-led IBESP activities related to institutional strengthening will be carried out in close coordination with the related elements of other donor projects.
- **Crisis Response**: All three project components (sub-IRs) will incorporate elements that alleviate the stresses on education due to the influx of Syrian children into the public school system while, in many cases, also addressing longer term systemic issues. For example, early grade reading assessment testing will promote proper placement of Syrian students and help teachers provide more informed assistance to struggling

learners. Activities will help parents of refugee children become more active in student learning through community outreach efforts. Teacher training activities, as well as training for the MEHE Inspectorate Department, will enhance the ability of individual schools to respond to the challenges posed by having additional students. Project activities will deal broadly with many other refugee-specific concerns such as overcrowding in classrooms, growing tensions between students, and language issues. Cross-cutting refugee-related concerns must, of course, be undertaken in consultation with other donors, primarily UN agencies and active NGOs and faith-based organizations.

- Public Awareness/Behavior Change: The project will enhance opportunities for public forums to discuss pressing issues related to education and youth. It will focus on providing opportunities for individuals from the private and public sector, from schools and community-based organizations, and from families to come together to discuss and collaboratively find common solutions in support of public education. Project activities will involve parents and other stakeholders in increasing awareness and understanding of school learning environments such as psycho-social issues. The project will highlight the importance of reading through community outreach activities that involve parents' councils. Central to supporting the broader aspects of this project, such activities will also respond to consistent feedback from MEHE officials on the need for greater parental/community support. Parental engagement is crucial for community buy-in of project activities and for the long-term sustainability of the proposed initiatives.
- Gender: IBESP will address gender issues through its several components and cross-cutting themes. The project will address the weak quality of the public education system generally and specifically how it affects girls and boys differently. The project will incorporate gender sensitive materials in its training activities for teachers, and in the classroom teaching materials that are developed. The project will include the indicator "number of teachers (by sex and age) trained with USG assistance".

B. Beneficiaries

- Students enrolled in public schools (especially at the primary level) will be the most important beneficiaries. They will benefit from all aspects of this project, including improved learning outcomes, better skilled teachers, improved school learning environments, and expanded extra-curricular activities. Improving the quality and relevance of their basic education will lead to better performance at the intermediate and secondary levels and beyond. Syrian refugee children will continue to receive an education, despite the disruptive nature of their circumstances, and impacted schools – children, teachers, and school administrators – will be better able to cope with the issues arising from the refugee influx.
- School leaders, including teachers, principals, and local level administrators will benefit from training and will contribute to an improved learning environment with enhanced skills in teaching and managing classrooms and the schools. Officers and researchers at MEHE and CERD will benefit from training, especially in the context of monitoring school performance and assuring follow-up.

- Local stakeholders will benefit from increased engagement with the school community and they will see the benefits of their active involvement in school-related activities, especially in terms of their own children's education.

C. General Program Parameters

The following guidance and parameters will be applied to the activities to be implemented under IBESP:

(1) Support MEHE Role: Collaboration with the MEHE, including the CERD, Inspectorate Department, and many local directorates, will be critical to the success of the project. The Recipient will provide technical assistance to the MEHE and its counterpart GOL entities in all project activity areas. All activities will be carried out, to the extent possible, by GOL staff with guidance from the Recipient. For example, since a primary objective of IBESP will be to build the capacity of the MEHE and CERD to deliver high quality in-service teacher training programs, it will be important for the Recipient to support, guide and provide technical guidance for CERD to carry out these efforts on a sustainable basis. This principle will apply to all aspects of support to MEHE/CERD.

(2) Collaborate with Donors: Any technical assistance or MEHE or CERD capacity-building activities will be coordinated with other donors, in order to maximize overall donor support to the MEHE and CERD while ensuring complementary, non-duplicative programs among donors.

(3) Adhere to the Programmatic Priorities for Basic Education: USAID policy provides general guidance for establishing programmatic priorities for basic education projects. The basic education definition is as follows:

USAID defines basic education broadly, to include all program and policy efforts aimed at improving pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education (delivered in formal or non-formal settings), and in programs promoting learning for out-of school youth and adults. Capacity building for teachers, administrators, counselors, and youth workers is included. Basic education includes literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development for learners. The common thread among these elements is that they help learners gain the general skills and basic knowledge needed to function effectively in all aspects of life.

As a guiding principle, the intent of Congress and USAID is that basic education funds should to the extent possible be used for programs that can help countries achieve significant results in advancing their national education goals. In other words, basic education funds should not generally be used for project activities that do not have advancement of basic education objectives as the primary, overarching objective.

(4) Achieve Results: IBESP is designed to accomplish the results indicated for each component (sub-IR), through close collaboration among all stakeholders, e.g., MEHE/CERD/Inspectorate/ targeted schools, Recipient, USAID, other donors, community groups, and other partners.

There are several assessments proposed below (rapid/baseline, early grade reading test, teachers' knowledge of reading instruction, and a needs assessment of school impacted by Syrian refugee influx). It will be up to the Recipient to determine what information on these

topics already exists – either within the GOL or with other donors – and how these assessments may, at least in part, be combined for most efficient administration and cost savings. All assessments will require MEHE and USAID approval.

At this point, it is anticipated that main project activities will be in the areas of building capacity for in-service teacher training; implementing school infrastructural rehabilitation, especially in those school most heavily impacted by refugee inflows; and supporting community mobilization and extra-curricular activities. The areas of activities must be designed to demonstrate the extent to which their collective efforts will expand access and improve learning outcomes (IR 1.1.). It is further anticipated that IBESP will require tailored activities for individual schools based on assessments at the local level, but they also must bring together the areas of intervention to demonstrate the collective outcomes of proposed activities. Similarly, support at the MEHE/CERD/Inspectorate level will require tailoring specific activities in collaboration with these stakeholders and in consonance with desired project results. The Recipient will have flexibility to propose appropriate activity designs based on assessment findings and discussions with stakeholders. Designs must include a strong monitoring and evaluation system to be able to track and report results.

The Recipient will also determine what percentage of the overall budget will be needed for each component/area of activity. Budget allocation will reflect the project emphasis on the early grade reading and the psycho-social support components.

D. Program Components:

Component One:

Sub-IR 1.1.1: Improved reading outcomes for primary level public school students

In the long-term, student performance is most heavily influenced by basic literacy skills gained during a child's first years in education. As the public school system struggles to keep pace with greater levels of enrollment, Lebanese children at the primary level risk a possible reduction in the quality of their education in foundational skills. It has been well documented that often increases in classroom enrollments can lead to a decline in the education provided, clearly a concern with the rise in enrollments over the past few years.

Further, Lebanese public school teachers, also struggling to appropriately teach the new Syrian students who have lost years of schooling, do not have the English or French language comprehension skills needed to proceed in the primary schools. These Syrian students at the same time are dealing with the trauma of leaving their homes and families and trying to integrate into a new environment. The differences in education systems in Lebanon and Syria, including the use of English or French language in Lebanon to teach technical subjects, leave Syrian students less prepared to academically succeed. According to consultations with school administrators and MEHE, this contributes significantly to the high dropout rates among current Syrian students. The project will, therefore, support early grade reading activities to ensure that an entire generation of students – Lebanese and Syrian – will have the foundation necessary to succeed throughout their academic careers.

MEHE has thus far not conducted a national or even regional early grade assessment of how well students are reading in Arabic in Lebanon and therefore lacks data on student reading progress and areas in need of improvement. With the influx of the Syrian refugee students,

student bodies in public schools are increasingly diverse and have greater needs as new students adapt to the Lebanese curriculum and classroom environment. Given this context, a rapid yet sophisticated assessment will be needed to provide a baseline as well as inform the most effective focus, prioritization and sequencing of activities.

For reporting towards Goal 1 of USAID's current Education strategy, the project will conduct at least a baseline and endline learning assessment (and ideally a midline assessment) to measure the oral reading fluency and reading comprehension levels of pupils at different stages in the implementation of the project. Each assessment should be designed to be representative of pupils at the end of grade 2, and pupils at the end of the last grade of primary school, and to allow separate calculations for male and female pupils. Baseline/midline/endline assessments should be designed to produce results that are comparable.

