

ASHA FY20 RFA (72ASHA20RFA00001)
Public Comments/Questions and Responses

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General RFA Questions/Comments		
Organization	Public Comment/Question	ASHA Response
Organization 1	Q1: <u>Time Frame for Comments</u> : The time frame for public comment on the RFA has coincided with the holiday season and, as a practical matter, limited the opportunity for many institutions to conduct as full and thorough a review and exchange of views as in past cycles. Additionally, the notifications for the FY2019 cycle have not been released yet by ASHA, therefore making suggestions on the new format difficult to assess. We understand the time constraints under which ASHA is operating but also want to be sure changes made last year aren't taken as new baseline pending this further practical experience and feedback.	Given the increased oversight and consultations this past year (FY19 cycle), the FY20 RFA was posted for public comment later in this funding cycle. Historically, posting for public comment typically occurs in October/November. The format of the FY20 RFA is identical to that of the FY19 RFA. Please note that funding decisions regarding FY19 applications do not impact the format.
	Q2: <u>Public Diplomacy Definition</u> : As mentioned in our comments to last year's RFA, the definition of "public diplomacy" remains vague. We think it should more clearly reflect the traditional ASHA emphasis on "soft power" diplomacy – i.e., training of next generation of leaders in business, government, science, medicine. This includes short-term people-to-people impacts common to other State Department programs, but is much more substantial and targeted and this should be reflected	The RFA is clear regarding the public diplomacy criterion. The definition of public diplomacy, which is taken directly from the U.S. State Department website, actually is inclusive of the public's comments, while not being too prescriptive to impede other ideas and possibilities. The Agency, as a whole, tries to encourage new ideas, by not

	in ASHA guidance and evaluation metrics. Supplemental guidance provided in conjunction with last year's RFA public comment process was very helpful and should be reiterated in an appropriate form.	providing such examples that are typically taken as "tacit requirements." The same FY19 RFA supplemental guidance-- a reference link to materials provided at the ASHA Meeting in October 2018 and Annex 2 Section III reference sheets for ASHA's public diplomacy indicators--is included with the FY20 RFA
	Q3: <u>Scope and purpose of the "past impact statement"</u>: This aspect of the RFA also remains vague and would benefit from a more explicit reiteration of clarifying guidance provided in conjunction with last year's RFA public comment process. As expressed in our statement last year, we believe an applicant's ability to demonstrate its public diplomacy bona fides should be a primary focus and that evidence of such impact should not be time- or project-limited. Such evidence may often include, but should not be limited to, the narrow metrics commonly associated with post-grant implementation reporting. Broader measures of an institution's practical "public diplomacy" reach and impact, over time, will often be as relevant and insightful for ASHA purposes. The flexible approach suggested in supplemental guidance for the FY2019 cycle -- allowing an applicant to exercise its best judgment in marshalling evidence of its public diplomacy bona fides -- has seemed to us the right balance and should be reiterated for this cycle.	The format of and guidance in the FY20 RFA is identical to that of the FY19 RFA. Applicants may opt to also include broader impact metrics if they feel those will substantiate their request. However, applicants need to carefully weigh what information they should include to demonstrate the scale of impact per the criterion.
	Q4: Weighting: Similar to last year's comments by the Coalition, we are concerned about an overly-	The weighting of the categories reflects the importance of Phase 1 of the

	simplistic weighting of four categories – i.e., according equal (50%) weight to public diplomacy/past impact (for ME region) and to management/commodities.	application. For both the “Full and Open” and the “30% Set-Aside,” Phase 1 is worth 50% of the overall rating.
	Q5: <u>Annexes</u>: Use of the annexes provided with the RFA now appears mandatory. If so, this should be more clearly stated. If use of the annexes is now mandatory, we would ask that these be provided in a Word as well as PDF format or, alternatively, that the RFA include an explicit authorization for an applicant to do so itself. PDF editing software is proprietary and not all applicants would have easy access to this. As importantly, PDF documents have much more limited functionality than Word documents, making it much harder to give documents a professional appearance. This will be especially important for documents containing narrative content -- in particular, the technical application.	Thank you. We have corrected the RFA to clarify that the use of the Annexes provided is mandatory. ASHA is using the PDF documents to ensure that applicants properly answer the required sections. This will help to expedite the review process and reduce the risk of misinterpretation. To complete the required Annexes, one only needs the basic Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available to U.S. organizations. The same Adobe Acrobat reader is used to complete other commonly used U.S. Government standard forms.
	Q6: <u>Page Limits and Scope</u>: As mentioned in previous cycles, we are concerned by the limited space and scope given applicants to describe a proposed project, substantiate their case for public diplomacy impact (especially for non-standard contexts or circumstances), and elaborate relevant public diplomacy bona fides and past experience or impacts. We continue to believe that applicants should be accorded greater opportunity to make and substantiate a case for funding. Short of this, we would again urge ASHA to allow applicants to attach	Page limit will remain at 3 for Phase 1, and another 3 for the additional set-aside criterion. ASHA feels that given the requirement under the criterion has been reduced to only focus on public diplomacy, 3 pages suffice to respond. In previous years, Applicants were successfully able to make their public diplomacy case with less overall space; e.g., the other 8 pages were in response

