

Questions and Answers for Breakthrough-RESEARCH

RFA-OAA-17-000001

January 31, 2017

*Please note that this is a Request for Applications that will result in one cooperative agreement. Therefore, all references to Request for Proposals have been changed to Request for Applications; all references to proposals have been changed to applications; and all references to offerors have been changed to applicants.

1. What types of international organizations are eligible to apply to Breakthrough RESEARCH? Are public international organizations eligible to apply to this RFA?

Public international organizations are not eligible to apply to this RFA; please see the revisions in Section C: Eligibility Information, which now state: “To be eligible for the CA under this RFA, applicants submitting as prime recipients must meet the requirements stated below. In order to be a Prime Applicant, the applicant must be:

1) Be a US or non-US based for-profit NGO, not-for-profit NGO, international organization (excluding Public International Organizations), or private voluntary organization, inclusive of universities.

AND have the following items #2-8:

2) Demonstrated capacity in SBC research and evaluation across a range of health and related areas in LMICs (this capacity can be achieved across the prime applicant and proposed partner organizations);

3) Demonstrated managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve the results outlined in this RFA, including financial systems;

4) Documented capacity to collaborate with a range of stakeholders to achieve the results outlined in this RFA;

5) Established financial management, monitoring and evaluation processes, internal control systems, and policies and procedures that comply with established U.S. Government standards, laws, and regulations; and

6) Propose to contribute cost share from their own, private, or local sources no less than 10 percent of the amount of funds obligated by USAID for the implementation of this project over the course of the agreement. Specifically, such funds may be mobilized from the recipient; other multilateral, bilateral, and foundation donors; host governments;

and local organizations, communities and private businesses that contribute financially and in-kind to the implementation of activities at the country level. Mobilization of funds from outside sources through cost share of project activities is highly encouraged.

Applications from organizations that do not meet the above eligibility criteria will not be reviewed and evaluated. Individuals are not eligible to apply for this RFA.”

2. Is it possible to serve as a subcontractor to one prime for ACTION and to another prime for RESEARCH?

Yes, it is possible for an organization to be a proposed subawardee on both Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH. As per both RFAs in Section A.1, “Post-award, when Breakthrough-RESEARCH receives a request to evaluate the work of Breakthrough-ACTION or another USAID project, the Recipient must determine if there are potential Conflicts of Interest (COI) due to partners/sub-awardees’ roles on each project. If potential conflicts of interest are identified, the Recipient must submit a plan to demonstrate how these potential conflicts shall be mitigated. The mitigation plan must: 1) describe the potential conflict of interest; 2) describe the impact these conflicts could have on the Breakthrough-RESEARCH (or other USAID) agreement performance; and 3) describe the procedures that the Recipient would put into place that would resolve the COI. **Any conflicts as identified above will be determined and the mitigation plan approved, or not approved, by the Breakthrough-RESEARCH AO and the other project’s AO/CO.**”

2. Is there an existing research agenda the contractor would be expected to work from, and if so can USAID share this?

There is not a single existing research agenda for Social and Behavior Change (SBC), within or beyond USAID. USAID expects that the successful applicant will support a range of stakeholders, including donors, implementers, and academic institutions, in developing one or more research agendas for SBC to inform investments across the life of Breakthrough RESEARCH and other projects.

3. Qualitative research methods can play an important role in building the SBC evidence base. The RFA seems to focus on quantitative methods. What role does USAID see for qualitative research under Breakthrough-RESEARCH?

USAID recognizes the importance of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in informing and evaluating SBC programming, and expects that both will be incorporated in the work of Breakthrough RESEARCH.

- 4. Will Breakthrough-RESEARCH have the ability to give input into Breakthrough-ACTION implementation design/rollout to facilitate study design (for example when doing an impact evaluation or to do a phased roll-out to understand the impact of component elements of a campaign on the overall impact)?**

USAID expects that Breakthrough ACTION and Breakthrough RESEARCH will collaborate closely across the life of both projects. In some cases, Breakthrough RESEARCH may have the opportunity to either provide input into the design of a Breakthrough ACTION intervention, or to design its research concurrently with intervention design, but USAID cannot guarantee that this will be the case.