In addition to gathering data on how effective the reading curricula and instruction is in the early grades, there will be a need to account for gender differences, contextual differences (double-shifted schools, percentage of Syrians in the school), community/ confessional characteristics linked to schools, teacher capacity, etc. A conflict mitigation/prevention lens needs to be used to make data more reflective of the situation in the schools and inform USAID and MEHE on how best to address the situation, detailing specific activities to be implemented in order to address the identified needs. The Arabic reading assessment should also: (1) determine the capacity of MEHE, educational districts, and schools to support annual diagnostic testing, and (2) identify related issues that require special project attention due to the refugee crisis. The early-grade reading component should incorporate these considerations into the planning process.

Elements of this sub-IR 1.1.1 (Component 1) include:

- **Instituting the use of an early grade assessment to evaluate the reading skills of young children**

MEHE currently is unable to collect and analyze consistent annual data on student skills development. Globally, many countries are now developing and using a standardized test to assess students' reading levels and track their performance as they move through the educational system in cohorts. IBESP will conduct a reading assessment test in Grades 2 and 3. The development of this assessment tool will be informed by cost and feasibility in partnership with MEHE. Given the situation in Lebanon, a more comprehensive assessment will be needed to identify additional issues on community and school relations, particular classroom and school-based stressors, and other useful topics. The results of this assessment will inform subsequent activities under this project.

- **Holding a policy level workshop(s) with MEHE to dialogue and develop policies for reading, and monitoring progress**

Assessment results will be shared among stakeholders to discuss policy and activity options for wider adoption of a national reading assessment, and will inform additional activities under Component 1. MEHE must be a key partner in developing and implementing the reading assessments, and in devising appropriate interventions for addressing continuing challenges. These policy discussions will be central, in the context of building MEHE's capacity to collect,

analyze, and use data for decision-making, and to increase its ability in making adjustments according to changing circumstances and ongoing challenges.

- **Conducting an assessment of public school teachers' knowledge of reading instruction**

MEHE has very little data on the present level of public school teachers' abilities in reading instruction. As MEHE plans to expand early grade reading activities in a new curriculum, data on teachers' related skills will be necessary to direct MEHE resources and the new project's early grade reading interventions. The project will therefore support a study to assess teacher knowledge of reading instruction in the early grades. Combined with data from the rapid assessment (described in Component 2), and early grade reading testing, the teacher assessment will inform the scope and targeting of this Component's activities. Though it is premature to define the relationship with the Lebanese University (LU) as part of these activities, there will be a need to consider their engagement as LU is the primary implementer of pre-service and in-service teacher training. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MEHE and LU is under development and will help to define these areas of activities once finalized.

- **Establishing an early warning system for struggling readers in the early grades**

There is no standardized "early warning" system in Lebanon to find children who are not progressing as expected in their reading skills and there is no widespread remedial instruction in the public schools for the children experiencing these difficulties. The project will focus on establishing a system that allows for the early detection of children with reading challenges. It will also strengthen remedial systems for those with reading difficulties. Many innovative approaches for this are possible, pairing public schools with well-resourced private schools, for example, or linking with youth organizations to develop tutoring programs for struggling young readers.

Potential Focus Areas

Activities implemented under sub-IR 1.1.1 (Component 1) will follow and be informed by the results of the rapid assessment. However, based on initial consultations with MEHE, USAID has identified several potential activity areas and needs that are likely to arise from the assessment.

- **Developing teacher training modules on reading instruction**

Research strongly shows that five elements significantly impact the effectiveness of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These specific concepts and students' demonstrable abilities in them are strong indicators of their later reading achievement. An effective national reading instruction program integrates all of these concepts.

MEHE has indicated their desire to support early grade Arabic instruction in the classroom but notes that teachers currently have very few training or instructional resources. The project may, following the outcomes of the assessment, help MEHE develop and launch teacher training modules to improve reading instruction. The training modules would potentially focus on the above five concepts and have activities to adapt instruction for students on an individual basis.

Such additional individualized assistance would help children receive the most instruction appropriate for their level and at an appropriate pace. Potential training modules might include vital subjects such as reading text as well as books that are age and grade appropriate. Consideration should be given to special lessons that help teachers to support slow learners and to develop a skills management system that tracks the skills their students have learned and those they have yet to learn.

- **Training early primary teachers in early grade reading instruction**

Teachers' skills in both instructional practice and on specific academic subjects are vital factors in how well students learn in the classroom. The rapid assessment, conducted under Component 1, should provide detailed information about current barriers to student reading. The new project may consider strengthening the capacity of CERD and the DOPS (*Department d'Observation Pédagogique Scolaire*/Department for Guidance and Counseling) to train teachers in effective teaching methods in reading. If training is pursued, sessions should prioritize sustainability and potentially target master trainers from CERD and DOPS.

Also MEHE has repeatedly highlighted the poor quality of foreign language instruction in the public schools and how it is negatively affecting students' learning, given that several subjects of the curriculum are taught in a foreign language. In addition, both the World Bank's Roadmap and the UNICEF rapid needs assessment cite classroom instruction in foreign languages as one of the major barriers in the Syrian students' academic performance in the Lebanese system. Clearly these are areas of concern, especially since foreign languages begin in Grade 1, and after some groundwork has been laid to help early grade learners succeed in Arabic, there may be room toward the later years of the project to address support for foreign language interventions to strengthen teachers' capacity to instruct English in particular.

- **Providing technical assistance to CERD in the development and dissemination of the new curriculum's early grade educational materials**

CERD has recently updated the curriculum for the Kindergarten and Cycle 1 (Grades 1-2-3) of the primary level only. The updated curriculum focuses on introducing a comprehensive learning approach that is based on a set of educational objectives broken down by competencies for improved student learning outcomes. The updated curriculum focuses on the subjects of Arabic, Math and a foreign language as primary subjects, while all other subjects (Sciences, Geography, Civic Education, Theatre, Music and Arts) are taught in an integrated approach and not as separate subjects. The updated curriculum is currently being piloted in fifteen public schools throughout Lebanon.

Based on initial discussions with MEHE, the new curriculum will cover four of the five above-discussed elements necessary for successful early grade reading. MEHE and USAID have identified the potential need to update the Lebanese curriculum to include an additional emphasis on fluency. The project may use the results of the early-grade learning rapid assessment to inform gaps and priority areas where technical assistance may increase the effectiveness of early grade learning activities.

Pending assessment results, the project may provide technical assistance to CERD to include the fluency element in the updated materials and offer additional assistance that is required to launch revisions to the new curriculum such that it integrates new materials and information.

Such assistance may also include supporting CERD to develop quantitative indicators for the new curriculum and effectively monitor student achievement.

CERD has also identified the lack of age appropriate materials as a major obstacle for early grade learning. The project may support CERD in publishing and disseminating necessary materials for the teaching of Arabic (and potentially English) for the early grades, potentially targeting Cycles 1 and 2. If appropriate, assistance may include the design and printing of school books for reading and language arts in Arabic, and educational posters, the development of audio-visual educational materials (listening, DVDs, etc.), the digitization of selected content, and the establishment of reading corners in early grade classrooms (provision of a variety of books). If recommended in the assessment, the project may help develop support/remedial materials for Syrian students and those who have special needs or experience difficulty in specific areas of learning.

- **MEHE and CERD undertaking systemic reform to promote early grade learning**

The Lebanese public school system faces a number of challenges that hinder students' skills in basic reading. Kindergarten is not mandatory in Lebanon, which forces basic reading instruction to Grade 1 and delays children's reading abilities. Grade 1 must additionally incorporate instruction on Kindergarten-level materials that detract from more advanced skills. As Syrian students enter into Lebanese schools in the early grades, many lack the appropriate reading performance levels for their age. Whether Lebanese or Syrian, students who struggle to read at an early age are less likely to understand technical subjects later in their academic careers and are at greater risk of dropout.

Research indicates that the level of reading instruction significantly affects young children's reading performance. At minimum, one hour of reading per day is necessary to improve performance. Historically, public teachers are allowed to teach subjects outside of their subject matter expertise. The project will provide technical assistance to help MEHE adopt reforms that enable early grade reading instruction to spread among a wider cadre of trained teachers.

