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Subject: Niger Resilience and Agribusiness Master's Program (N-RAMP)
72068522APS00001 Addendum to the Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX) New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Annual Program Statement (APS) **No. 7200AA20APS00009**

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: 98.001, Foreign Assistance for Programs Overseas

Pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, the United States Government, as represented by the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), the [Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation \(DDI\)](#), and USAID/Niger is announcing the Niger Resilience and Agribusiness Masters Program (N-RAMP) Addendum to the Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX), a New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Annual Program Statement (APS), hereafter known as the HELIX APS.

Through this N-RAMP Addendum, USAID/Niger aims to engage locally based new and underutilized partners to expand and amplify the Agency's work through and with higher education. NPI seeks to support partner countries' progress to self-reliance, achieve sustainable and resilient results, and catalyze more effective partnering for impact. This Addendum disseminates information to prospective Applicants so they may develop and submit Concept Notes in response and ultimately to be considered for USAID funding. This Addendum describes and provides:

- The type of activities for which Concept Notes will be considered;
- Available funding, process and requirements for submitting Concept Notes and Full Applications;
- The Merit Review Criteria for evaluating Concept Notes; and
- Refers prospective Applicants to relevant documentation and resources.

USAID/Niger anticipates awarding one (1) assistance award, including grants or cooperative agreements, under this Addendum. Issuance of this Addendum does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of the U.S. Government to make an award, nor does it commit the United States Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a Concept Note or Application(s). The actual number of assistance awards, if any, is subject to the availability of funds, as well as the viability of eventual Full Applications received.

Based on the submitted Concept Note(s), USAID/Niger will determine whether to request a Full Application from an eligible organization(s). To be competitive under this Addendum to the HELIX APS, Concept Notes and Full Applications must be fully responsive to all directions under the APS except when specifically noted otherwise in this Addendum or in the request for full application.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the entire APS and Addendum Opportunity have been downloaded from www.grants.gov and USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the APS, please contact the grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

ROBERT ANTHONY TRIMBLE (affiliate)
Digitally signed by ROBERT ANTHONY TRIMBLE (affiliate)
Date: 2021.12.29 09:39:35 Z

Robert Trimble
Regional Agreement Officer
USAID /SENEGAL

Attachment A : Concept Note Template

Attachment B: Budget Template

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES

Niger Resilience and Agribusiness Masters Program (N-RAMP)
UNDER EXISTING

Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX)
Annual Program Statement

A New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Opportunity

No.: 7200AA20APS00009

PLEASE NOTE: This is an Addendum to an existing announcement. All interested organizations should carefully review both the N-RAMP Addendum AND the full APS announcement, which can be found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=326056>. Important information contained in the full worldwide announcement is not repeated in the N-RAMP Addendum.

This activity is authorized in accordance with Part 1 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended.

Through the **Niger Resilience and Agribusiness Masters Program (N-RAMP)**

No.: 72068522APS00001 Addendum to the Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX) Annual Program Statement (APS) New Partnerships Initiative No.: 7200AA20APS00009, the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation, Center for Education (DDI/EDU) and USAID/Niger seek to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of Nigerien public universities to design and deliver academic coursework leading to a Masters Degree in Agribusiness.

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID/Niger anticipates supporting one (1) award of up to **\$6.9 million** over the life of the award. USAID reserves the right to award more or fewer awards than this estimate and is not obligated to make any awards.

Unless otherwise stated herein, all terms and conditions of the HELIX APS apply (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=326056>).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APS	Annual Program Statement
CLA	Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting
FSA	Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
FtF	Feed the Future
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
GON	Government of Niger
HC3N	High Commission for a Presidential Initiative, Nigeriens feed Nigeriens
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HELIX	Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
OPVN Niger)	L'Office des Produits Vivriers du Niger (Office of Agricultural Products of Niger)
PSEF	Education and Training Sector Program
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
PTSEF	2020-2022 Education-Training Sector Transition Plan
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RESEN	Report of State of the Nigerien Education System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UAM	Abdou Moumouni University
USG	United States Government
UTA	University of Tahoua
WFP	World Food Program

SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is issuing this Addendum pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. Any potential resulting award(s) will be subject to 2 CFR 700 and 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards and USAID's Standard Provisions for U.S and Non-U.S Based organizations per ADS 303.

A. Background

Higher Education At USAID

USAID's work in higher education engages the capacity and expertise of higher education institutions as central actors in driving and sustaining local development. In our partner countries, higher education, depending on the project or activity, can be viewed as a target for capacity development support, a stakeholder in local systems, and/or an implementing partner. To capture this vision for its Higher Education programming, USAID has developed a [Higher Education Program Framework](#) that depicts USAID's common, sector-inclusive understanding of a higher education system, commitment to key higher education outcomes, and ways of engaging with higher education to achieve these outcomes.

Higher education investments at USAID stretch across nearly every technical Operating Unit and in every region where USAID works¹—from investments that improve rule of law degree programs to support democratic governance, to agricultural research partnerships that are increasing food security, to education activities that work with local post-secondary technical and vocational schools to develop workforce skills, to health investments that are strengthening the global health workforce to prevent and respond to pandemic disease. By developing relevant education and training, harnessing research and innovation, and increasing community engagement, faculty and students contribute to cross-sectoral development outcomes.

Please refer to the HELIX APS for more complete background information on USAID's higher education work broadly.

Niger Context

Niger consistently ranks at the bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index. The country has experienced decades of chronic political instability and is considered a fragile state. It is marked by regular poor harvests and food insecurity which, combined with deeply rooted chronic poverty, corrupt governance, high population growth rates, and recurrent climate shocks, drive vulnerable communities into frequent crises. Growing instability in parts of the country adds additional uncertainty. Lack of access to adequate government services, including health and education, exacerbates this chronic vulnerability.

¹ For more information reference the [USAID Higher Education Landscape Analysis 2014-2018](#)

In Niger, chronic food insecurity and infectious diseases have resulted in some of the highest rates of malnutrition and mortality in the world. According to 2018 data, 15.0 percent of children are acutely malnourished in Niger and stunting, which has consequences for a child's survival and cognitive development as well as economic development of the country, affects 47.8 percent of children.²

Malaria accounts for 28 percent of all illnesses and 50 percent of all recorded deaths.³ In addition, Niger has the highest fertility rate in the world, estimated to be 6.91 children/woman. Left unchecked, Niger's rapid population growth will further undermine the effective delivery of health services and weaken the resilience of the most vulnerable populations in the country.

Farmer strategies for managing risks linked to climatic change and other agro-ecological shocks include mixed and pastoral farming systems, the application of rudimentary (a) soil and water conservation, (b) restoration of degraded soils and (c) natural resources management techniques which show their limits in the face of recurrence of drought, sandstorms, water or wind erosion and accelerated degradation of cropland. In 2020, cereal production was estimated at 5,572,729 metric tons⁴ (up 5 percent compared to that of 2019 and down 2 percent compared to the 5-year average).⁵

Food market supply is below average due to the decrease in crop production in Nigeria (the sources of supply) and trade disruptions (currency/Naira value decreasing, insecurity, closure of borders linked to COVID-19 related restrictions measures). The food security situation is characterized by increasing staples demand due to depleting household cereals stocks; above average demand from Nigeria traders due to low crop production performance in bordering Nigeria; above average institutional demand due to depletion of last year stocks used for unanticipated humanitarian assistance (situations linked to COVID and its restriction measures in urban and rural centers and to exceptional floods).

