



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

To All Applicants:

From: USAID/Afghanistan
Acquisition and Assistance Office
Great Masoud Road
Kabul, Afghanistan

Date: February 18, 2013

Subject: Amendment No. 1 to RFA No. SOL -306-13-000019, Strengthening Political Entities and Civil Society (SPECS)

The purpose of this Amendment is to incorporate changes in the RFA and provide Questions and answers under the subject RFA. Accordingly, the changes are as follows:

1. Pg. 1 – cover page, DELETE closing date “February 23, 2013” and REPLACE it with “February 27, 2013”.
2. Pg. 4 – Section V.6 “Application Review”, under table of contents correct the numbering as follows:
 - C. Past Performance
 - D. Cost Evaluation Criteria
3. Pg. 19 – Section II .C. “Start Date and Period of Performance”, DELETE “The estimated start date from May 30, 2013” and REPLACE with “July 1, 2013”.
4. Pg. 28 – Section IV.E.4.F “Cost/Business Application Format”, DELETE item No.3 in its entirety.
5. Pg. 32 – Section V “Application Review Information”, INSERT the following paragraph at the end “Technical Approach is weighted more than the Management Approach and the Management Approach is weighted more than Past Performance”.
6. Pg. 33 – Section V “Application Review Information”, Alphabetical Re-number the followings:

C. Past Performance

The applicants past performance in conducting similar or related contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements over the past five years will be evaluated. Special attention will be paid to activities which took place in Afghanistan or involve other emerging democracies in conflict-prone regions.

D. Cost Evaluation Criteria

No points are assigned for cost evaluation; however, each applicant's cost application will be evaluated separately from the technical application. The Applicant should have a structure that will allow it to provide the greatest value (highest results) at the lowest cost; minimizing and/or eliminating overall administrative costs, overhead, subcontract/sub grant pass-through costs, international staff benefits, home office communications and support, and other non- value added costs. Each Applicant's cost application shall be evaluated based on the following criteria in comparison with the cost application of other Applicants:

- 1) Effectiveness of proposed cost control structure including budget transparency to effectively track expenditures
- 2) Reasonableness of proposed labor cost and structure
 - a. Expatriate salary structure and expense considering the Afghan First approach; and
 - b. Local salary structure and expense
- 3) Cost efficiency of proposed Other Direct Costs (ODCs)
 - a. Offers market competitive pricing estimates of tangible items to be used for Performance; and
 - b. Competitiveness of pricing and soundness purchase methods of international and in-country air travel and surface transportation.
- 4) Provides cost-sharing, matching arrangements, and value of in-kind contributions, if any is proposed.
- 5) Reasonableness of overall proposed price.
7. Pg. 33 – Section V “Application Review Information”, insert the following paragraph at the end “The applicant can submit up to five past performance references in the Past Performance Contact Information in Annex G”.

Incorporate the following Questions and Answers:

	Questions	Answers
1	Would it be possible to extend the application closing date?	The deadline for submitting applications is extended through February 27, 2013 (4:30 PM) Kabul time.
2	Are sections A, B, and C in the project narrative weighted equally for evaluation purposes, or, for example, is the Technical Approach weighted higher than the Management Approach and Past Performance?	Technical Approach is weighted more than the Management Approach and the Management Approach is weighted more than Past Performance.
3	Should the Implementation Plan/Timeline be included or discussed in the project narrative, or should it be attached as an annex to the technical application? Should the Implementation Plan/Timeline cover all three years of the project?	The draft Implementation Plan should be submitted as an annex. Please see Item No. E 4) h) on page 27.
4	Should the Level of Effort Chart be included in the project narrative, or as an annex to the technical application?	The Level of Effort Chart should be included in the project narrative.
5	The RFA estimates \$1,000,000 for direct grants under the project, and also describes a sub-grant component. Will both the funds for the sub-grant component and the \$1,000,000 for direct grants come out of the \$18 million USAID intends to provide for SPECS?	The \$1,000,000 is set aside for direct grants, and is included in the overall project budget. Applicants should present a plan as to how they will coordinate with the organization(s) that receive(s) direct grants. The prime may be asked to provide technical assistance to the grantee.
6	On page 28 of the RFA, item 2 states the "cost/business application should be for a period of up to 36 months using the budget format shown in the SF-424A" while item 3 states "the budget to be presented under the Cost/Business Application should relate to results while showing the inputs and a matrix is most suitable." Does USAID want the budget to be presented in two different formats?	The budget should be submitted in accordance with the SF-424A format.
7	On page 28 of the RFA, item 3 states to see item 10 below for a list of inputs that the budget should be presented in. Item 10 provides guidelines on the line items which require detailed budget notes/narrative and doesn't seem to have the list of inputs. Will a list of inputs be provided?	Item 3 is deleted
8	Can USAID please confirm that applicants do not have to include a branding strategy and marking plan as part of their applications, as	Branding strategy and marking plan will not be evaluated as part of this RFA.