- **Parents and guardians learning explicit strategies for supporting children's reading success and retention in school**

The project will promote the importance of reading through community outreach activities that involve parents' councils (analogous to Parent Teacher Associations in the United States). Through trainings and outreach materials, the project may consider helping parents' councils increase community awareness of the importance of reading in the classroom. Such activities would provide opportunities and ways that councils may acknowledge and recognize teacher excellence in promoting early grade reading through awards for schools, teachers, students and communities. Outreach campaigns should have a special focus on engaging both Lebanese and Syrian families in their children's education.

Component 2:

Sub-IR 1.1.2: Expanded access to safe and relevant education for vulnerable public school students

In the last two years, more than one million Syrians have fled into Lebanon. Current data estimates approximately 600,000 school aged Syrian children in Lebanon, with only about 90,000 enrolled in the current school year. Most of the refugees are living in Lebanese communities in the North or Bekaa, renting accommodations or staying with relatives and friends, and many are sending their children to local public schools. This situation has added a layer of strain to an already struggling public school system.

According to MEHE (based on information shared during a meeting held in February 2014), about 90,000 Syrian refugee students are enrolled in public schools for academic year 2013-2014, with 60,000 in the regular shifts and 30,000 in the afternoon shifts. International humanitarian organizations, including UNICEF and UNHCR, place this figure closer to 53,000. Regardless of the exact figure, the challenges that the Ministry faces as a result of this situation are many, and include the following:

- The current supply cannot meet the demand; there are not enough classrooms or teachers to meet the current need.
- The public education system in Lebanon differs from the Syrian school system. There is a significant language barrier for Syrian students, because in Lebanon science and math subjects are taught in English or French rather than in Arabic. In Lebanon, English and French are subjects that start in Grade 1.
- Increase health/hygiene -related risks include lice, scabies and other outbreaks because of overcrowded living conditions and irregular medical support
- Lack of funds to cover all needs; MEHE targeted only 200 out of 900 schools that include Syrian refugees this year.
- Challenges in mobilizing enough resources for monitoring the activities carried out by humanitarian agencies in the schools, as the emergency is much greater than earlier anticipated.
- Coordination of education activities with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Displaced children face numerous difficulties in educational settings, and may display anxiety, fear, worry, lack of focus, trouble sleeping, anger, moodiness, frustration, and/or social withdrawal, which may affect concentration and memory. Their ability to process, organize, and retain information may be negatively impacted. Physical and emotional distress may be displayed through physical symptoms such as head or stomach aches, unpredictable or impulsive behavior, intense reactions to reminders of traumatic events, and more.¹

Educators and caregivers may also suffer from compassion fatigue, which includes symptoms such as increased irritability or impatience with students, difficulty planning classroom activities and lessons, decreased concentration, denying that traumatic events impact students or feeling numb or detached, intense feelings and intrusive thoughts that do not lessen over time about a student's trauma, and dreams about students' traumas.²

¹ National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee, *Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators*, Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, October 2008.

² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Psycho-social well-being will be addressed through strengthening schools' ability to provide inclusive education to all students. The overall aim of the interventions under this component is to change behaviors within schools in order to keep students engaged and learning.

Elements of this sub-IR 1.1.2 (Component 2) include:

- **Developing a response strategy based on ongoing monitoring**

The project will conduct ongoing monitoring to develop interventions based on real-time data. Information will be shared with MEHE and other education stakeholders. The project will need to remain flexible to maintain retention for the current school population and reach additional vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian out-of-school children according to MEHE's policies³.

- **Providing new and additional seating and other amenities in crisis-affected schools to mitigate tensions from overcrowding**

Informed by the rapid assessment's results, this activity will provide desks, chairs, white and blackboards and related equipment to public schools that are the most affected by the Syrian crisis. Small grants will be provided to public schools to help them implement small scale improvement projects. These activities will be informed by the policy decisions of MEHE (for example, options for the type of support provided to vulnerable Lebanese students and Syrian refugees in and out of schools) as well as the evolving nature of the crisis (for example, geographically where there is the most need). These activities will serve to facilitate the enrollment and retention in of vulnerable students so as not to compromise its quality or cause tensions

Professional development for teachers and other school-based personnel to manage large class sizes, the effects of forced migration, violence and trauma on children, including increasing skills for school-based staff to dialogue with parents and communities on how they are working to mitigate deteriorations in school quality

Following the outcome of the rapid assessment, the project may provide psycho-social support to students in the targeted schools, in collaboration with the school staff, administration and teachers. Activities will include conflict-mitigation initiatives, artistic activities, and other recreational and extra-curricular initiatives to alleviate tension and promote a school environment that is conducive to learning. This activity will build off of the support to teacher training to improve learner well-being that will be part of the DRASATI-2 project. The aim of this intervention is to put training into practice, and incentives can be created to implement this element.

³ The target number will be set jointly with MEHE, and ideally correspond to the Government's pending or future commitments for expanding access for refugees. An illustrative target might range from 50,000 additional students to the maximum number committed to by the Government.

- **Addressing barriers to schooling for vulnerable students such as costs, transportation, safety, etc.**

As reported in the Regional Response Plan (RRP) 6 and other recent assessments, the reasons that children do not attend school in Lebanon vary, but the most common barriers include not being able to afford the cost of transportation and tuition fees, language barriers, and safety concerns (particularly for children returning home from the second shift in the darkness). This activity will aim to present innovative options for families and children to overcome the financial and safety obstacles. Ideas and support for reducing costs will be based on community-based solutions and local partnership opportunities.

- **Strengthening school-based monitoring and management, including financing school grants, so that schools are able to organize and support community-based efforts that improve public school education based on needs**

USAID's support under this sub-IR will focus on strengthening parents' and communities' contributions to improved school environments that are conducive to learning. School staff can be supported to undertake activities based on the local situation and need that enhance social cohesion through engagement of parents and communities in and around the schools. Financing school grants to undertake projects in partnerships with the communities is one way to encourage collaboration and builds cohesion among participants. Positive social relationships and attitudes about school are as important to the environment as are safe and well-kept buildings and grounds. A safe, clean, and well-maintained school with a positive psychosocial climate and culture can foster school connectedness, which in turn boosts student and staff health as well as students' educational achievement. Creating a healthy school environment requires the involvement of virtually everyone in the school as well as the involvement of families and other community agencies.

- **As it fits in MEHE's current or future strategy, widening access opportunities for learning through non-formal education and accelerated learning programs**

MEHE has actively worked to expand formal school opportunities to Syrian refugees. Given the continued influx of school-aged children, there will not be enough space to accommodate all students in the formal school system. Non-formal and accelerated learning programs are options to reach those students, including vulnerable Lebanese students who have dropped out of school. These options may provide students with structured learning so that they can catch up to grade level, continue their education outside of the formal school, and be able to transition into future learning programs or gain the skills needed to work. MEHE may request technical assistance to strengthen and expand current non-formal education programs to accommodate more out-of-school students.

Component 3:

Sub-IR 1.1.3: Strengthened management (resilience) in education system to better manage and monitor education

Activities under this sub-IR 1.1.3 (Component 3) will contribute to strengthening MEHE's ability to help strategic stakeholders to address weaknesses within the education system inhibiting a robust response to needs in the current protracted and uncertain context. The project will support MEHE to develop, monitor and test policies, strategies and guidelines in priority areas as identified in their sector development plan. Assistance will be flexible and adapt to the Ministry's needs as it develops its response to both systemic issues as well as humanitarian challenges. However, all MEHE support will be anchored in meeting the objectives of Sub-IRs 1 and 2 of the project and will spill over into other areas.

Activities will strengthen MEHE's ability to monitor education services in the classroom and at the school level, as well as to sustain good practices for oversight and response to humanitarian situations. As part of this component, attention will be required to bridge the humanitarian versus development needs and work with MEHE to make strategic choices. The project will provide targeted assistance to selected MEHE and/or CERD units and relevant departments to improve their monitoring and reporting abilities. Such entities might include MEHE's Inspectorate Department, which is authorized by law to observe teachers' performance in the classroom and report back to the Government. Assistance will be based on MEHE central oversight of those activities undertaken in support for early grade reading and supporting MEHE's efforts to manage the policies, guidelines and activities linked to support for the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian students.