Lack of water and poor drinking water quality contribute to malnutrition and disease and pose a limiting constraint to agricultural and livestock production. Unsustainable natural resource use, desertification, and high population growth exacerbate the poor water availability status of communities while also propelling degradation of agricultural and pastureland. This fuels natural resource-based conflicts, loss of livelihoods, and food insecurity.

² UNICEF, "[Niger: Nutrition](#)," Accessed 2021.

³ [U.S. President's Malaria Initiative](#), Accessed 2021.

⁴ Afrique Verte International, "[Point sur la situation alimentaire au Sahel \(PSA\) Bulletin mensuel d'information sur le prix des céréales: Niger - Mali - Burkina Faso Suivi de campagne n° 240](#)," (April 2021).

⁵ République du Niger, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Elevage Secrétariat Général, Rapport d'évaluation de la campagne agricole d'hivernage 2019 et Perspectives Alimentaires, 2019/2020."

Niger continues to be vulnerable to violence in neighboring Libya and the security threats posed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, as well as the Nigeria-based extremist group Boko Haram. Instability in neighboring Mali and northern Nigeria further complicates Niger's efforts to grow its economy, strengthen governance, and address human rights issues. In addition, Niger has experienced an increased number of direct, internal attacks, and has noted the growth of community-based armed groups and criminal networks in the last few years.

Education in Niger

According to UNESCO, school enrollment in Niger is 66 percent, the adult literacy rate is 35 percent, and school life expectancy (primary to tertiary education) is six years. Girls have a lower school enrollment rate (62 percent) than boys (71 percent). Gross enrollment rates (GER) in higher education have increased significantly over the past ten years, staying near 4 percent since 2018, but are still well below GER rates for Sub-Saharan Africa (9.48 percent)⁶ and higher education globally. The female higher education enrollment rate is 2.8 percent, compared to the male rate of 5.9 percent.⁷

The Government of Niger (GoN) is currently implementing its second ten-year education improvement plan, the 2014-2024 Education and Training Sector Program (PSEF)⁸. While the previous plan focused on primary education, the PSEF focuses on the entire Nigerien education sector, including higher education. The plan outlines a series of priorities, including:

- Improve the quality of basic education by introducing familial language instruction in early grades, bettering pedagogical supervision, and increasing the supply of teaching and learning materials.
- Continue recruiting of state-paid contract teachers and decrease reliance on civil service teachers. Establish a new recruitment and redeployment strategy to relocate teachers to rural areas.
- Develop incentive programs to increase girls' enrollment and retention.
- Implement a school construction program to adequately meet population pressures.
- Create an environment conducive to improving the relevance of higher education to create skilled human capital through various programs involving teacher development, strengthening scientific research, and expanding higher education offers.
- Implement a literacy and non-formal education program to reach those who have never attended school or have dropped out.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur de la Recherche et de l'Innovation) is the government ministry responsible for

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?locations=ZG>

⁷ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "[Niger](#)," Accessed 2021.

⁸ Global Partnership for Education, "[PSEF](#)" Accessed 2021.

determining the policies and direction of the higher education system in Niger.⁹ There are five universities in Niger: Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey (first and largest, founded in 1974), Islamic University of Niger in Say (opened in 1986), University of Zinder, University of Maradi, and University of Tahoua. In 2014, plans to create four additional universities in Agadez, Diffa, Dosso and Tillabéri were announced.¹⁰ Due to the new BA/BS - MA/MS - Ph.D. reform that was adopted for higher education in the early 2010s, students now have the option of obtaining professional Bachelor's and Master's degrees.¹¹

Despite rising enrollment in vocational training and higher education institutions, the state budget devoted to this sub-sector has been in decline since 2015.¹² These institutions also face the following challenges: insufficient infrastructure to serve a growing student population; increase in student-teacher ratios at most universities; lack of engagement with the private sector; lack of hands-on and project-based learning opportunities for students; focus on theoretical (not practical) training; abandonment of the systematic recruitment of staff; and insufficient investments in operational and research funding.¹³

Youth in Niger

With a population of 21.5 million, nearly 69 percent of the Nigerien population is under the age of 25, with a median age of 14.8 years. At the current rate, the population is expected to double every 18 years.¹⁴ Adolescents, especially girls, face major constraints to fulfilling their potential: 76 percent of girls are married before age 18; 36 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 have already given birth or are pregnant, and only 27 percent are literate, versus 50 percent of boys. Access to secondary education is low, with only 31 percent of girls and 42 percent of boys enrolled. Niger's Youth Development Index is 0.38 (144 out of 177 countries).¹⁵

Nearly 500,000 youth enter the workforce every year, yet over 1.5 million youth aged 13 to 19 are neither in school nor employed (including over 50,000 secondary school graduates). Nigerien youth prioritize socioeconomic growth and opportunity, but often lack network support, demand-driven, quality training and in some cases, literacy and numeracy skills.¹⁶ This rapid increase in the labor force, combined with a low supply of jobs, places high demand on public investment, mainly in health and education, and raises the issue of the role young people play in society. The Nigerien government has accelerated job creation and entrepreneurship under the Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES 2011-2015) to develop youth employment. Despite these

⁹ Chekaraou, I. and Goza, N.A., "[Niger: Trends and Futures](#)," 2015.

¹⁰ Agence Nigerienne de Presse, "[Création de quatre autres Universités publiques dans certaines régions du Niger](#)," 2014.

¹¹ Chekaraou, I. and Goza, N.A., "[Niger: Trends and Futures](#)," 2015.

¹² République du Niger, "[Plan de transition du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation \(2020-2022\)](#)"

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ UNICEF, "[Children in Niger](#)," Accessed 2021.

¹⁵ YouthPolicy.org, "[Niger Factsheets](#)," 2014.

¹⁶ USAID, "[Sahel Youth Analysis](#)," 2017.

programs, thousands of youth continue to face difficulties in integrating into the labor market and finding the means of subsistence.¹⁷

Niger's National Youth Policy was adopted in 2011.¹⁸ Youth are defined as between ages 15 to 35. The National Youth Council of Niger is an independent, non-partisan advisory body under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It undertakes capacity-building projects with its members in areas as diverse as conflict management, climate change advocacy, and anti-corruption. Youth are classified as among the most vulnerable groups since they face problems in health, education, sports, leisure, employment, socio-economic integration, and progressive loss of national cultural values. The Nigerien government acknowledges that young people represent an important human potential for the future of the country, however, it also recognizes the difficulties in empowering this group.¹⁹

Agriculture, Agribusiness, and Food Security in Niger

At the macroeconomic level, the Nigerien economy remains fairly exposed to numerous shocks. The country has recorded a real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of around 5 percent on average over the course of ten years, which constitutes good performance, although the year-by-year analysis shows a jagged evolution (+ 9.6 percent in 2008, -0.7 percent the following year, + 11.8 percent in 2012 but 5.3 percent the following year, etc.) reflecting a the exposure of the Nigerien economy to numerous shocks, both internal (insecurity, drought and floods, volatility of commodities, etc.) and external (conflicts in neighboring countries, price fluctuations on international markets, etc.). With an economy that remains relatively undiversified (in 2017, the GDP 42.3 percent consisted of the primary sector including agriculture and livestock, 16.9 percent for the secondary sector and 40.8 percent for the tertiary sector, most of which comes from trade foreign exchange and uranium and gold export earnings), the country will remain exposed to the vagaries of climate, regional and global change beyond its control, with adverse consequences on public finances.²⁰

Natural resource limitations or unfavorable geographic attributes can impede economic growth by limiting viable investment opportunities and making rapid economic growth more difficult to achieve. In Niger, these geographic limitations appear to be quite acute. While Niger is a landlocked state whose surface area includes vast portions of the Sahara Desert, the country does possess a number of natural advantages as well as disadvantages. Niger benefits from sizable exploitable mineral deposits and a relative abundance of agricultural and pastoral land. It has adequate, but costly renewable water resources, which is coupled with low, variable rainfall. Niger bears the costs of its lack of proximity to ports and, by extension, its poor access to

¹⁷ UNICEF, "[Étude participative sur les aspirations des jeunes et l'efficacité des politiques publiques en matière de jeunesse au Niger](#)," 2018.