	relevant background materials to their formal phase 1 applications (such as summary handouts or other materials that describe institutional impact /relevance to USAID objectives, ASHA success stories, etc.).	to other factors. Since ASHA started using grants.gov in 2012, the number of applicants has increased exponentially. ASHA reviews hundreds of applications every year. Applicants need to make every effort to be succinct in highlighting their impact during phase I.
	<u>Q7: Gender and Environmental Impact Objectives:</u> We ask that ASHA more explicitly recognize the relevance of institution-wide activities and data. Many ASHA institutions are leaders in their countries and regions in advancing shared environmental and gender objectives, with such activities typically (and properly) occurring on an institution-wide and not just project-specific basis. For example, an applicant may have -- and should be credited for -- robust environmental measures in place on an institutional basis that would extend to specific supported project. Similarly, many ASHA applicants are making an important contribution to gender equity through the training of women generally, not simply in a specific ancillary activity associated with grant-supported commodities, and should be able to describe and receive credit for this. ASHA should more clearly recognize that it is working with established institutions, not just start-ups. Clarification on this point would help to ensure that applicants with otherwise exemplary environmental or gender policies and practices are not down-graded for failure to describe supplemental actions unique to a specific proposed	ASHA and USAID are required to provide annual reporting to Congress on results from funded activities--Gender is one of those mandatory indicators. Unless we receive an exemption from this type of reporting, ASHA needs to attribute its funding to results for Gender activities of a specific project funded. For that reason, the Gender factor needs to directly link to the proposed project. However, the applicant, <u>in addition to</u> the attribution requirement, may include additional information regarding their broader contributions and impact in that domain.

	project. Conversely, a more explicit emphasis on institutional (not just project-specific) impacts would comport with the broader historic ASHA goal of modeling American values and practices in the larger communities that applicant institutions serve.	
Organization 2	We are very pleased to let you know that Organization 2 is looking forward to be an effective American Christian College in [Country]. As you read from the attached summary of our partnership agreement with a private Christian school in [City], our college is given four classrooms to implement its program in [Country]. Our program is being implemented with churches , public college students and faculty, and non-government development organizations. Our focus is on training churches on faith-based education through launching Christian Schools following U.S. best practices. We promote Christian Community Development principles and methods with churches and non-governmental development organizations , and training young people to be become Christian entrepreneurs in their communities. We promote American culture through English as a foreign language using American textbooks. Our financial needs for 2020 consist in renovation of classrooms offered to our College, training of NGO leaders in Christian Community Development principles with pilot projects in agriculture and marketing for Christian Schools. I will forward to you images of the school rooms	ASHA cannot respond to questions related to specific applications or proposed projects. Please submit your application during Phase I of the application cycle for 2020.

	needing improvements or renovation.	
Organization 3	Q1: Is there a list that applicants can reference to see which countries have USAID vetting programs in place?	USAID has partner vetting programs in the following locations: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Yemen.
Organization 4	Q1: The Technical Application Format section, we are seeking your input on the Past performance impact statement page limit, whether it can be reconsidered to increase the number of pages, given the evaluation weight on this section towards the 30% set-aside budget and the criteria which needs to be addressed.	Page limit will remain at 3 for Phase 1, and another 3 for the additional set-aside criterion. ASHA feels that given the requirement under the criterion has been reduced to only focus on public diplomacy, 3 pages suffice to respond. In previous years, Applicants were successfully able to make their public diplomacy case with less overall space; e.g., the other 8 pages were in response to other factors.
Organization 5	Q1: ASHA expects to fund selected applications and make awards in calendar year 2020 (as soon as funds become available)." a. What is the estimated date for funding availability?	The President through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) submitted a fiscal year 2020 (FY20) budget request to Congress in March of 2019 (the Congressional Budget Justification or CBJ). Final numbers and budget, including its distribution, are negotiated between the current Administration and the Hill in the ensuing months. Based on recent years, funding for FY20 from OMB could become available to USAID for obligation any