Elements under Sub-IR 1.1.3 may include:

- **Supporting the relevant departments within MEHE to develop policies and guidelines that support reforms that contribute to the management and implementation of Component 1 and 2 interventions**

This activity will support targeted departments within the MEHE to streamline their administrative functions, automate their processes and workflow system, and rationalize their archiving system. Existing systems and protocols prevent the effective functioning of a number of MEHE departments at a time when they are struggling under tremendous external pressure. Priority will be given to departments most closely linked to this project, or those that support improved early grade reading outcomes and those most affected by the refugee crisis.

The project will automate select departments' administrative procedures to process transactions faster and more accurately, better utilize existing MEHE resources and make service delivery more accountable. The project will consider MEHE needs which may include providing the necessary hardware, software, network connectivity resources, as well as train staff in the effective use of this technology. The project will also work with MEHE to determine how best to follow up on the status of their transactions online through technical assistance.

- **Identifying cost-effective models for expanding access and ensuring persistence in school for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian students**

It is well known that as pressure to expand education services is placed on a country, that quality in the provision of those services can become compromised. As MEHE continues to

expand education services at an accelerated pace, attention is required to support these services in a manner that is both cost-effective and of sufficient quality to encourage students to continue with their education. UNHCR reports that it costs \$650/Syrian student to support their enrolment in a Lebanese public school. This cost covers teachers' salaries, school-based costs, and learning materials, and does not include costs for transportation, and monitoring progress. Anecdotally, there are reports that the overcrowded situation is having a "push" factor on both Lebanese and Syrian students leading to increases in student drop-out rates.

It is imperative that MEHE and its partners work to devise strategies, models, and systems that are cost-effective and accommodating to improving the quality of education provided so that vulnerable students are motivated to stay in school and able to learn while there. As is the situation in many crises, with the challenges there are also opportunities to be innovative in response and this project will need to bring creative and evidence-based solutions to discuss with MEHE for how to better manage support for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian students. The issues and barriers that prevent vulnerable students from getting the most out of their educational opportunities will need to be addressed through practical activities that ultimately help to reduce disadvantage and close gaps.

- **Strengthened data collection, monitoring, management, and use of data for informed decision-making to improve reading and expand access within the MEHE at the national and sub-national levels**

In the current context, there is a need to partner with MEHE and other stakeholders to ensure that coordination in support for both humanitarian and development efforts is happening and that information is being shared so that systems and programmatic plans are harmonized. Though Syrian refugees are concentrated in the north, there is a need to ensure that an overlap in services. In this regard, the project will work with MEHE to use data (collection through analysis, synthesis, interpretation phases) to make transparent and informed decisions. MEHE needs institutional support to make data collection and monitoring a proactive and interactive process that goes beyond filling out data reporting forms at the various levels of an education system and the passive dissemination of reports. Attention to the quality and consistency of instruction and improving administrative functioning at the school level will be core areas will be key areas of focus for the project.

- **Generating consensus among stakeholders in delivery models to minimize costs, expand access and improvement the management of learning systems in Lebanon**

Given the increased attention from the international community in response to the Syrian crisis and the increasing demand put upon the MEHE to respond, there have been multiple stakeholders working to strategically respond and support solutions that address the ongoing crisis. In this context, there can be conflicting opinions and viewpoints and it will be important for the development of a robust response to be coordinated and to work collectively to ensure common goals and objectives and to share data and information on interventions. These activities will work to create a working environment where roles and responsibilities are clear and coordinated, where data are shared and transparent decision-making processes are put into place so that cost-effective and outcome-oriented goals are met to improve the public school system in Lebanon. The goal will be to build the capacity of the Lebanese education system to both respond to challenges with quality interventions and to sustain the art and science of maintaining high quality interventions based on dialogue, data and transparent processes.

- **Institutionalizing within the MEHE the successful reforms that increase learning outcomes, learner well-being and safety in public schools**

In addition to improving the psycho-social learning environments in Lebanon's public schools by increasing the capacity of teachers and other school staff to address student psycho-social needs as described above, there is also a need to ensure that MEHE adapts good practices and sustains activities that continue to enrich the school learning environment. The project will build on the work initiated by the second phase of D-RASATI to incorporate the extra-curricular and other psycho-social service training modules within MEHE's institutional practices and national policies to ensure the long-term sustainability of their ability to address challenges to learning for vulnerable students as they arise.

V: Indicators

A. USAID Indicators for Foreign Assistance Framework Reporting

The following indicators are used worldwide by USAID for monitoring its basic education programs. These indicators are found under the Foreign Assistance Framework. The recipient must assure that all activities that can report against these common indicators must do so on an annual basis. Whenever possible, these indicator findings are to be disaggregated by gender, age, geography, and economic status:

- Number of administrators and officials trained;
- Number of learners enrolled in USG-supported primary schools or equivalent non-school settings;
- Number of learners enrolled in USG-supported secondary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings;
- Number of teachers/educators trained with USG support;
- Number of Parent-Teacher Association or similar "school" governance structures supported;
- Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided with USG assistance;
- Number of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve equitable access to or the quality of education services;
- Number of host country institutions with improved management information systems as a result of USG assistance;
- Number of host country institutions that have used USG-assisted MIS system information to inform administrative/management decisions;
- Number of people trained in monitoring and evaluation with USG assistance;

- Number of people trained in research with USG assistance; and
- Number of people trained in strategic information management with USG assistance.

B. Monitoring Approach

The Mission will employ a three-tiered monitoring approach. The first tier of monitoring will be the responsibility of the Recipient. The Recipient will report monitoring findings in quarterly reports, incorporating whenever possible the above worldwide indicators in addition to these project-specific ones. The second tier of monitoring will be the responsibility of the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR). The AOR will review the Recipient's reports, visit Recipient's offices, and conduct regular site visits. The USAID/Lebanon Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) support contractor will provide a third tier of monitoring and support.

Baseline information will be collected by the Recipient at the onset of the project (rapid/baseline assessment). The Recipient will be required to adopt a reliable, transparent and valid approach to reporting data including:

- Maintaining a proper set of supportive documentation to track and report on indicators such as attendance sheets for training sessions, or press releases for media appearances;
- Ensuring that sources of data are valid while using either primary sources of information or objectively verifiable secondary information;
- Ensuring timely reporting;
- Ensuring that results are attributable to the activities and efforts undertaken under the project;
- Ensuring consistency in data collection, calculation and reporting; for instance, the Recipient will avoid double counting of participants who will attend different training sessions as part of a capacity building series;
- Ensuring consistent responsibility over data collection a designated team member at the implementing partner should be the primary person in charge of data collection as such tasks must not be delegated randomly);
- Ensuring that costs associated with monitoring and evaluation are reasonable; indicators must be developed in a way that will enable the Recipient to trace progress and attribute outcome at a relatively low cost.

The M&E support contractor will assist the Recipient with indicator-related responsibilities as needed and appropriate, and, in addition, will verify the quality of data being collected by the Recipient and the relevance of indicators being used.

USAID's goal level indicator for measuring progress toward the education IR1.1 will be the percentage improvement in early grade learning as measured by Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tests after project interventions are conducted. This indicator will allow USAID to measure the impact of its collective interventions in the sector.

C. IBESP-specific Purpose and Component level Indicators

As with worldwide indicators, these *proposed* IBES-specific indicators are, whenever possible, to be disaggregated by gender, age, geography, and economic status:

Purpose (IR 1.1): To expand access to quality education for vulnerable students in Lebanese public schools

- Number of new entrants to formal schools (or non-formal equivalents) receiving USG funding.
- Number of learners enrolled in schools or equivalent non-school based settings with USG support (standard indicator);
- Proportion of students in targeted schools who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand grade level texts (standard indicator);
- Number of laws, policies, regulations or guidelines developed or modified to improve primary reading programs (standard indicator);
- Number of laws, policies, regulations or guidelines developed or modified to expand access to primary school for Syrian refugees;
- Number of teachers/educators trained with USG support;
- Percentage of target schools reporting decreased school-level tension.