¹⁸ USAID, "[Sahel Youth Analysis](#)," 2017.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Republique du Niger, "[Plan de transition du secteur de l'education et de la formation \(2020-2022\)](#)."

international markets. However, agricultural and mineral outputs are growing and contribute significantly to the country's GDP.

Food products account for the largest share of Niger's GDP, with 34 percent of Niger's total imports for 2010, followed by petroleum products and capital goods. In total domestic food products, rice accounts for almost a quarter of imports (133,000 tonnes), cereals -corn, millet, sorghum - 18 percent (105,000 tonnes), major commodities - flour, sugar, oils - 33 percent (16 percent, 9 percent and 8 percent respectively) and 14 percent for manufactured goods (canned food, pasta, etc.). Livestock, meat, hides and skins, and onions are principal exports of the country's agriculture sector.

Niger's main agricultural value chains include rice, millet, sorghum, maize, onions, other vegetables (including tomatoes), moringa, sesame, cowpea, peanuts, souchet, and cotton. The year 2020 final overall results per crop are: 3,508,903 tonnes for millet, 2,132,235 tonnes for sorghum, 6,419 tonnes for maize, 5,673 tonnes for fonio and 27,949 tonnes for rainfed rice. To this rice production should be added the rain-fed production of the Hydro-Agricultural Development (AHA) which is 87,144 tonnes and 4,347 tonnes of wheat. As for cash crops, the country produced 2,629,772 tonnes of cowpeas, 593,669 tonnes of groundnuts, 88,189 tonnes of sesame, 46,240 tonnes of tiger nuts, 55,570 tonnes for voandzou, and 136,342 tonnes of Sorrel.

Niger was considered primarily during the colonial period as the livestock production capital of French West Africa. Despite all the programs and policies implemented in Niger since independence, it must be admitted that nowadays, certain indicators are in decline, in particular the consumption of animal products which is in constant decline. The growing demand for animal products (milk, meat, and eggs) now constitutes opportunities for Nigerien producers to increase their production. Indeed, with an annual growth estimated at 4 percent, the demand for animal products in West Africa is expected to increase by more than 270 percent by 2025.

Niamey, the capital city of Niger contains 40 percent of the country's urban population²¹ and is an important destination market for cross-border trade in local food and animal products. It also acts as the hub of food flows from neighboring countries, which are redirected according to the loss-making regions, its hinterland (north Tillabéry region) or to the east (Maradi and Zinder regions). Niamey is home to the largest number of importing wholesalers, domestic and foreign companies, national and international organisations (Staple foods Warehouses, L'Office des Produits Vivriers du Niger (OPVN); World Food Program (WFP)) involved in the supply of the population of Niamey, as well as Niger as a whole. The city of Niamey is therefore the main destination and disruptions of the load of goods imported by the various road corridors from the ports of Cotonou (Benin), Lomé (Togo), Tema (Ghana), and Abidjan (Ivory Coast).

²¹ Institut National de la Statistique, 2013.

Tahoua is the fourth largest town in Niger. The Tahoua region produces more than three quarters of national onion production. Onion producers enjoy a commercial advantage in local and sub-regional markets. Tahoua is an important commercial crossroads, with over 95 percent of domestic onion production being for export. Niger is the leading producer and exporter of onions in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region, outside of Nigeria. The Niger onion is mainly oriented towards neighboring and coastal countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Algeria, and Nigeria. Demands for dried onion as an ingredient for the food industry are increasing. Nestlé is contemplating moving to Niger to meet its needs for dried onions. The Faculty of Agricultural Sciences (FSA) of the University of Tahoua produces and sells improved onion and moringa seeds to local farmer organizations.

The GoN established a High Commission for a Presidential Initiative, Nigériens feed Nigériens, or HC3N, to coordinate national and donor development programming in food security and nutrition. The High Commissioner holds the rank of minister and reports directly to the President. HC3N is supported by a series of action plans to accelerate results, which prioritize improvements in water access, agricultural production, and resilience. Under the HC3N Initiative, access to water is the government of Niger's highest priority for food security as it is both the greatest constraint to macroeconomic growth and the most pressing daily concern of the rural population. The GoN's second priority for food security is reclamation of degraded lands.

Feed the Future in Niger

Under the U.S. Government's (USG) global hunger and food security initiative, Feed the Future (FtF),²² Niger was designated one of twelve Global Food Security Strategy²³ (GFSS) target countries. The GFSS Niger Country Plan,²⁴ a requirement for all target countries, has the goal to "Sustainably reduce global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty in Niger." The GFSS in Niger contributes to improving agricultural and livestock production and productivity, reducing malnutrition, increasing macroeconomic growth, managing annual and less frequent shocks and stresses, developing and strengthening the private sector, reinforcing government reforms, and countering violent extremism.

Agribusiness Higher Education in Niger

Niger does not have an active master's degree program in agribusiness, although some university faculties of agriculture have approved plans to develop them. Undergraduate degrees in agribusiness and related topics do exist at the following Nigerien HEIs:

- 1. University Abdou Moumouni of Niamey (UAM)**, formerly the University of Niamey, is located in the capital city of Niamey. UAM offers bachelor and masters degrees in the areas of natural sciences, agronomy, social sciences, medicine, economics, and law. The

²² U.S. Government, [Feed the Future](#), Accessed 2021.

²³ U.S. Government, "[Global Food Security Strategy, 2022-2026](#)," 2021.

²⁴ U.S. Government, "[Global Food Security Strategy \(GFSS\) Niger Country Plan](#)," 2018.

Faculty of Agronomy was established in 1974 as the "Ecole Supérieure d'Agronomie" (ESA); it became the Faculty of Agronomy (FA) in 1984. The Faculty of Agronomy offers the following fields of studies: Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Engineering, Agronomy, Animal Husbandry, Forestry, Sociology, and Social Sciences. The Faculty of Agronomy's mission is to train, develop and retrain professionals, design technicians, and executives working in the rural development sector and teachers and researchers in the agronomic disciplines.²⁵

Each year, UAM trains approximately 100 technicians on how to perform high-level technical functions in the agriculture, livestock, and agri-food industries, and on rural development. UAM operates on land with an estimated total area of 29.75 hectares for the practical work of students and the production of fodder for animals. These facilities, while underutilized, have potential to be further utilized for research, production, and other educational activities.