	this, according to USAID regulations, would only be requested from the apparent successful applicant at a later stage in the competitive process?	
9	For the required annexes to be submitted by the applicant, can USAID please clarify the information to be provided in Annex E, the Mobilization Plan, versus that requested in the draft implementation plan?	The Applicants should present how it envisions mobilizing the project during the first 1-3 months of implementation.
10	In the instructions for the 20 page technical narrative, USAID identifies the information that applicants should provide as part of the management capacity and staffing section. This includes a staffing plan, organizational chart, and an implementation timeline. However, these same items are requested as annexes to the technical proposal that do not count towards the 20 page limit. Assuming that these documents are indeed part of the proposal annexes; can USAID please confirm what management and staffing information should be provided as part of the 20 page technical application?	Staffing plan, organizational chart, and implementation timeline are to be submitted in the annexes. However, USAID would like to see an overview of this staffing plan as part of the technical application, including a brief description of Key Personnel.
11	For the direct grants and sub-grants described on pages 12 and 13 of the RFA, can USAID confirm whether the direct grants are indeed part of the program budget that the successful applicant will manage and administer as part of the SPECS program? As the RFA references a separate APS or RFA to issue these grants, it is not clear if these grants would be managed by USAID directly. If they are, would applicants still have to set aside \$1,000,000 of project funds for their use?	Please refer response to question No. 5.
12	Can USAID please clarify the projected start date for the program? Section I suggests an approximate start date of July 2013, while Section II suggests May 30, 2013.	The anticipated start date is July 1, 2013.
13	Can USAID please confirm that hard copy submissions of the technical and cost applications are not required for this RFA?	Hard copy is not required.
	For Section V, Application Review Information, can USAID please provide the specific number of points that would be assigned to the various components of the technical, management, and past performance sections of the application?	Please see question No. 2.
14	In the estimated program duration chart on pages 13 and 14 of the RFA, the chart lists short-term international observation as an activity around the Presidential, Provincial Council, and Wolesi Jirga elections, although it	The Applicants should present the best approach taking into consideration the political and security dynamics in Afghanistan.

	is listed as an optional activity in at least one case. Please confirm whether USAID expects applications to include international observation activities. Given the estimated funding under the RFA for programs to strengthen political entities and civil society groups, and considering the financial outlay involved to enable basic support for international observation, it is unclear whether the RFA budget is intended to bear costs for international observation activities.	
15	On page 28 of the RFA, USAID requests a description of contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements that the Applicant has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past three years, limited to five pages. If the applicant is a consortium of organization, are these project references limited to five pages for the entire consortium or five pages per individual organization?	Five pages per individual organization.
16	On page 27, the RFA asks for an Implementation Plan as a part of the Management Capacity and Staffing section as well as a Draft Implementation Plan as an annex. What specifically are you looking for in the Draft Implementation Plan annex and how does that differ from the Implementation Plan in the body of the proposal?	USAID is looking for a full, draft implementation plan in the annex. The body of the proposal should include an overview of the draft implementation plan and reference the annex.
17	On page 27, the RFA asks for Past Performance References (on page 33 this is described as past performance conducting similar or related contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements over the past five years) as an annex to the Technical Application and on page 28, Cost Application No. 6, asks to include a description of contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs over the past three years. Would you prefer that an applicant's past performance references are located in the Technical Application, the Cost Application, or both? Would you prefer that the applicant provides information about relevant programs from the past three years or the past five years?	The past performance information should be included in the cost application. The information on past performance can be provided for up to five years.
18	How many past performance references would you like the applicant to submit in the Past Performance References Contact Information section?	Up to five past performance references.
19	Currently the RFA does not describe a location to show CVs of Key Personnel in the Technical	Please see Item No. E 4) j) on page 27.

	Application. Where would you like Key Personnel CVs to be located?	
20	For the Cost/Business application would you like the applicant to present the required certifications (annex 1) from its partners?	Both the prime and the sub applicant will have to sign and submit the certifications.
21	Is there a suggested/preferred staffing structure for the three regional offices?	USAID does not have a preferred staffing structure for the three regional offices.
22	What is the expected provincial coverage? All provinces within the selected regions? Is HQ supposed to cover the Central region? Does USAID have a criteria for regional subdivision?	USAID does not have criteria for regional subdivision. The applicants should present a plan that it feels is most appropriate given the security and political dynamics in Afghanistan.
23	Romania, is it an eligible applicant for the SPECS program?	This is a full and open competition and any organization can apply, other than the restricted countries.

All other terms and conditions of the RFA remain unchanged