		time between March of 2021 and June of 2021. ASHA would like to have final 2020 awards negotiated and ready to sign between March and June of 2021.
	Q2: "Mission concurrence will be sought for all Apparently Successful Applicants to ensure the activity poses no reputational risk to the USG or presents insurmountable security risks." a. How is this determined? What are some examples?	ASHA sends a USAID standard form to make the request to the Mission overseas, which makes that determination. See ADS 201 for the full Mission Concurrence process. Mission concurrence may be denied for various reasons as outlined in the <u>ADS</u>. [link: https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201man]. Currently it takes 2 to 4 weeks to obtain Mission Concurrence from USAID Missions and/or US Embassies in non-presence countries. Mission concurrence is determined at the Mission Director and/or Ambassador level.
Organization 6	Q1: Can ASHA please clarify if the following two RFAs posted on Grants.gov are separate funding opportunities: 1. American Schools and Hospitals Abroad Program Worldwide (ASHA) Request for Application No. 72ASHA19RFA00001 for Fiscal Year 2019, issued on 7/22/2019 and Phase I due 10/1/2019 2. American Schools and Hospitals Abroad Program Worldwide (ASHA) Request for Application No. 72ASHA20RFA00001 for Fiscal Year 2020, issue on 12/05/2019 and due 02/14/2020.	FY19 and FY20 are separate funding opportunities. The deadline for FY19 applications has passed. The FY20 RFA that was posted had not at that time been issued; what was posted at the time was only for public comments or questions.

	Q2: For organizations that applied to Phase I of the Fiscal Year 2019 RFA, do they need to resubmit the same application for Phase I of the Fiscal Year 2020 RFA opportunity by 02/14/2020?	The FY19 RFA is not the same funding opportunity as FY20 RFA funding opportunity. An applicant may submit a new Phase one application for the FY20 RFA. All applicants will be advised of the status of their FY19 phase one applications PRIOR to the deadline for submitting FY20 phase one applications.
	Q3: For organizations that applied to Phase I of the Fiscal year 2019 RFA, can ASHA clarify when organizations will hear back if they are invited to Phase 2?	This question is not related to the FY20 RFA. FY19 Phase 1 applications are still under review. All applicants will be advised of the status of their FY19 phase one applications PRIOR to the deadline for submitting FY20 phase one.
	Q4: For organizations that applied to Phase I of the Fiscal year 2019 RFA, can ASHA share the expected turnaround time that invited organizations will have to submit the full application?	This question is not related to the FY20 RFA. FY19 Phase 1 applications are still under review. Please send an email to ashaapplications@usaid.gov or ashainfo@usaid.gov for an update on FY19 RFA information.
Organization 7	Q1: How does this new 2020 RFA impact the 2019 RFA?	The RFA for FY20 does not impact the RFA for FY19.
	Q2: When is the deadline for submissions for the 2020 RFA that was just announced?	The initial posting was to solicit Public Comments on the draft RFA FY20. ASHA has now issued the FY 20 RFA-- with updated deadlines-- to which organizations may apply.

Organization 8	Q1: Is there a template or guiding document with instructions regarding the critical elements of the application? Or a) Do we just answer the questions on the application form?	Please read and follow the guidelines in the RFA. Pay special attention to the review criteria as these, along with eligibility criteria, are used to make determinations. Please note that reviewers are not allowed to consider any information that is not included in the application.
	Q2: Is there a limit to the page count or word count for each section?	Please read and follow the guidelines in the RFA. These details are provided in the document.
	Q3: Can a non-profit partner with a department in an US based institution to provide assistance to an international institution?	ASHA cannot respond to questions related to applications or proposed projects. Please read the eligibility criteria.
	Q4: Are there any sample awarded applications in each phase online that you can direct me to view?	Applications are proprietary documents and cannot be shared. Furthermore, applicants sometimes provide sensitive information in their applications which could threaten individual and organizational safety. As such, ASHA adheres to a strict policy of confidentiality.
Organization 9	Q1: Must the applicant conduct a gender analysis specifically in response to this RFA proposal, or can the challenges (and proposed activities to address them) be duly “informed” by other recent or current gender analyses – conducted by the applicant and/or other sources – that have direct relevance to	Absolutely, they may be informed by many sources/assessments available. For the format and submission, please read the RFA for guidance.