2. **University of Tahoua (UTA)** opened in 2011 with a two-fold mission focused on higher education and scientific research, and training and development of senior managers. UTA has seen growing enrollment rates recently, with 1,793 students in 2013-2014; 2,689 students in 2014-2015; 3,528 students in 2015-2016 and 4,209 students in 2016-2017, including 801 women, or 19 percent of the total enrollment. The Faculty of Agronomic Sciences (FSA), with 355 students, offers degrees in Land management and reclamation; Forest and fishery management; Management of pastoral resources; Agronomy; and Irrigation Management.
3. **University Boubakar Bâ of Tillabéri** opened at the start of the 2015-2016 academic year. The university has a Faculty of Agronomic Sciences and an Institute of Food and Nutrition Technology. Specific departments include the animal production and nutrition department, the agricultural socio-economy department, that of environmental sciences, that of internships and professional integration and finally, that of sustainable crop production²⁶. The university's research is focused on crop and animal production and the development of local agricultural, pastoral, and fishery resources to address the major challenges posed by food insecurity and poor nutrition. In June 2021, the university opened an agro-ecology laboratory, funded by SWISSAID, to improve the quality of student training.

An overwhelming imbalance exists between job requirements and the quality of training and education in Niger. Survey data found 40 percent of Niger's young jobseekers did not meet employers' needs as they were insufficiently qualified, with just 8 percent having received vocational training. For example, although demand for technology services is increasing worldwide,²⁷ Agriculture and artisanal trade dominate Niger's labor market, yet the scope of informal non-agricultural employment declined from 91 percent in 2005 to 73 percent in 2017.

²⁵ World Higher Education Database, "[Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey](#)," Accessed 2021.

²⁶ Agence Nigérienne de Presse, "[Tillabéri : Inauguration du laboratoire d'agro-écologie](#)", Accessed 2021.

²⁷ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, "[Labor Market Profile: Niger 2021022](#)," 2021.

This drop suggests the country is taking small steps towards job creation and access to financial services.²⁸

Impact of COVID-19 and Other Shocks

Since the virus first appeared in Niger in March 2020, infection rates have been low—as of June 2021, Niger has confirmed 194 deaths and about 5,500 COVID-19 cases. COVID-19 -positive results in Niger have averaged 4.5 percent.²⁹ Researchers hypothesize that low positivity rates are due to a combination of Niger's hot climate, young population, and quick response from authorities in March 2020. While Niger has largely escaped the virus' epidemiological impact, its economy has been devastated. The number of people in extreme poverty increased by 400,000 as a result of COVID19 restrictions in 2020.³⁰

Additionally, Niger was heavily affected by flooding in August/September 2020. As a result, the country is facing an unprecedented health, education, and economic crisis—one that threatens to reverse the development progress of recent years. The World Bank³¹ reports that real growth fell from 5.9 percent in 2019 to 0.8 percent in 2020, owing to the pandemic and increasingly violent terrorist attacks. Inflation stood at 3.4 percent in 2020, fueled by supply disruptions. Moving ahead, the reopening of the border with Nigeria, the resumption of major investment projects and the normalization of supply chains provide hope for an economic turnaround.³²

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19 and the 2020 floods, Niger was facing multiple recurrent and persistent shocks (e.g. drought, insecurity, massive population displacement, etc.), significantly affecting agricultural and pastoral production, and increasing the levels of food insecurity and malnutrition.³³ After the confirmation of COVID-19 in the country, the Nigerien Government put in place a series of restrictive measures for public safety. Although many of the restrictions have been lifted, citizens are still feeling the aftereffects of the shutdowns. For example, there have been significant disruptions to markets, food chain supplies and trade, which has led to issues securing access to sufficient and diverse sources of food.³⁴

In rural areas of Niger, the challenges linked to disruptions in the food supply chain impact food availability and access, especially for the most marginalized like rural youth, women, and individuals with disabilities. Farmers are experiencing difficulties in procuring agricultural inputs, as well as transportation limitations. The effects of movement restrictions have also

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Faucon, Benoit., "[Niger Is the Land That Covid-19 Forgot](#)," Wall Street Journal (July 2021).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The World Bank, "[The World Bank in Niger](#)," Accessed 2021.

³² International Monetary Fund, "[Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa](#)," October 2020.

³³ African Development Bank Group, "[In Niger, a rare scene in the pandemic: Covid-19 wards remain empty, agriculture and business benefit from support programs](#)," May 2021.

³⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "[Niger: Impact of Covid-19 on Food Security](#)," December 2020.

prevented households from engaging in daily wage labor thereby reducing their access to income and increasing the adoption of negative coping mechanisms, such as the consumption of seeds. As a result, 2.7 million Nigeriens are facing acute food insecurity at crisis levels because of the pandemic.³⁵

In conflict affected regions of Niger, necessary movement restrictions and border closures linked to COVID-19 have also hampered livestock mobility. This directly impacts agro-pastoral livelihoods and the livestock feed value chain with severe fodder production deficits. Therefore, many pastoral households don't have enough feed for their livestock, which in turn has reduced production and trading activities.³⁶

New Partnerships Initiative

The New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) will allow USAID to work with a more diverse range of partners, strengthen existing partner relationships, and provide more entry points for organizations to work with the Agency. The principles behind NPI are outlined in the Agency's first-ever Acquisition and Assistance (A&A) Strategy. Under NPI, there are multiple modalities for new and underutilized partners to do business with USAID. Under NPI, the N-RAMP activity will focus on new or underutilized partners, specifically higher education institutions.

B. Purpose

As millions of young Nigeriens enter the workforce, the future success of Niger will depend on the government's capacity to offer quality and relevant education and training that is accessible and inclusive to all. Furthermore, the success of Nigerien businesses will depend on finding a supply of skilled people for all economic sectors, including startups, local private businesses, and multinational corporations. With this in mind, the purpose of the Niger Resilience and Agribusiness Masters Program (N-RAMP) is to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of Nigerien public universities to design and deliver academic coursework leading to a Masters Degree in Agribusiness.

The N-RAMP activity will strengthen Faculties of Agriculture and Faculties of Management to improve the quality of the student experience by improving the quality of undergraduate coursework, developing new graduate-level coursework, providing instructional staff with professional development in both content and pedagogy, increasing the quality of university agriculture research, improving university-community linkages, and increasing women's and other marginalized populations access to graduate degree programs. While focusing on agribusiness, it is the intent that N-RAMP will improve the quality of partner HEIs and the Nigerien higher education system as a whole.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "[Niger: Impact of Covid-19 on Food Security](#)," December 2020.

Applicants should propose activity objectives and interventions relevant to achieving the purpose and outcomes (see Programmatic and Geographic Focus sub-section) of N-RAMP.

C. Coordination and Complementarity

N-RAMP Concept Notes are encouraged to plan for collaboration with other USAID and USG activities, including but not limited to:

- Current awards managed by the USAID/Niger.
- Future awards managed by the USAID/Niger;
- Department of State programs such as Fulbright and other Fellowships; and
- Other Agency, USG, or donor awards, as appropriate.