Component 1 (sub-IR 1.1.1.): Improved reading outcomes for primary level public school students

- Percentage change in proportion of students in primary grades who, after two years of schooling, demonstrate sufficient reading fluency and comprehension to “read to learn”;
- Percentage of schools conducting early grade reading monitoring and remediation;
- Meeting national standards for grade-level performance in reading in Arabic
- Proportion of beneficiary primary school teachers who correctly use evidence-based instructional methods as a result of training and coaching
- Number of early grade educational materials developed and disseminated;
- Number and proportion of teachers using the results of continuous assessments to improve reading instruction;

- Number and proportion of students in remedial programs demonstrating improved performance in reading;
- Percentage improvement in students' oral reading fluency, i.e. words-per-minute measurement at the end of grade two
- Total number of learners benefiting from the program, by year and by sex
- Total number of new learners benefiting from the program, by year and by sex
- Proportion of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text.
- Proportion of students who, by the end of the primary cycle, are able to read and demonstrate understanding as defined by a country curriculum, standards or agreed-upon by national experts

Component 2 (sub-IR 1.1.2): Expanded access to safe and relevant education for vulnerable public school students

- Number of additional vulnerable students gaining access to education;
- Number of additional second-shift schools supported, since a baseline at the beginning of the project;
- Number of educators trained to deal with psycho-social needs of students;
- Number of target schools that report decreased tension at the school level;
- Percent change from baseline in number of students engaging in extra-curricular activities;
- Number of private sector activities initiated to support them most affected schools;
- Percentage increase in community involvement in the school.
- Total number of learners benefiting from the program, by year and by sex
- Total number of new learners benefiting from the program, by year and by sex
- Total number of dropouts (learners who exit the program without completing it), by year and by sex

Component 3 (sub-IR 1.1.3): Strengthened management (resilience) in education system to better direct and monitor education

- Number of MEHE personnel participating in capacity building workshops;
- Percentage improvement in MEHE's quality monitoring capacity compared to baseline;
- Number of data-driven policies implemented;
- In addition, the project will coordinate with the Mission M&E contractor, to refine and finalize the PMP (Performance Monitoring Plan). The M&E contractor will provide support services in aligning the implementing partner's M&E Plan with the Mission's results framework, and will perform data quality assessment and data verification if/when required. When requested by the AOR, the contractor will perform project site visits to follow-up on the project implementation. Evaluations will be conducted by the Mission's M&E support contractor.

A finalized set of IBESP-specific indicators for reporting will be determined after award when the project's Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) is being developed. Other project indicators will be needed as part of the IBESP PMP.

VI: Performance Monitoring Plan

The Recipient will coordinate with the M&E contractor to refine and finalize a Performance Monitoring Plan. The M&E contractor will provide support services in aligning the Recipient's M&E Plan with the Mission's results framework, and will perform data quality assessment and data verification if/when required. The M&E contractor will perform project site visits to follow-up on project implementation.

The PMP will be designed to collect, evaluate, and validate data, which will be used to measure overall progress and compare status over time. Within the PMP, the Recipient will develop performance indicators and show how baseline measurements can be established to assess the impact of proposed interventions. A final list of indicators will be confirmed by the M&E contractor and the AOR after the award.

The PMP should demonstrate how this management system will help clarify and focus project objectives; serve as an early warning system, forecasting, and reporting tool; promote on-going discussions pertaining to project scope and direction; and aid in effective management decision-making.

The PMP shall also include an explanation of how data and information will be collected, analyzed, and used, and the cost effectiveness of such activities.

VII: Branding Strategy and Marking Plan

The Recipient will submit a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan that clearly outlines branding and marking issues associated with the program based on knowledge of the country. Refer to ADS 320, (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/>) specifically 320.3.2.2 and 320.3.2.3 for more information. The Recipient will comply with the requirements of the USAID “Graphic Standards Manual” available at www.usaid.gov/branding, or any successor branding policy.

VIII: Work Plan

The Recipient will be required to submit a draft detailed work plan for all activities under each component with associated budget estimates to USAID/Lebanon for review 15 days after USAID acceptance of assessment/appraisal findings and school selections. The AOR will provide written comments on the draft plan within one week of submission. Upon receipt of the comments, the Recipient will have one week to revise the plan. The AOR will provide written approval of the finalized plan.

The work plan must include the Recipient’s proposed Performance Monitoring Plan, which must establish clear benchmarks and indicators, as well as a timeframe for results to be attained over the life of the award.

The Recipient will be required to include an exit strategy and operational closeout plan. The exit strategy should ensure that project-supported improvements at the school and MEHE levels can be maintained after end of project.

IX: Special Considerations

- Applications submitted under this RFA shall not cover major school construction works.
- The Applicant should take into consideration the impact of gender on the quality of education. For example, the status of female teachers, role of girls in the classroom, and involvement of mothers in the formal schooling of children, as well as females in community groups, are all heavily influenced by the by the pattern of gender relationships.
- The agreement to be funded under this RFA shall be implemented within a maximum time period of four years starting in September 30, 2014.
- Incremental funding will be provided, based on availability of funds and the Recipient’s satisfactory performance.
- Establishing partnerships with local Lebanese non-governmental and/or private and public organizations is required.
- USAID will approve all key Recipient personnel.

- USAID will be substantially involved as a collaborative member of technical and programmatic advisory committees.

X. Reporting Requirements

The Recipient shall submit reports, deliverables, or outputs as further described below to the AOR. All reports and other deliverables shall be in the English language.

- a) **Weekly Reports:** The contractor shall provide the AOR, on Monday of every week a concise report with bullet points on the activities undertaken during the previous week, and planned activities for the coming week. Important meetings and milestones need to be included. The weekly report should seek to be a brief yet precise, including description of the activities, with emphasis on issues that have arisen, impacts made, constraints encountered, and suggestions for additional actions that might be taken.
- b) **Quarterly Reports:** Quarterly reports shall be submitted within thirty days after the end of the quarter. The scope and format of the quarterly reports will be determined in consultation with the AOR.
- (c) **Annual Work Plan:** An annual work plan, comprising the full fiscal year, shall be required by the implementer annually. The annual work plan will detail the work to be accomplished during the upcoming implementation year of the program. The scope and format of the annual work plan will be finalized by the implementer and approved by the AOR during the first 60 days after the award of the award. The annual work plan may be revised on an occasional basis, as needed, to reflect changes on the ground and with the concurrence of the AOR.

The annual work plan will establish the timeline for objectives that indicate progress towards the tasks that need to be performed to achieve objectives; and will specify activities on a critical path and show critical performance benchmarks for the responsible parties. The annual work plan will include a detailed budget with a pipeline analysis of costs incurred and projections of costs for the life of the award implementation plan for achieving project outputs.

- (d) **Performance Monitoring Plan:** The implementer will submit a performance plan that reflects the work plan and its corresponding targets 60 days after the start of the award. The performance monitoring plan should include indicators to measure progress and success at the outputs, outcome and impact levels. The implementer will use some of the standard indicators used by the Mission along with a range of custom indicators that the implementer will develop specifically for this program. The scope and format of the performance plan will be finalized by the implementer and approved by the AOR during the first 60 days after the award of the award.

- (e) **Final Report:** The implementer shall prepare a final report within 90 days post expiry of the award that matches accomplishments to the specific paragraphs of the Program Description. The final report will be drafted to allow for incremental improvements in the process, both generally within USAID and specifically with respect to this award.

- (f) TraiNet Training Database: Accurate documentation and timely reporting of all USAID-funded training is an important component of this award. The implementer shall enter all trainee data into USAID's TraiNet system. The implementer shall submit a training report of this training information to USAID within 60 days after the completion of the USAID fiscal year. The implementer shall also maintain an electronic database of trainees' home addresses, including governorate, district, home and office telephone numbers, email address, and organizational affiliation.
- (g) Quarterly Financial Reports: Thirty days after the end of each quarter, the implementer shall submit to the AOR the Federal Financial Form (SF 425).
- (h) Quarterly Accruals Report: The implementer shall submit a quarterly accruals report 15 days before the end of each quarter.
- (i) Oral Briefings: As requested by USAID/Lebanon. USAID/Lebanon may ask the implementer to brief U.S. Embassy colleagues.
- (j) Other Special Reports: The implementer will be required to submit to USAID/Lebanon all special reports, as requested by USAID, or as determined by the Annual Work Plan. These reports will include management reports, trip and consultant reports, technical reports, seminar reports and evaluation, needs assessments and diagnostic studies, and training course models.
- (k) Branding Strategy and Marking Plan: The implementer shall submit to USAID within 45 days post award signature a branding strategy and marking plan for USAID's approval. The plan shall focus on the outreach efforts that the implementer will undertake, though minimal, and the USAID overall program ownership.