- 5. In the Eligibility Criteria (page 37), USAID states that in order to be a Prime Applicant, the applicant must have items #3-8. This appears to exclude criteria 2) Demonstrated capacity in SBC research and evaluation across a range of health and related areas in LMICs. Can USAID please clarify a) whether the intention was to include that criteria; and b) whether it will be acceptable to demonstrate the full range of content and geographic capabilities across the consortium members, in lieu of the Prime bringing the full technical and geographic range?**

This is a typographical error; demonstrated capacity in SBC research and evaluation across a range of health and related areas in LMICs is a critical element of applicant eligibility. Page 37 should read: “AND have the following items #2-8”; please see the revisions in the RFA. USAID expects that the successful applicant will be a demonstrated leader in SBC research and evaluation; specific experience and capacity in different health areas or geographies may be achieved across a consortium of partners. The revised RFA now states: “2) Demonstrated capacity in SBC research and evaluation across a range of health and related areas in LMICs (this capacity can be achieved across the prime applicant and proposed partner organizations)....”

- 6. What is the scope of this application? Is this a regional project or local? Do applicants have to present a proposal at country level (only Dominican Republic) or regional level (Latin America)?**

Please see Section A: Program Description of the full RFA on grants.gov for the scope of this project. It is intended to provide assistance worldwide, so applications should focus on working globally.

- 7. Does this application involve sub awardees, subcontractors, consortium or stakeholders? If yes, what would be the amount that they should have for their budgets?**

It is up to each prime applicant to determine if they will involve sub-awardees, contractors, and/or a consortium in the application. There is not a set amount required, or

determined, for any proposed sub-awardees, contractors, and/or consortium members. Please see the full RFA for discussion around the importance of stakeholders in this project.

For the purposes of the technical and cost application for this RFA, partners should be grouped into three categories:

1. “Principal partners” which have an intended or proposed role across multiple buy-ins, whether core or field funded. Principal partners are those funded at 15% or more of the total project budget, which should be reflected in the cost narrative and budget. Past performance forms and signed letters of intent to collaborate are required for partners in this category.
2. “Project partners” which have an intended or proposed role across multiple buy-ins, whether core or field funded, who will be funded at a level less than 15% of the total project budget. Signed letters of intent to collaborate are required for partners in this category. Past performance forms are not required - and will not be accepted - for partners in this category.
3. “Resource partners,” likely country-level organizations, which may have a role in one specific field buy-in, and do not have a proposed budget in the application. Signed letters of intent to collaborate and past performance forms are NOT required for partners in this category.

For all principal and project partners that have a proposed budget, the prime applicant needs to provide a budget tab and narrative for each of these organizations in the cost application. All named partners with budgets in the cost application, including principal and project partners, will be considered sub-awardees, and may be approved at time of award if they meet all pre-award requirements AND have a budget tab and narrative included in the cost application.

8. Would the consortium be with local or regional partners? Do applicants have to present applications along with institutions outside of Dominican Republic?

Please see the responses to Questions #6 and Questions #7 above. The successful applicant must have the capacity - including both past experience and ability to conduct future research - in a wide range of countries.

9. As an applicant to this project, should we apply as a prime institution that will manage the funds presenting all the sub awardees or subcontractors related? Or should we present an application only as a prime institution and later we define the sub awardees institutions or subcontractors that will participate in the project?

It is up to each prime applicant to determine if they will involve partners in the application (please see the response to Question #7 above for categories of partners); if partners are proposed in the application, their elements of the technical application and budgets in the cost application (if applicable) will be evaluated and reviewed. For all principal and project partners that have a proposed budget, the prime applicant needs to provide a budget tab and narrative for each of these organizations in the cost application. All named partners with budgets in the cost application, including principal and project partners, will be considered sub-awardees, and may be approved at time of award if they meet all pre-award requirements AND have a budget tab and narrative included in the cost application.

10. Is it mandatory to submit an application in all the areas mentioned in the RFA (Family Planning, Malaria, other infectious diseases and maternal, neonatal and child health) or can the applicant develop an application in the areas that the applicant has deeper knowledge?