The proposed activity is encouraged to coordinate with the following activities when applicable, enabling

USAID/Niger to move from an ad hoc programming approach to a more systems building focus via strategic partnerships:

- **Sahel Human Voice In Governance Activity (SHIGA):** The goal of SHIGA is to improve the effectiveness of civil society's engagement with government institutions, and ensure that these institutions are responsive to citizen needs. SHIGA has three objectives: Emphasize capacity building within Niger's civil society; improving GoN effectiveness, transparency, and accountability; and create and nurture constructive engagement spaces around policy reform.
- **Resilient Governance in Niger (RGN):** RGN strengthens the social contract between the state and citizens, and enhances individual, household, and community resilience in 19 communes across the country. RGN increases the capacity of communal governments to act as resilient hubs for inclusive local development, bringing together civil society (especially women, youth, and other excluded groups), the private sector, other tiers of government, donors, and stakeholders to support locally defined priorities.
- **Sahel Collaboration and Communication Activity (SCC):** Through continuous collaboration with USAID's partners, local and national governments, and community-level organizations, SCCA aims to strengthen collaboration for collective impact, improve learning and adaptive management, and increase awareness of USAID's contributions among key audiences.
- **Yalwa Markets and Nutrition:** The "Yalwa" activity strengthens the capacities of farmers, producer organizations, agribusinesses and rural households in the Maradi, Tillabéri and Zinder regions of Niger to meet the growing demand for affordable, safe and nutritious food.
- **Bridge Youth Connect:** The purpose of the Youth Connect activity is to facilitate access to strategic economic and social opportunities for vulnerable youth in Niger and Burkina Faso. The activity supports youth with agricultural, technical and soft-skills training, and improved access to career coaching to improve the educational attainment of out-of-school youth, increase their employability, and provide employment opportunities.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Niger Compact contributes to the GFSS by

investing a portion of its total \$437 million into access to water for agriculture and livestock. MCC is also programming \$45 million in alignment with the World Bank's Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project (PRAPS) and \$51.1 million in alignment with the World Bank's Climate Resilient Agriculture projects. MCC also engages on a variety of policy reform issues. For example, the compact is conditional on the implementation of reforms to the fertilizer sector.

The United States African Development Foundation (USADF), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Department of State also contribute to the GFSS in Niger. USADF works with small scale farmers and businesses by providing capacity building and financial support, USDA funds school feeding programs, engages on regional trade issues, and provides targeted technical assistance to the government and agricultural sector actors, and the Department of State promotes policy priorities and U.S. business investments and engagement.

D. Programmatic and Geographic Focus

Programmatic Focus

USAID/Niger anticipates that ultimately N-RAMP will contribute to USAID's Mission and objectives through successful achievement of one or more of the following outcomes and focal areas as leverage points in higher education programming:

- **Increase Capability, Contributions, and Quality of *Individuals*:** N-RAMP envisions multiple individuals to have improved capabilities and contributions as a result of the activity, with a primary focus on students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels to gain both technical knowledge and soft skills in agribusiness and related areas and faculty and other instructional staff to improve the quality of instruction and to provide practical learning experiences for students. Recognizing that multiple individuals play roles within the higher education system, it is also anticipated that N-RAMP will engage with HEI administrators and researchers, ministry and other regulatory officials, private sector representatives, and with local community members through its university-community linkages.
- **Enhance Sustainable and Self-Reliant *Institutions* of Higher Education:** While N-RAMP has identified initial local HEI partners, Applicants are encouraged to build local ownership and to foster partnership across Nigerien HEIs and other organizations. It is envisioned that while N-RAMP activities may focus on three initial partner HEIs and agribusiness degree offerings, the activity should serve as a model for improved performance of HEIs in Niger in order to improve the access, retention, and completion rates of higher education; improved curriculum and pedagogical approaches; create and implement gender-sensitive policies and practices; improve management, administrative, and financial structures; improve understanding of local labor market and private sector needs; and develop infrastructure for sponsored projects and research; among others.

Note: USAID recommends the use of a HEI organizational assessment such as HEICAT or OCA to set a baseline for performance improvement.

- **Strengthen Higher Education Systems to Ensure Long-lasting Impact:** N-RAMP seeks to strengthen the Nigerien higher education system utilizing agribusiness as an entry point. USAID/Niger recognizes that HE and related systems are complex and interrelated, therefore, N-RAMP outcomes on a systems-level should seek to strengthen actors including HEIs, relevant ministries (Higher Education and Research; National Education; Agriculture; Commerce, Industry, and Youth Entrepreneurship; HC3N; among others), the secondary school pipeline, private sector employers, regional trade authorities, chambers of commerce, relevant accreditation bodies, and other relevant actors necessary to ensure an enabling environment and system level change.

Note: USAID recommends the use of a Social Network Analysis or similar system map to direct this outcome.

- **Advance the Higher Education Evidence Base for Learning:** USAID/Niger expect N-RAMP to support advancing learning in support of the USAID Higher Education Learning Agenda, USAID Youth Workforce Development Learning Agenda, the RISE II Learning Agenda, and/or the Feed the Future Learning Agenda, as relevant to the approach proposed by Applicants, with a focus on how higher education programming can be improved to achieve results in Niger.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to include illustrative learning question(s) as part of Section II of the concept note template.

Geographic Focus

The N-RAMP intends to focus on three geographical areas, based on the locations of the partner Nigerien universities. For the universities in both Tahoua region and Tillaberi region, the geographic areas include the rural communities region-wide, and not just those communities immediately surrounding the cities of Taouha and Tillaberi. For Niamey, the partner university has a national focus, especially for research.

Guiding Principles

Proposed interventions under this activity should incorporate the following guiding principles:

Positive Youth Development (PYD)	Positive Youth Development (PYD) engages youth along with their families, communities and/or local and/or national governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems. The proposed activity will use the PYD framework to engage with Nigerien youth, especially university students, and in developing and implementing relevant interventions to achieve the activity's objectives and purpose.
Private Sector Engagement (PSE)	Private sector engagement enables USAID and partner countries to collaborate with the private sector to co-create and co-design market-based and enterprise-led development N-RAMP Addendum approaches. Such approaches leverage markets,

	investments, firm behavior, and technical expertise to drive valuable business and development results in a sustainable manner over the short, medium and long term. In the Nigerien context, the private sector includes both large, multinational and international corporations, as well as small and medium enterprises, including local producer groups, cooperatives, etc. Given the growing and vital role the private sector has in solving global development problems, private sector engagement is essential to Niger's economic growth. Engagement and partnerships with the private sector will help improve the effectiveness of interventions under this activity and ensure that degrees, non-degrees, short-courses, certification programs, internships, and on-the-job training will meet the workforce development needs of the private sector. The N-RAMP activity should increase university linkages with the private sector through strategic partnerships with industry and financial institutions to enable graduates to launch innovative agricultural enterprises or be employed in them.
Inclusion and Equity	For societies to thrive, marginalized and vulnerable groups (which in the Niger context includes women, youth, people from rural areas, persons with disabilities) need to have equal access to opportunities and resources, such as education and technology. This will further enable them to access economic opportunities, income, land, and markets to help them to fully participate as productive members of society. They must also have equal rights and opportunities as change makers, peace-builders, and leaders. The proposed activity should use the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework and Guidelines in designing and implementing interventions to ensure an inclusive learning environment can be applied to ensure learning for all.
Collaboration, Learning and Adapting (CLA)	Strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management are key to development effectiveness. CLA can ensure that programs are coordinated, grounded in a strong evidence base, and iteratively adapted to remain relevant throughout implementation. The systematic application of CLA approaches, grounded in a strong learning agenda, to drive implementation will improve the effectiveness of interventions and support the achievement of development outcomes. The proposed activity should incorporate rapid assessments, such as a labor market needs assessment, and other CLA approaches to inform the development and adjustment of interventions and program implementation. As part of the MEL/CLA approach in the concept note, the Applicant is encouraged to propose a 4-6-month refinement/inception phase to be incorporated into the year 1 work plan, including how CLA approaches will be applied to use this refinement period to conduct needed assessments. If invited to the RFA stage, this refinement/inception phase will be more fully developed in the full application.
Resilience	For USAID, resilience is the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner

	that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth³⁷. Resilience for N-RAMP should include strengthening the higher education system and partner higher education institutions to improve adaptive management practices to be responsive to shocks and stresses, both in Niger and the greater Sahel region, and to strengthen the capacity of individuals to adapt and innovate. While N-RAMP is specifically focused on improving agri-business education, it is anticipated that other related areas that build resilient higher education and agriculture systems, such as Climate Smart Agriculture, may be integrated into the proposed approach. In light of the current COVID-19 shock, resilience under N-RAMP also includes strengthening the ability for learners, HEIs, and local/national governments to better respond to and thrive in the face of fluctuating public health measures and secondary impacts from the current public health crisis.
Locally-Led Development and Community Engagement	Locally led development is the process in which local actors – encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities, and governments – set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality. In the case of N-RAMP, much of this focus will be on the local HEIs. USAID recognizes that local leadership and ownership are essential for fostering sustainable results across our development and humanitarian assistance work.³⁸ Community engagement fosters local ownership. Local ownership helps ensure the long-term sustainability of initiatives.

E. What is the Process?

USAID has outlined the process through which potential Applicants may apply under each potential Addendum of the HELIX APS in Section D of the APS and under Section D of this Addendum.

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Issuance of this N-RAMP Addendum does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor do those commit the U.S. Government to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of questions, comments, suggestions, Concept Notes, and/or Full Application. Applicants submit Concept Notes/Applications at their own risk, and all preparation and submission costs are at their own expense.

³⁷ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDResiliencePolicyGuidanceDocument.pdf>

³⁸ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/What_is_Locally_Led_Development_Fact_Sheet.pdf

A. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

USAID/Niger anticipates awarding **one (1) award of \$6.9 million** under this N-RAMP Addendum to the HELIX APS. The actual number of assistance awards, if any, under this Addendum is subject to the availability of funds and the interests and requirements of USAID/Niger, as well as the viability of eventual Applications received.

B. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Award

The anticipated period of performance for an award (or awards) made under the N-RAMP Addendum to the HELIX APS is five (5) years. The period of performance will depend on negotiations, co-creation/co design and other requirements.

C. Type of Instrument

Assistance Awards that result from this N-RAMP Addendum may take the form of a grant or cooperative agreement. The [Shock Responsive Programming and Adaptive Mechanisms](#) guide can help inform how to make an award that can be responsive to a context subject to recurrent crises or conflict.

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

USAID defines “Implementing Partners” as U.S. and non-U.S. non-governmental organizations that can design and implement assistance activities outside the United States. All Implementing Partners must be legally registered entities under applicable law and eligible under the relevant laws to receive funding from a foreign source. Individuals, unregistered, or informal organizations are not eligible to be Implementing Partners. NPI provides further details on eligibility, depending on the approach to partnership. Implementing Partners must also have a DUNS number and maintain current registration in SAM.gov to be eligible to receive United States Government (USG) funding.

Eligibility for the N-RAMP Addendum is restricted to a higher education institution as the primary Applicant (“Prime”) from anywhere in the world; however, Concept Notes must include partnerships between at least one U.S. Higher Education Institution (HEI) and at least one HEI from Niger. Concept notes must meet at least one of the NPI modalities listed in Section III of the HELIX APS. USAID/Niger encourages implementation arrangements that include multiple Nigerien HEI partners, as well as relevant private sector partners.

All eligible interested organizations are restricted to submitting only one Concept Note as the Prime Applicant. If more than one Concept Note is received with the same Prime Applicant, USAID will seek written clarification from the relevant entity regarding which Concept Note should be considered for review. If clarification is not resolved within five (5) business days, all Concept Notes submitted by the Applicant will be deemed ineligible.

Note: Please note that Applicants can serve as sub-awardees or supporting partners on multiple Concept Notes under an Addendum.

Please refer to the HELIX APS for additional information on eligibility requirements, including NPI requirements, for Addendum under the APS.

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Agency Point of Contact

For any questions regarding this N-RAMP addendum, contact Aminata Diallo at amdiallo@usaid.gov with a copy to Robert Trimble at rtrimble@usaid.gov. Questions must be submitted by **January 14, 2022, 5:00 Pm ,Dakar Local Time**.

The USAID/Niger will furnish promptly to all prospective Applicants, as an amendment to this Addendum, any information concerning this Addendum given to a particular prospective Applicant, if that information is necessary in submitting Applications, or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective Applicant.

If an award is made, the Agreement Officer (AO) will appoint an Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) at that time to provide technical and administrative oversight of the specific award during implementation.

B. Content and Format of Application Submission

Applicants are advised to refer to both the HELIX APS and the entirety of the N-RAMP Addendum in preparing Concept Notes. The application process for the N-RAMP Addendum includes the following sequential phases:

1. Concept Note(s) submission (See attachment A for Concept Note template);
2. Review of Concept Note(s) by USAID/Niger;
3. In-person and/or virtual co-creation discussions and/or workshop(s), collaboration and communication with selected Applicant(s), by invitation only; and
4. An invitation for submission of a Full Application

USAID/Niger will be responsible for the review of Concept Notes and Full Applications and management of any subsequent awards issued under this Addendum. Additional information about each phase of the application process is provided below

C. Application Process

Concept Note Submission

All concept notes must be prepared and submitted in English using the provided template (see Attachment A) on www.grants.gov. Respondents are asked to download the template from

grants.gov in Word format, provide their responses in that document, and email a PDF saved copy of the document to amdiallo@usaid.gov with the file name saved as: "Insert File Name." Concept notes must be five (5) pages or less, **single-spaced** with 12-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins on the electronic equivalent of 8.5 x 11-inch paper. Content above five pages will not be reviewed. Concept notes are due by **5:00 PM, GMT on February 14, 2022**.

Concept notes submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed.

After a concept note is received, USAID/Niger Country Office reserves the right to request supplementary information or pose clarifying questions to any applicant.

Requesting supplementary information or posing clarifying questions to one applicant does not obligate USAID to do so with all applicants, nor does it guarantee invitation to submit a full application. USAID will host a two-week Q&A period, where prospective applicants are invited to ask questions until **5:00 PM, GMT on January 14, 2022**. Questions regarding the USAID *N-RAMP* addendum should be directed to amdiallo@usaid.gov. One week after the closure of the Q&A submission period, USAID/Niger will post written responses on [grants.gov](https://www.usaid.gov/grants).

Concept Note Review

Concept notes will be reviewed based on the proposed approach, feasibility, and alignment with the above-referenced purpose of the USAID *N-RAMP* addendum. Additionally, concepts should be consistent with USAID legal and policy restrictions, including those set forth in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) and in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

All terms and conditions of (HELIX) New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Annual Program Statement (APS) No. **7200AA20APS00009** apply.

USAID/Niger Country Office anticipates notifying authors of concept notes within 60 days of submission if USAID/Niger wishes to engage in further discussions/co-creation, maintain the application in a pool for potential future engagement, or if USAID/Niger's Country Office will not pursue further collaboration under the USAID *N-RAMP* addendum based on the submitted concept note.

Co-Creation Process

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID/Niger's Country Office will invite a subset of the most highly qualified concept note applicants to engage in a round of co-creation with USAID prior to submission of full applications. The aim of the co-creation phase is to further define activity objectives, design interventions, align timelines, and finalize budgets.