SECTION II AWARD INFORMATION

Estimated Funds to be Available: USAID estimates funding for this program will be made available in the range from \$40 million to \$45.5 million. USAID anticipates one award for a four-year period.

Estimated Start Date and Performance Period:

The performance period for this program is estimated to begin on/about September 30, 2014 and be completed by September 29, 2018 i.e. four years.

Type of Award:

The award will be a Cooperative Agreement as USAID desires to be substantially involved in the implementation of the selected program that is consistent with USAID policy contained in ADS Chapter 303 concerning non-governmental assistance activities: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>

SECTION III ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Criteria

A.1 Type and Nationality of Applicant

Applicants must be U.S. or non-U.S. organization, non-profit, or for-profit entity.

A.2 Cost Share

Cost share refers to the resources an applicant contributes to the total cost of an agreement. It is the portion of project or program costs not borne by the United States Government (USG). Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide innovative approaches to cost sharing and to provide detailed explanations in their applications. In addition to USAID funds, applicants are encouraged to contribute resources from their own, private or local sources for the implementation of this program. Illustrative examples for cost share include overhead, non-exempt taxes, general and administrative costs or any other costs. Applicants should review 22 CFR 226.23 (http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2001/aprqttr/pdf/22cfr226.23.pdf) in determining cost share contribution. Cost share will be considered as an element of cost effectiveness under USAID regulation 22 CFR 226 and of applicable USAID policy and procedure:

<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>

Contributions can be either cash or in-kind and can include contributions from the university, local counterpart organizations and other donors (not other USG federal funding sources). Cost sharing contributions should be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110 – Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations which can be found at the following link <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a110/a110.html#23>. Information regarding the proposed cost share should be included in the SF 424 and the Budget as indicated on those documents. The cost sharing plan must be discussed in the Budget Notes to the extent necessary to determine its feasibility and realistic access to the sources and funds.

A cost share of at least 20% of the total project cost is required as per guidance below.

All cost-sharing contributions must be allocable to IBESP, reasonable, allowable and verifiable through independent financial audits.

SECTION IV APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Application:

This RFA and any future amendments can be downloaded from www.grants.gov. Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Questions and answers are posted through www.grants.gov

Submission:

Applications shall be submitted electronically in two separate parts: (a) technical and (b) cost/business application. The application shall be prepared according to the structural format set forth below. Applications must be submitted directly to the Regional Procurement Office of USAID/Egypt to the following e-mail address: slebanon@usaid.gov

The due date and time for complete application submittals is as stated in the RFA cover letter, unless the RFA is amended to extend the deadline. **Applications received after the deadline will not be considered for award, unless the Agreement Officer determines all similarly late applications can be considered.**

Point of Contact:

Abeer Rizk, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist e-mail address: arizk@usaid.gov, telephone: 011-202-2522-6884

Application Preparation Guidelines:

(A) THE TECHNICAL APPLICATION FORMAT

THE TECHNICAL APPLICATION HAS A STRICT TWENTY FIVE (30) PAGE LIMIT, excluding authorized attachments. Authorized attachments to the technical application which do not count against the page limitation are listed below.

Applicants are advised that any pages exceeding this limit will not be considered for evaluation.

The full application must be in English. The full application should reflect full consideration of all the information provided in this RFA.

Applicants must not copy and paste from the RFA and must develop their own application adopting their methodology based on the RFA terms and conditions.

1. Technical Application (not to exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes stated below typed on A4 paper size, at least font 12, single spaced, regular paper margins, including the below sections.)

To facilitate the review of the Technical application, the applicant must organize the narrative sections of their technical applications in the same order as the Evaluation Criteria in **Section V** of this RFA as follows:

1. Technical Approach 45 points

The Applicant's technical approach should clearly present the strategies that will be used in program implementation, as well as the rationale behind those strategies. The technical approach should be precise, clear and well-conceived in addressing all the requirements in the Program Description. The technical approach should also reflect a real understanding of the opportunities and problems that are likely to be encountered throughout program implementation.

2. Personnel Qualifications: 20 points

The Applicant should submit a resume or CV for each of the Key Personnel (Chief of Party and Deputy Chief of Party positions). The resume should at least include relevant work experience in similar projects in technical and academic qualifications, reference contacts and language capabilities. At least three references, with contact information, preferably email addresses. The applicant should also include a signed letter of commitment from the individual proposed. The letter of commitment must specify the length of the commitment to the position.

3. Past Performance: 15 points

The applicant should provide an information sheet for all grants, cooperative agreements, contracts, or other programs that are similar to the program description in this application that have been performed by the applicant or by a member of the applicant's team over the past three years. For each program listed, please provide the following information:

- Award number;
- Agency or entity providing the funding;
- Description of the program including, but not limited to, a brief discussion of the complexity/diversity of activities;
- Primary location(s) of activities;
- Duration of the program;
- Skills/expertise required;
- Dollar value of the program;
- Contact information for two persons, including name, job title, mailing address, phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

(USAID recommends that you alert the contacts that their names have been submitted and that they are authorized to provide performance information concerning the listed awards if and when USAID requests it).

If extraordinary problems impacted any of the referenced programs, provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken in this section of the Technical Application.

4. Management Capability 20 points

The Applicant should propose adequate approaches to manage all the activities as described in the Program Description. A relevant staffing plan to implement the Program Description must be provided. The staffing plan should include the following:

- An organizational chart illustrating the proposed staffing pattern,
- A table which shows the level of effort or number of person months for each position proposed (both in-country and home office staff).
- A description of the positions for Key Personnel.
- A description of how the Applicant intends to maximize the use of local personnel.
- A description of Home Office support to field implementation (if any).

The Applicant shall also propose:

- Well-defined Work Plan with clear targets and benchmarks.
- A monitoring and evaluation plan with clear performance indicators.

Also, the Applicant shall provide an illustration of how the work under the subject RFA will be coordinated with other donors.

-Attachments:

Attachments should be titled (e.g. Annex A). Annexes must be used to support the detailed methodology in the application. The application must include the entire scope of information required in the program description of this RFA as per various sections above; annexes are only supportive documentation. The core of the implementation approach and methodology must be included in the application only.

Annexes must not exceed 35 pages. Annexes must be compiled in one single electronic document (e.g. MS Word, PDF), with appropriate page numbers. Annexes must include at least the following:

1. Draft illustrative work-plan for the duration of the project in a tabular format for the projects activities against a timetable reflecting specific milestones to be achieved. The work plan must not be in a narrative format.
2. Detailed organizational chart for the project reflecting positions, levels of effort, reporting lines and sub-partner organizations if applicable.
3. Draft M&E plan including life of projects targets as per USAID expected outcomes.
4. Draft branding strategy and marking plan (BSMP) including a detailed outreach plan to promote IBESP and recognize USAID during the life of the project. Guidelines on developing the BSMP are be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/branding/assistance-awards>.
5. Resumes of only key personnel not exceeding two pages per resume.
6. Letters of commitment from key personnel to work under IBESP;
7. Letters of commitment from proposed sub-awardee(s) reflecting very briefly the scope of their engagement, total budget allocation, any cost share contribution and duration of their engagement.
8. Responsibility determination and vetting documents of proposed sub-awardee(s). This section refers to the validation by the applicant of the capability of the proposed sub-awardee to undertake the necessary work.
9. Past performance information sheets.

Note: If the full application exceeds 30 pages (excluding annexes) ONLY the first 30 pages will be considered when evaluating the application. Likewise, only the first 35 pages of the annexes will be evaluated.

(B) COST/BUSINESS APPLICATION FORMAT

Cost/business sections of the application must be separate from the technical section. There is no page limitation to the cost/business submittal.