	the proposed project? Should the applicant submit the gender analysis as an attachment or can it/ simply be cited or referred to in the “Management Approach”?	
	Q2: Can you please confirm that the SAM screenshot (Annex 5) is submitted in Phase 2 and not Phase 1?	SAM screenshot is only required in Phase 2. Please check that your SAM profile is up to date each year and that there are no issues as it can take months to resolve them and has resulted in the loss of funding opportunities in recent years.
Organization 14	Q1: Will ASHA be releasing a word version of Annex 1, or should applicants only fill out the PDF version released on grants.gov? I ask this as not all versions of operating systems can easily fill in/edit the PDF. Can the applicant copy the PDF format in to a word document?	ASHA will not be releasing a word version. It is mandatory to use those Annexes that have been made into PDF. USOs have access to Adobe Acrobat reader which is the basic and free software for completing the forms and other commonly used U.S. Government PDF forms.
Questions/Comments Specific to an Organization/Application		
Organization	Public Comment/Question	ASHA Response
Organization 7	Q1: Apart from an email confirming receipt of our submission we haven't received any further information. Do we now need to submit another proposal for the 2020 fiscal year?	That is a decision for your organization to make. FY19 Phase 1 applicants will receive notification of the status of their application prior to the due date for FY20 RFA Phase 1 applications.

	Q2: Is our submission for the 2019 fiscal year still being considered?	This question is not related to the FY20 RFA. FY19 Phase 1 applicants will receive notification of the status of their application prior to the due date for FY20 RFA Phase 1 applications.
Organization 10	Q1: We want to confirm with USAID that the Country of Mexico is an eligible country for proposal submission. (Organization 10 would participate as the "USO" as we are a US-based, NGO)	Currently applicants from USOs working with Mexican organizations (OSIs) can receive funding from ASHA. The ASHA Program is worldwide; however, mission concurrences and prevailing government policies ultimately determine where ASHA can program funding. In addition, please read the eligibility criteria carefully.
	Q2: The Lead Applicant, Organization 10, has a federally approved NICRA rate. We assume that NICRA is an allowable cost line item that may be included in the budget to AHSA. The RFP notes that "overhead costs" include staff time, travel costs, etc. and that these would not be allowable costs. We want to make sure that USAID makes a distinction between NICRA costs and Overhead costs.	ASHA does not fund NICRA or any overhead.
	Q3: We want to confirm that the Mexican subrecipient (our "OSI") will not have NICRA, but will have a NICRA proxy formula. May those NICRA costs (not overhead) be covered, in part, with AHSA resources?	ASHA does not fund NICRA or any overhead.

Organization 11	Q1: [Proposal idea submitted] Organization 11's simulators - hardware and software - will be made available for training for two (2) years or more. The ownership of simulation equipment - both hardware and software will be owned, maintained, and updated by Organization 11. The OSI and Organization 11 will have a 2-3 year commodity use/service delivery agreement. Would USAID/ ASHA consider this an acceptable framework for funding?	ASHA cannot respond to questions related to applications or proposed projects.
	Q2: Are the funds from USAID/ASHA, referenced above, available and eligible to qualify Organization 11 as a possible recipient of the grant award, under the "Centers of Excellence" category, for the three-step simulation-based, standardized program outlined above?	ASHA cannot respond to questions related to applications or proposed projects. Please read the eligibility criteria.
Organization 12	Q1: Our organization submitted a Phase 1 submission in response to RFA # 72ASHA19RFA00001 for FY19. We have not received a response. We assume we should resubmit our Phase 1 submission according to the updated guidance for 72ASHA20RFA00001 for FY 20 and use the revised Phase 1 template. Please confirm.	The FY20 RFA is a separate funding opportunity and does not "erase" the FY19 funding opportunity. ASHA typically issues funding opportunities every year. FY19 Phase 1 applicants will receive notification of the status of their application prior to the due date for FY20 RFA Phase 1 applications.
Organization 13	Q1: [Proposal Idea submitted] Could you please let me know if you believe this Center would be responsive to this RFA?	ASHA cannot respond to questions related to applications or proposed projects. Please read the eligibility

		criteria and submit a phase 1 application making the case for the Center of Excellence overseas. Please note that USOs receive no funding. The support provided by ASHA can only support USOs' existing relationship with overseas institutions that meet ASHA criteria as centers of excellence. You may review information on prior grantees on the ASHA website for more background on the types of organizations previously funded by ASHA.
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