Through discussions, both the applicant(s) and USAID may identify additional resources, partners, or strategies necessary to successfully implement the activity. This process may involve extensive discussions with USAID/Washington, USAID Mission staff, or other experts, within or outside of USAID. Co-creation may happen in-person or virtually, through video conference, and phone calls.

By applying to the USAID *N-RAMP* addendum, applicants give USAID/Niger's Country Office the right to share concept notes with appropriate external partners for the purposes of evaluation or co-creation. All parties privy to the contents of submitted concept notes, whether within or outside of USAID, will be required to keep contents in confidence. Additional information about the co-creation process can be found in the "Co-Creation, Collaboration, and Communication under HELIX APS" section of the umbrella HELIX APS and through USAID's Co-creation Toolkits.

Note: Communication with USAID/Niger Country Office during the concept note/co-creation phase should NOT be interpreted as a commitment to funding or guaranteed request for a full application. Any expenses incurred by applicants during this time are solely the responsibility of the applicants, unless otherwise stated in writing by USAID.

If USAID/Niger Country Office decides to continue with the proposed activities following the co-creation phase, USAID will request a full application from applicants, inclusive of all modifications, expansions, discussions, etc. resulting from the co-creation phase and will provide a full application template for completion.

Full Application

USAID/Niger Country Office will issue a request for full applications with complete instructions only to applicants that are invited to continue in the application process and only applications from those approved applicants will be accepted. In general, it is expected that full applications will expand upon their concept note and incorporate any discussions, ideas, plans, feedback or changes from USAID/Niger Country Office and other partners discussed during the co-creation phase.

Note: USAID/Niger Country Office's Request for Application (RFA) should not be interpreted as a commitment of funds.

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Review of Concept Notes and Full Application

Once a Concept Note has been submitted in response to an Addendum under the APS, USAID will conduct an initial review of the Concept Note using the criteria outlined in the Merit Review Criteria and Considerations section of the APS and this Addendum.

The purpose of the initial review and related communication is to determine whether USAID wishes to engage in further discussions regarding the proposed approach and activities. The initial review and communication will result in one of three outcomes:

- A decision to forego further consideration of the approach proposed in the Concept Note;
- A decision to provide the Applicant an opportunity to submit a revised Concept Note (this is very rare); OR

- An invitation to engage in more in-depth and specific co-creation discussions aimed at further developing the proposed approach and determining whether to request a Full Application.

B. Co-creation, Shared Responsibility, Collaboration, and Communication

Please see the HELIX APS for information on co-creation, shared responsibility, collaboration, and communication that applies to the N-RAMP Addendum.

C. Merit Review Criteria and Considerations

USAID/Niger will use the following merit review criteria to assess Concept Notes and Full Applications in response to the N-RAMP Addendum. Any Concept Note/Full Application submitted to this Addendum should propose an approach that satisfies these merit review criteria and exhibits the characteristics set forth below.

Concept Notes will be assessed according to the following merit review criteria on an adjectival system; *Very Good, Satisfactory, Marginal, and Unsatisfactory*. All criteria will be weighted equally. If invited to submit a full application, the RFA will include specific merit review criteria.

Criterion 1: Alignment with USAID and M/B/IO Strategic Objectives and Programming

Priorities: Extent to which the proposed partnerships, projects, or activities align with USAID policies and strategies, as relevant to the Addendum opportunity, including but not limited to: the Education Policy, Youth Policy, Policy Framework, Scientific Research Policy, and the Indigenous Peoples, Disability, and Gender and Women's Empowerment Policies; USAID Mission's Country Development Cooperation Strategy; other collaborating Bureau or Independent Office Mission(s) and strategic objectives; and partner country strategies, policies, and/or objectives.

Criterion 2: Quality and Capabilities of Strategic Partnership Approach and Collaboration

for Local Capacity Development of Individuals, Institutions, and/or Systems: Extent to which the proposed partnerships, projects, or activities describe a commitment to equitable collaboration and deep partnership between U.S. and host-country partners at every stage of the concept development, activity design, and implementation (including, but not limited to, sub-awards to local entities and/or locally established partners); propose appropriate, inclusive, equitable, and effective collaborations with local individuals, institutions, systems, including marginalized groups as defined by the [reference to ADS 201](#) Additional Help (ADS 201saj); and demonstrate partner commitment to proposed collaboration(s), including a brief synopsis of how each partner will engage within the partnership.

Criterion 3: Quality, Feasibility, and Sustainability of Proposed Solutions and Impact at

Individual, Institutional and/or System-Level: Extent to which the proposed technical solution(s) to achieving objectives/outcomes are technically sound, well-defined, and achievable; likelihood that proposed partnerships, projects, or activities will result in substantially enhanced capacity for individuals, institutions, and/or systems or build the evidence base for higher education and other related systems as relevant to the Addendum; and best practices for data,

evidence, and learning are integrated into the proposed approach, including, where possible, the generation of evidence to support adaptive implementation and Agency-wide learning.

NOTE: At a minimum, Concept Notes should include illustrative indicators used to track progress, quality, and impact (custom or standard F indicators as applicable), note any technical frameworks that should shape the approach to monitoring, evaluation, or learning, and include at least one illustrative learning priority. At the full application stage, additional guidance will be provided. The [Education Reporting Toolkit](#) may be a helpful resource.

Criterion 4: Equity and Inclusion: Extent to which proposed technical solution demonstrates a clear strategy/vision to create improved outcomes using an intersectional lens to prioritize equity, along the equity dimensions most relevant to the context, and extent to which a diversity of groups, especially marginalized and underrepresented populations³⁹, are actively invited to contribute and participate at every stage of the concept development, activity design, and implementation.

NOTE: At a minimum, Concept Note/Applications should demonstrate considerations for persons with disabilities who comprise at least 15 percent of any given population, gender equality and women's empowerment, and crisis or conflict-sensitivity⁴⁰. Illustrative indicators reporting on numbers of beneficiaries reached must report on sex disaggregates and should also include disaggregates to track inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented populations in all contexts. Specific indicators focused on equity and inclusion are encouraged.

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices

The USAID Agreement Officer (AO) is the only individual who may legally commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds. Applicants are prohibited from charging or incurring costs to the proposed award prior to receipt of either a fully executed award or a specific, written authorization from the AO. USAID will administer awards in accordance with Parts 700 and 200 of Title 2 of the CFR, and Standard Provisions for U.S./non-U.S. organizations.

B. Type of Award

USAID/Niger has a number of assistance award types to choose from when providing funds under this N-RAMP Addendum to successful Applicants. The type of award and terms and conditions included therein depends upon the type of recipient organization, programmatic factors, and other due-diligence matters (including responsibility determinations.)

³⁹ The USAID Education Policy identifies marginalized populations as girls, people affected by or emerging from armed conflict or humanitarian crises, people with disabilities, people in remote or rural areas (including those who lack access to safe water and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, and victims of trafficking.

⁴⁰ The USAID Education Policy defines conflict sensitivity as the ability of an organization to: 1) understand the context in which the organization operates; 2) understand the two-way interaction between its intervention and that context; and 3) act upon this understanding to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on conflict.