The cost/business portion of the application must consist of the following completed forms and requests for information which are available on the following web-site <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>:

- [SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance](#),
- [SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-construction Programs](#), and
- [SF-424B, Assurances – Non-construction Programs](#).
- Pre-Award Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Applicant/Recipient as stated in ADS 303.3.8 and are available on the following web-site <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.
- Other submission requirements for applications submitted in response to this RFA.

The following are amongst the Pre-Award Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Applicant/Recipient which are requested to be included with the application submittal:

1. **Restrictions on Lobbying** ([22 CFR 227](#));
2. **Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers** ([ADS 206](#)); and
3. **Certification Regarding Terrorist Funding** ([AAPD 04-14](#)).

- b. Other certifications and statements found in [Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of the Recipient](#):
1. The **Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants**;
 2. A Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number (See [Use of a Universal Identifier by Grant Applicants](#) for background information.);
 3. A signed copy of **Key Individual Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking**, ([ADS 206.3.10](#)) when applicable;
 4. A signed copy of **Participant Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking** ([ADS 206.3.10](#)) when applicable.

Other submission requirements for applications submitted in response to this RFA consist of:

- Detailed/itemized budget in **excel format** with budget narrative in **MS word** for each budget object class category, including explanation of how costs were estimated, for both the requested USAID funding and proposed cost share amounts. More information on the detailed/itemized budget are provided further below in this same section.
- Similar budget detail with narrative is requested for organizational partners teaming with the prime applicant.
- Current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) negotiated between the applicant and a Federal agency (if available). If a NICRA is not available, the following is required: 1) Copies of the applicant's financial reports for the previous 3-year period, which have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID; 2) Projected budget, cash flow and organizational chart; 3) A copy of the organization's accounting manual.
- If program income (i.e., cost recovery or other revenues generated under the award) is anticipated, the estimated amount should be reflected in the budget, and the Budget Narrative should describe how the program income is proposed to be treated, i.e., additive, cost sharing, or deductive, or a combination thereof (See 22 CFR 226.24).

Detailed/Itemized budget:

- If the applicant proposes expending more than \$300,000 of USAID funding during a single fiscal year of the applicant, the applicant must include funds within the budget to contract an audit. The average cost of an audit is approximately \$10,000.
- The applicant must submit the detailed budget in excel format including itemized costs breakdown, the necessary calculation formulas and due explanations. The budget and budget narrative must include the detailed breakdown of sub-awards budget. The budget must be broken down per year and by major category (e.g. personnel, fringe benefits, travel and transportation, other direct costs, indirect costs, sub-awards). The budget narrative must be submitted in MS Word format reflecting in detail rationales and details for each budget item.
- The management structure must be clearly reflected in the budget and budget narrative. Levels of effort per month, number of months and the monthly remuneration must be clearly reflected for all personnel including key and admin/support staff. The applicant must use the below format in the budget presentation for personnel costs. Salary history must be provided for every person irrespective of

whether charged on USAID or cost-share. The salary history must be provided irrespective of whether the person worked during the past three years at the applicant's organization or somewhere else, and irrespective of whether the person is key personnel or support.

- A similar table must be provided reflecting the proposed level of effort (LOE) under IBESP and duration of this LOE.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
							Year 1			Year 2		
Position	Number of staff	Proposed Monthly Salary	Salary History: Provide Salary of this person during the past three years.	Number of months	% Level of Effort per Month	Total Amount per year	USAID Share	Cost Share	Total	USAID Share	Cost Share	Total
						=BxCxExF						

The budget submission must include a summarized Excel budget as following (edit line items as necessary to reflect the budget submission):

A	B	C	D	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	Unit	Unit Cost	Number of Units	Year 1 – USAID	Year 1 – Cost Share	Total Year 1	Repeat for all years as per columns F, G and H	Total Years	Total USAID	Total Cost Share
Personnel										
Fringe Benefits										
Travel & Transportation										
Supplies										
Participant Training										
Sub-awards										
Other Direct Cost										
Indirect Cost										
Total										

- The detailed breakdown of sub-awards should be presented in separate tabs.

The applicant must submit as well a summary budget that, if approved, will constitute the basis of the award budget per the following:

Budget Cost Category	USAID Share	Cost-Share	Total in USD
Personnel			
Fringe Benefits			
Transport			
Sub-Awards			
Equipment			
Supplies			
Participant Training			
Other Direct Costs			
Indirect Costs			
Total			

- Summary budget per activity item must also be submitted.

Environmental Compliance:

- The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 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. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) Parts 201.5.10g and 204 (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ADS/200/><<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ADS/200/>>), 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. Respondent environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this RFA.

- 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.

- No activity funded under the awarded grant/CA will 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). (Hereinafter, such documents are described as "approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.")

- As part of its initial Work Plan, and all Annual Work Plans thereafter, the recipient, in collaboration with the USAID Cognizant Technical Officer and Mission Environmental Officer or Bureau Environmental Officer, as appropriate, shall review all ongoing and planned activities under the grant/CA to be awarded 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 ongoing 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 from USAID.

SECTION V APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Technical Evaluation Criteria and Sub-criteria:

The 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 and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Technical applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria and Sub-criteria:

The 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 and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Technical responses will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Approach: 45 points

Factors that will be considered for evaluation under this criteria are:

1. Clear understanding of the public education system in Lebanon.
2. Feasible, integrated and innovative approaches towards achieving the stated objectives, results and requirements and viable approaches for realizing institutional and technical sustainability for the each component requirements stated below:

Component 1: Improved reading outcomes for primary level public school students

- a) Proposed approach for conducting and institutionalizing an early grade reading assessment
- b) Proposed approach for holding policy dialogue with MEHE and develop policies for reading and monitoring progress
- c) Proposed approach for conducting an assessment of public school teachers' knowledge of reading instruction
- d) Proposed approach in establishing an early warning system for struggling readers in the early grades
- e) Proposed approach for developing teacher training modules on reading instruction

- f) Proposed approach for developing teacher training materials and training primary teachers in early grade instruction
- g) Capacity building strategies for working with the CERD in the development and dissemination of early grade educational materials
- h) Proposed approach for supporting the MEHE and CERD to undertake systemic reform to promote early grade learning
- i) Proposed approach for introducing new strategies for supporting children's reading success and retention in school

Component 2: Expanded access to safe and relevant education for vulnerable public school students

- a) Proposed approach for developing a response strategy based on ongoing monitoring
- b) Proposed approach for providing new and additional seating and other amenities in crisis-affected schools to mitigate tensions
- c) Proposed approach for providing professional development to manage large class sizes
- d) Proposed approach for addressing barriers to schooling for vulnerable students such as costs, transportation, etc...
- e) Proposed approach for strengthening school-based monitoring and management to improve public school education based on needs
- f) Proposed approach for widening access opportunities for learning through non-formal education and accelerated learning programs

Component 3: Strengthened management capacity in the education system to better direct and monitor education to address system limitations while enhancing the resilience of the system to adapt to evolving demands

- a) Soundness of proposed approach for supporting the MEHE to develop policies and guidelines that support reforms
- b) Soundness of proposed approach in identifying cost-effective models for expanding access and ensuring persistence in school for vulnerable students
- c) Soundness of proposed approach in strengthening data collection, management, and use of data for informed decision-making to improve reading and expand access
- d) Soundness of proposed approach for generating consensus among stakeholders in delivery models to minimize costs, expand access and improve the management of learning systems in Lebanon
- e) Soundness of proposed approach for institutionalizing within MEHE the successful reforms that increase learning outcomes, learner well-being and safety in public schools.

Personnel Qualifications: 20 points

Factors that will be considered include:

1.The evaluation of this criterion will be based on the demonstrated capability, experience, education and qualifications (including management, leadership and interpersonal skills) of the proposed team for the activities listed in the program description.

2.In addition to the technical and support staff, the proposed Lebanon office will include the following two full time key personnel:

- a) A Chief of Party, full time, Lebanese, with a PhD or Master's degree, with strong relevant experience of no less than 5 years in the management of similar education projects. Knowledge of the Lebanese context and working in conflict or crisis situations is a must. The COP must have excellent communications skills, including in Arabic and English, and strong team leadership capabilities.
- b) A Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP), Lebanese, full time, with a minimum of 4 years of relevant experience in management of similar projects. The DCOP will work closely with the COP to manage the entire project. Must speak Arabic and English.