The successful applicant, either individually or in combination with its proposed partners, must possess broad experience in SBC research and evaluation that spans a range of health areas, including those described in the RFA.

11. How should the applicant present the budget? Should the applicant present a general budget that summarizes all the sub awardees budgets? Or a split budget per sub awardees and prime institution?

As per the revised RFA, Section D.7 Cost Application Instructions: “The budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents for the **prime applicant and each principal and project partner**, at a minimum:

1. ***Summary budget***, must be inclusive of all project costs (USAID-funded and cost share), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the applicant and each principal and project partner for the entire period of the project.
2. ***Detailed budget***, which is a detailed version of the Summary Budget. The detailed budget must reflect each estimated cost item, broken out. Detailed budget must include a breakdown by year, by budget category and budget line items for all federal funding (core and field support) and cost share for the entire implementation period of the project. Each cost must be specified. Unallowable costs and costs without a clear definition (such as “Miscellaneous”, “Other”, etc.) will not be accepted.

Please see the remainder of Section D.7 for additional information on the budget categories that must be in the detailed budgets for both the prime applicant, and each principal and project partner.

12. What should be the amount proposed per year?

It is up to the applicant to determine the necessary level of annual funding based on the proposed project in the application.

13. Does a Breakthrough RESEARCH application need to be linked in terms of processes and activities with the Breakthrough ACTION project? How do applicants connect the application of the Breakthrough RESEARCH Project with the Breakthrough ACTION project?

Applicants to Breakthrough RESEARCH and Breakthrough ACTION may coordinate their proposed strategies in developing their applications, but this is not required. USAID expects that applicants for both projects will consider how best to align their efforts with the other mechanism, but does not expect applicants to coordinate during proposal development. Successful applicants for the two projects will be expected to work together post-award to coordinate their efforts. Please see the full RFA, specifically Section A: Program Description, for description of potential linkages/modes of coordination between Breakthrough RESEARCH and Breakthrough ACTION. Post-award, the projects will be expected to have regular communication and coordination on joint activities.

14. In the Breakthrough RESEARCH project, should the applicant present only contain investigations and research activities, not service activities?

Breakthrough RESEARCH is designed to conduct research and evaluation for SBC programs; it will not implement SBC interventions. The only potential exception to this is around the design and testing of innovative or emergent practices in SBC, or implementation of operations research, which may be conducted through Breakthrough-RESEARCH should funding, partner capacity, and USAID interest allow.

15. What are the institutions or partners that are actually working with the SBC projects that we could link identified priorities in our investigation proposal?

USAID encourages interested applicants to review key documents produced by USAID and its central SBC implementing partners in recent years (see list of such projects and initiatives in Annex A to the Breakthrough RESEARCH RFA) to understand priority interventions and research needs as defined by the Agency. USAID cannot provide a list of organizations that are currently working on SBC projects, as they are numerous.

- 16. The RFA states that Breakthrough-RESEARCH will be authorized to accept funds from “Missions, Regional Offices, Regional Bureaus or USAID functional bureaus outside Global Health” (p.31). Could USAID please confirm whether the project will be able to accept funds from all USAID sources within Global Health, e.g. PEPFAR?**

Yes, the Breakthrough-RESEARCH project will be able to accept funds from all USAID sources within Global Health including PEPFAR, and also from operating units and elements other than Global Health.

- 17. For Breakthrough-RESEARCH, the RFA states that “a 10% cost share of the total obligated federal funds is required” (p.38). Could USAID please clarify whether this requirement should be changed to “10% of the total expenditures” rather than the obligated amount?**

USAID only intends to obligate funds in the amount needed for expenditures; therefore, the RFA is correct in stating that it is a “10% cost share of the total obligated federal funds.”

- 18. The scenarios described in the Breakthrough-RESEARCH RFA do not include much detail on the interventions that Breakthrough-RESEARCH would study. Could USAID please clarify whether applicants should describe methodological approaches that are generic enough to cover a broad range of prospective interventions, or should we identify specific methods we might apply depending on the actual intervention?**

Applicants should propose realistic and specific methods and studies based on their analysis of potential SBC interventions that may be applied to address the scenario.