



June 16, 2014

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS NO. SOL-268-14-000002

Improved Basic Education Services Project (IBESP)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

The purpose of this amendment is to amend the solicitation and provide answers to questions received.

The subject RFA is hereby amended as follows:

1-Page 15, second paragraph, under Section I. Funding Opportunity Description, IV. Program Description, D. Program Components, Component One, delete the following phrase:

“..and pupils at the end of the last grade of primary school,..”

2-Page 32, under Section III, Eligibility Information, A. Cost share, third paragraph, delete the following sentence:

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

And replace with the following:

“A cost share of *up to* 20% of the total project cost is required as per guidance below.

Response to Questions Received:

1. The RFA notes that in addition to Arabic, Syrian students do not have the English or French language comprehension skills. Is the early grade reading testing only in Arabic or will also include English and French?
Answer: The early grade reading testing is in Arabic.
2. The second paragraph of page 15 of the RFA states that the reading assessment testing will be administered “at the end of grade 2, and pupils at the end of the last grade of primary school” (grade 6), while the second-to-last paragraph states that reading assessment test will be administered “in Grades 2 and 3.” Could USAID

please clarify if the reading assessment testing is to be administered in grade 2 and grade 3, or in grade 2 and grade 6?

Answer: Thank you for catching the error. The phrase *and pupils at the end of the last grade of primary school* has been deleted from the RFA in the second paragraph on page 15 per this amendment. USAID prefers that all reading assessment take place in Cycle 1 of the Lebanese public school system (grades 1-3). USAID would like to emphasize that the point of the reading assessment will be threefold: to gather initial data for designing proper activities to address reading gaps; monitor progress and use data to make adjustments to interventions and materials as needed; and demonstrate overall effect of activities after the period of implementation.

Applications that suggest assessing any or one of the Cycle 1 grades are acceptable as long as proposed activities are aligned with Goal 1 of USAID's Education Strategy and accompanying guidance in terms of standard indicators for reporting.

The important aspect of this activity will be to demonstrate analysis for and to justify decisions with regard to which grade or grades to assess for reading.

3. Is the early grade reading testing only for Syrian students? Or for both Lebanese and Syrian students?

Answer: The early grade reading testing is for both Lebanese and Syrian students.

4. Are the early grade reading testing and activities to focus only on Arabic? Or also on English and French?

Answer: The early grade reading testing and activities will primarily focus on Arabic.

5. Are there specific parameters in terms of size of the small grants to be administered to public schools?

Answer: USAID's ongoing D-RASATI 2 project provides small grants for school improvement projects at around \$4,000 each. In general, small grants should not exceed \$7,000 each.

6. Does USAID anticipate interventions and policy changes with regards to reading curricula at the pre-service level?

Answer: No, this project focuses on in-service and not pre-service teacher training.

7. Is there specific guidance as to how cost share should be distributed over the life of the project?

Answer: The applicant is to propose the best and most sound approach for distributing cost share over the life of the project.

8. Could USAID please clarify what the envisioned scope of work for and level of incremental funding referenced on pages 29 and 30, and if incremental funding might be available throughout the life of the project or if any aspects of the program design and budget should reflect the possibility of incremental funding?

Answer: USAID will not initially fully fund this award. The award will receive an initial funding amount covering the first year of the project. The remaining funds

will be incrementally funded throughout implementation depending on progress and based on the availability of funds. This process is according to USAID forward funding rules.

9. Can USAID please expand upon its interpretation of “relevant education” under sub-IR 1.1.2 with regards to this program? How are interventions at the non-formal level envisaged considering the project design advocates MEHE and CERD ownership?

Answer: “Relevant education” is meant to suggest that the project needs to ensure that activities presented will meet immediate needs in Lebanon’s current context.

USAID does not mean to suggest that education should have workforce development outcomes (as is sometimes the case with the term "relevant" education).

Outcomes expected are firmly rooted in increased access to safe learning opportunities that contribute to children and youth progress in education and help to bridge identified learning needs for the most vulnerable students so that they can continue their education.

Non-formal Education (NFE) interventions must be pursued in partnership with the MEHE and CERD, according to the Education Sector Plan guidance. USAID cannot support through this assistance any NFE interventions that are not approved by the MEHE for Syrian refugees.

10. Please confirm if branding and marking (B&M) plan should include outreach or if the outreach plan will be separate. Page 31 mentions only B&M, while page 35 includes outreach.

Answer: The Branding and Marking plan should include outreach.

11. Besides providing input on the PMP to the successful tenderer, what is the role of the mission M&E contractor?

Answer: The Mission’s M&E contractor reviews the PMPs of project awards, supports the Agreement Officer Representatives (AORs) in site visits, as well as conducts Mission evaluations.

12. Please clarify USAID’s expectations with regards to providing hardware, software, network connectivity as well as training staff in the use of technology. Page 22 mentions that this is a possibility.

Answer: The objective of this assistance is to help targeted departments’ to more effectively and efficiently manage and monitor basic education services. To reach this goal, potential tools and related skill development activities could include automation of their systems and processes.

13. Page 31 notes that the documentation of training in the TraiNet Training Database. Is TraiNet applicable considering all activities are in-country?

Answer: Yes, TraiNet is applicable for all training as defined per ADS 252 and ADS 253.

14. Please confirm that the exit strategy and operational closeout plan referenced on page 29 are not part of the work plan that will be submitted with the proposal in a non-narrative format.
Answer: Correct, the exit strategy and operational close out plan are not part of the work plan that will be submitted with the proposal in a non-narrative format.
15. How does the mission anticipate coordination between the D-RASATI 2 and IBESP activities?
Answer: Coordination between D-RASATI 2 and IBESP will take place between the two project implementers and will primarily cover psycho-social support in the schools that are most affected by the Syrian crisis, as well as teacher training. USAID does not anticipate significant coordination between the two programs on the reading component.
16. Please confirm that the Inspectorate Department is under MEHE and not the Prime Minister's office.
Answer: The Inspectorate Department overlooks all of MEHE's activities both at the central and regional level. The Inspectorate Department falls under the Prime Minister's Office. This entity is named in the RFA as a possible beneficiary but others could be proposed.
17. Could USAID please confirm if LU is responsible for in-service teacher training as stated on page 16? Our understanding is that they are responsible only for pre-service teacher training.
Answer: LU is primarily responsible for pre-service teacher training, while CERD is responsible for in-service teacher training.
18. Could USAID please clarify in which language teachers will be trained in early grade reading instruction (page 17)?
Answer: Arabic.
19. The RFA requests a 20% cost share which is a very challenging request for a project of this nature. Would USAID consider lowering the cost share requirement?
Answer: A cost share of up to 20% is requested instead. The RFA is amended to reflect this.
20. The time between the issuance of the RFA and the due date for this solicitation is only about 22 working days, and even with a same day turn-around time on the response to questions, applicants will have only about 16 working days to respond. To allow for the sound design of a program and the development of a quality proposal, would USAID please consider extending the deadline for final submission of applications?
Answer: Unfortunately, USAID cannot extend the deadline for the final submission of applications.

End of Amendment