C. Additional Information on Award Administration

- ADS Chapter 201 Program Cycle Operational Policy:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/201.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 204 Environmental Procedures:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/204.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 205 Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/205.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 303 Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mab.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 303 Standard Provisions for U.S. organizations:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303maa.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 318 Intellectual Property Rights:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/318.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 579 USAID Development Data:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/579.pdf>
- Grant and Contract Process: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/grant-and-contract-process>
- USAID Graphic Standards Manual and Partner Co-branding Guide:
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/USAID_GSM_03_05_2019.pdf

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

1. Aminata Diallo, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist

USAID /Senegal
Regional Office of Acquisition and Assistance
C/O US Embassy Senegal, BP.49, Route des Almadies
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 879 40 00
Email: amdiallo@usaid.gov

2. Robert Trimble, Contracting and Agreement Officer

USAID/ Senegal
Regional Office of Acquisition and Assistance
C/O US Embassy Senegal, BP.49, Route des Almadies
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 879 40 00
Email: rtrimble@usaid.gov

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the Concept Notes/Full Applications submitted under this addendum to the HELIX APS.

[END OF APS No: 72068522APS00001]

ATTACHMENT A: Concept Note Template

Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX) Annual Program Statement (APS) Concept Note Template (Required Format)

The main body of the Concept Note (sections II and III) must not exceed 5 pages (+1 page cover page + a 1-page notional budget template) and must use 12pt Times New Roman font, single spaced with 1 inch margins.⁴¹ Ten-point (10pt) font can be used for incorporated figures, tables, and legends, where necessary. The Concept Note and supporting documentation must use the format described below and be written in English. If possible, all materials, including the notional budget, should be sent as a single PDF document. If this is not possible, MS Word format will be accepted. **The Concept Note must be submitted to amdiallo@usaid.gov by no later than 17:00 Pm ,Dakar Local Time on February 14,2022** The email subject line should follow this naming scheme identified in the Addendum instructions.

SECTION I - COVER PAGE INFORMATION

- A. Title of Concept Note:**
- B. Applicant Contact Name:**
- C. Phone number and email address of contact:**
- D. Lead Institution:**
- E. Lead Institution DUNS Number⁴² (if known):**
- F. Other Partner(s):**
- G. Sub-award Organization Name(s):**
- H. Sub-award Organization DUNS Number(s):**
- I. Proposed Period of Performance (Estimated Start Month/Year and Estimated End Month/Year):**
- J. Proposed Project Budget:**
- K. Overall Concept Objective (1-2 sentences):**
- L. Type of Organization (e.g., U.S., non-U.S., multilateral, private, for-profit, non-profit etc.):**

New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Modality Eligibility: Please see Section C of the APS for more information on eligibility criteria:

- ☐ (For Partners That Are Applying as “New” or “Underutilized” “US” or “Local” or “Locally Established) We certify that, in line with the criteria enumerated in Section C, Sub-Section A of the HELIX APS, our organization has not received more than \$25

⁴¹ Questions regarding this template can be directed to helix@usaid.gov

⁴² A DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization. The federal government uses the DUNS number to track how federal money is allocated. For more information, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

million cumulatively in direct or indirect funding from USAID over the last five (5) years.

- ☐ (For Partners That Are Applying for a Limited Mentorship Award) We certify that, in line with the criteria enumerated in Section C, Sub-Section A of the HELIX APS, our organization will use Modality 3a or Modality 3b to provide sub-awards to local or locally established partners or, if the Prime Applicant is a HEI, we will utilize Modality 5 for sub-awards to local, locally established, and/or new and underutilized U.S. HEIs.
- ☐ (For Partners That Are Applying as Leverage) We certify that, in line with the criteria enumerated in Section C, Sub-Section A of the HELIX APS, our organization can demonstrate a match in additional leveraged funds and/or in-kind contributions worth a minimum of 50 percent of the total value of the award we seek from USAID.

SECTION II – DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY (Section II may not exceed 5 pages)

A. Alignment with Strategic Objectives and Programming Priorities:

Describe how the proposed approach and activities are aligned with USAID and M/B/IO strategic objectives and programmatic priorities as identified in the APS and associated Addendum.

B. Description of Partnership and Partners

Describe the proposed partnership and how the core partner(s), including institutional strengths, capabilities, resources leveraged, alignment with individual or institutional priorities and mandates, and other appropriate context. Indicate institutional commitment and roles to the proposed activities and their intended outcomes. Describe how the proposed approach to partnership specifically fits the development problem(s) or challenge(s) to be addressed.

Describe the role of each partner in developing the Concept Note, including contribution to the following:

- Identification and development of proposed solutions to the problem(s);
- Identification of needs/priorities in improving local capacity of individuals, institutions and/or systems for the opportunity identified
- Identification and development of proposed implementation of the activities;
- Role in decision making regarding the proposed partnership.

Given that substantial collaboration is anticipated between partners at every stage of the proposed activity (including concept development, activity design, and implementation), briefly outline a plan for ensuring effective collaboration and communication between any proposed partners.

C. Description of the Development Problem or Challenge and Proposed Solution(s)

Clearly identify and describe the development problem or challenge to be addressed and provide a thorough description of:

- How the proposed approach and activities advances the evidence base for learning;
- A description of how the context will influence and shape the approach to an equitable partnership as well as the outputs, outcomes, results, and impact over the life of the proposal, an identification of the most salient risks to success, and

proposed actions to mitigate risk;

- The anticipated outputs, outcomes, results, and impact, noting whether these anticipated changes happen at the individual, institutional, and/or systemic level, and how they will be sustained beyond USAID funding;
- How the proposed partnerships, projects, and activities will substantially improve individual, institutional, and/or systemic performance for the opportunity identified within three to five years;

D. Equity and Inclusion

How the proposed approach and activities will ensure equity and inclusion along the dimensions most relevant to the context and at the appropriate levels.

E. Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Summary

Briefly describe (2-3 paragraphs) your CLA and MEL plans, including illustrative indicators, frameworks, and learning questions that will be tracked throughout program implementation and used to modify implementation, as needed. At the concept note stage, it is normal that both the page limitations of the Concept Note and the stage of the concept development limit how much an applicant can describe. However, applicants should strive to illustrate to USAID that they have discussed with partners where and when to gather robust data as part of their activity design and implementation, what uncertainties they anticipate, and how they will be prepared to learn and adapt during the implementation of the proposed activities. This allows the HELIX community to contribute to the global learning and policy dialogue on the role of higher education and research organizations in achieving development outcomes.

When preparing a CLA/MEL plan, the Applicant is highly encouraged to utilize the CLA and MEL principles described in the following USAID toolkits:

- [Monitoring](#)
- [Evaluation](#)
- [Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting](#)

CLA and [complexity-aware monitoring](#) approaches are particularly relevant in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

If invited to submit one, the Full Application will request a more comprehensive CLA/MEL plan, including all components outlined in Automated Directive Services 201 ([ADS 201](#)) section

201.3.4.10: A. Activity MEL Plan. Final indicators will be negotiated between the Apparently Successful Applicant and the requesting M/B/IO.

[Sections II of the Concept Note must not exceed five pages.]

SECTION III – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A. Proposed Estimated Cost and Cost Breakdown (1 page maximum)

Please use the budget template provided in [Attachment C](#) of the Helix APS and attachment B of the addendum.

If invited to submit one, the Full Application will request a more comprehensive budget.

B. Contact Information for Proposed Partners (2 page maximum)

Provide contact information for all the core partners in spreadsheet format. Include organization, point of contact name, title, email, and phone numbers, as well as a brief description of each prospective partner's previous work and experience.

C. Letters of Commitment

Applicants may provide a 1-page letter of commitment from each member of the pa