Past Performance: 15 points

1. Performance information will be used for both the responsibility determination and best value decision. USAID may use performance information obtained from other than the sources identified by the applicant. USAID will utilize existing databases of past performance information and solicit additional information from the references provided by the applicant and from other sources if and when the Agreements Officer finds the existing databases to be insufficient for evaluating an applicant's performance.
2. If the performance information contains negative information on which the applicant has not previously been given an opportunity to comment, USAID will provide the applicant an opportunity to comment on it prior to its consideration in the evaluation, and any applicant's comment will be considered with the negative performance information.
3. USAID will initially determine the relevance of similar performance information as a predictor of probable performance under the subject award. USAID may give more weight to performance information that is considered more relevant and/or more current. The applicant's performance information determined to be relevant will be evaluated in accordance with the elements below:
 - Quality of product or service, including consistency in meeting goals and targets;
 - Timeliness of performance, including adherence to schedules and other time-sensitive project conditions, and effectiveness of home and field office management to make prompt decisions and ensure efficient completion of activities;
 - Business relations, addressing the history of professional behavior and overall business-like concern for the interests of the customer, including coordination among team members and developing country partners, cooperative attitude in remedying problems, and timely completion of all administrative requirements;
 - Customer satisfaction with performance, including end user or beneficiary wherever possible;
 - Effectiveness of key personnel, including appropriateness of personnel for the job and prompt and satisfactory changes in personnel when problems with clients were identified; and
 - Cost control, including forecasting costs as well as accuracy in financial reporting, ensuring that unnecessarily expensive technical assistance is not used when lower cost advisors are adequate, and pacing the expenditure of level of effort such that deliverables and outputs can be produced within budget.

Management Capability: 20 points

Factors that will be considered include:

1. Well-defined Work Plan with clear targets and benchmarks.

2. A monitoring and evaluation plan with clear performance indicators.
3. Effective use of Home Office Support.
4. The applicant proposes adequate approaches to manage the implementation of the early grade reading component, reducing tensions in schools and communities, and working in complex situations that require student integration and addressing remedial learning needs.
5. The applicant has a good management plan that reflects the assignment of needed personnel to complete the targeted activities.
6. The applicant has strategic plans for how best to work with the MEHE to provide capacity building.
7. The applicant will have demonstrated ability to work with local organizations and teams to carry out project activities and create effective partnerships.
8. The applicant must offer evidence of their technical resources and expertise in addressing relevant problems and issues.

Cost Evaluation

The Cost Application will be evaluated for cost effectiveness and cost realism. Cost sharing contributions will be evaluated for cost realism.

Omissions, deviations from the RFA that lead to serious changes in the scope, and lack of compliance with the terms and conditions of this request of application will be negatively evaluated.

Description of the Review and Selection Process:

Application(s) which are deemed to offer the best overall value and meet USAID objectives will be selected for award. The Technical Evaluation Committee will evaluate the technical/programmatic merit of each application as measured against the evaluation factors. At the time of RFA issuance, all panel members are anticipated to be USAID employees. The panel may make an award recommendation based on the extent of its evaluation scope. In addition, one or more panel members may be asked to provide input to the cost effectiveness review, any substantial implementation involvement desired by USAID, and on any special provisions that may be included in the award.

Once an apparent successful applicant is identified, additional information and discussion may occur between the applicant and USAID Agreement Officer, before the Agreement Officer makes the final funding decision.

The recommendation or selection of an application for award does not in any way guarantee an award. The USAID Agreement Officer must be fully satisfied that the applicant has the capacity to adequately perform in accordance with standards established by USAID and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This issue of organizational capability is generally referred to as a pre-award “responsibility determination.” The Agreement Officer must also complete any other necessary pre-award arrangements.

Details on USAID pre-award responsibility determination policy and procedure can be found on our agency website, in its automated directive system (ADS) chapter 303, section 303.3.9: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.

Other areas of review and discussion will vary according to the circumstances pertaining to the application. The following areas commonly require discussion and agreement prior to award:

1. Branding Strategy and Marking Plan. The apparent successful applicant will be requested to propose a branding strategy and marking plan which provides for appropriate acknowledgment of USAID

support, and which will be required as a material element of the Cooperative Agreement. Information on USAID branding and marking policy can be found in ADS Chapter 320. ADS Chapter 320 sections concerning “assistance” applies to this RFA. ADS Chapter 320 sections concerning “acquisition” do not apply to this RFA. ADS Chapter 320 can be found on USAID website: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf>.

2. Final program and budget plans.
3. Payment terms.
4. Procedures concerning administrative reporting and logistical requirements for program including training components.
5. Cost sharing terms.
6. Other award terms including audit, special provisions and/or special award conditions.

SECTION VI AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Authority to Obligate the Government:

The USAID Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Cooperative Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Cooperative Agreement or specific pre-award written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

USAID Disability Policy - Assistance (December 2004)

(a) The objectives of the USAID Disability Policy are (1) to enhance the attainment of United States foreign assistance program goals by promoting the participation and equalization of opportunities of individuals with disabilities in USAID policy, country and sector strategies, activity designs and implementation; (2) to increase awareness of issues of people with disabilities both within USAID programs and in host countries; (3) to engage other U.S. Government agencies, host country counterparts, governments, implementing organizations and other donors in fostering a climate of nondiscrimination against people with disabilities; and (4) to support international advocacy for people with disabilities. The full text of the policy paper can be found at the following website: http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABQ631.pdf.

(b) USAID therefore requires that the recipient not discriminate against people with disabilities in the implementation of USAID funded programs and that it make every effort to comply with the objectives of the USAID Disability Policy in performing the program under this grant or cooperative agreement. To that end and to the extent it can accomplish this goal within the scope of the program objectives, the recipient should demonstrate a comprehensive and consistent approach for including men, women and children with disabilities.

Deviations from Standard Provision:

None are anticipated at this time.

SECTION IX - SPECIAL PROVISIONS

A- EXECUTIVE ORDER ON TERRORISM FINANCING (FEB 2002)

The Contractor/Recipient is reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibits transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. It is the responsibility of the contractor/recipient to ensure compliance with these Executive Orders and laws. This provision must be included in all subcontracts/subawards issued under this contract/agreement.

B- TRAINING RESULTS AND INFORMATION NETWORK (TRAINET)

Exchange Visitors and Training

The recipient will conform to USAID Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 252 – Visa Compliance for Exchange Visitors and ADS 253 – Training for Development, as well as USAID/Egypt-specific requirements for processing of J-1 Exchange Visitors.

The Recipient will enter applicable information into TraiNet for any participant Training, third-country training and in-country training that is funded through this award.

Information and assistance on ADS 253 requirements is currently available from the following USAID/Egypt personnel:

Samah Eid seid@usaid.gov 2522-6891

C- VETTING REQUIRMENTS OF SUB-AWARDEES

Prior to the provision of funding by the Recipient to its sub-grantees ("sub-awardees"), the Recipient shall conduct all screening procedures and due diligence on sub-awardees and key individuals of the sub-awardees, including a check of sub-awardees and such key individuals not screened at the time of award by the Agreement Officer to ensure compliance with Executive Order 13224 and U.S. law prohibiting transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. The Recipient will screen names of its sub-awardees and the key individuals of such sub-awardees against the Specially Designated Nationals List ("SDN" list) administered by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control ("OFAC") <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sdn/>; UN's 1267 Committee List on Al-Qaida and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolist.shtml> ; and State Department's Terrorist Exclusion List: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/list/> (see ADS 303.3.8.a.4 and ADS 303.3.9) and the applicant has a record of business integrity and does not appear on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) on this web-site: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>

"Key individual" means (i) principal officers of the organization's governing body (e.g., chairman, vice chairman, treasurer and secretary of the board of directors or board of trustees); (ii) the principal officer and deputy principal officer of the organization (e.g., executive director, deputy director, president, vice president); (iii) the program manager or chief of party for the USG-financed program; and (iv) any other person with significant responsibilities for administration of the USG-financed activities or resources."