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Office of Acquisition and Assistance

Issue Date of NOFO/RFA: January 20, 2023
Questions Deadline: February 03, 2023, 5:00 p.m. Ethiopia Time
Original Closing Date: March 10, 2023, 5:00 p.m. Ethiopia Time
Revised Closing Date: **March 17, 2023,** 5:00 p.m. Ethiopia Time
Issue Date Amendment No. 000001: February 15, 2023

Reference: NOFO/RFA 72066323RFA00004; Highlands Resilience Activity

SUBJECT: AMENDMENT NO. 000001

Dear Prospective applicants:

The United States Government ("USG"), represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development's ("USAID/ETHIOPIA") hereby amends the above-referenced NOFO.

The purpose of this amendment 01 is to purpose of this amendment is to:

1. Extend the closing date of the NOFO/RFA as follows:

   COVER LETTER

   Closing Date: Delete "March 10, 2023" and replace it with "March 17, 2023".

2. Provide formal responses to questions received from prospective applicants by the deadline. See Attachment No. 1 for the answers to questions submitted by prospective applicants.

Thank you for your interest and consideration of this USAID initiative. We look forward to your organization's continued participation.

Sincerely,

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Attachment No. 1 - Questions and Answers

1. Section A (pages 4 and 10) state that HRA will be implemented in five (5) regions of Ethiopia: Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Sidama.
   Section A.3 (page 12) states that "HRA should target PSNP woredas in two or more highlands Regions."
   Section B.1 (page 34) states that "USAID intends to award one to two Cooperative Agreement(s)," and the "total estimated amount will consist of $57 million in core activities and $3 million in crisis modifier activities."
   Section D.6, Cost Assumptions (page 50), includes cost guidance "solely for the purposes of the cost application", with "Core Activities: The total estimated not to exceed $57 million over five years; and B. Crisis Modifier: The total estimated ceiling of $3 million is provided to be evenly allocated over each program year, as appropriate."

   In order to ensure applicants submit proposals that can be equitably evaluated across applicants and geographic regions, can USAID please indicate which scenario applicants should submit cost applications for:
   a) one (1) award to be implemented across 2-5 regions with a total estimated cost of $57 million and crisis modifier of $3 million;
   b) two (2) awards in which applicants propose implementing 2-3 regions (and the remaining to be implemented by other applicants) with a total estimated cost of $28.5 million and crisis modifier of $1.5 million per award; or
   c) will propose an alternative scenario for awards?

   Response: HRA will operate in all five regions under either one or two awards. USAID expects to cover a subset of PSNP implementing woredas in the five regions through this award. Some applicants may want to cover a subset of the five regions prioritized. In this case, the applicant should at least cover two regions (with either the full caseload of beneficiaries and budget OR with a reduced number of beneficiaries and proportional budget). Proposals will be reviewed on merit basis considering management capacity and administrative budget requirements. USAID wants the applicants to propose according to their strengths and operational capacities.

2. In Section A.3 (pages 12-15), Expected Results for IR 1 include "at least $53 million mobilized in new loans to PSNP households for a first-round loan," while Expected Results for IR 2 do not include any results for loans. The same challenges related to access to capital that are prevalent to the conditions of IR 1 are true for IR 2. Can USAID clarify whether the Expected Result of "at least $53 million mobilized in new loans to PSNP households for a first-round loan" and the intent to create access for lending is applicable for IR 1 and IR 2?
   Response: Access to finance is a critical factor for HRA's success and is applicable to all IRs as appropriate. As a result, USAID expects applicants to propose and justify a strategy that will facilitate $53M in loans over five years for the targeted beneficiaries.

3. The Initial Environmental Examination, published in July 2022, included a preliminary list of lower level results, titled "sub-activities" under each IR, and necessary actions to consider under each "sub-activity" (not each IR). Section A.4 Environmental Analysis (page 24), states that "the activity should incorporate the recommended actions in the design process". However, the IEE sub-activities do not align with the Expected Results and Illustrative Indicators in the Request for Application. Using a results approach under each IR, we assume applicants should propose our own lower-level results to align with the Intermediate Results and Expected Results/Illustrative Indicators. Can USAID please confirm?

   Response: The expectation is for the applicants to include recommended environmental actions as appropriate, with the understanding that sound environmental management is a key component of sustainable development. It is the responsibility of the applicants to propose results and approaches that do not violate sound environmental management and that lead to the expected results described.

4. Section A.8 Key Personnel (page 31) states that the Chief of Party candidate must have "Demonstrated expertise and a minimum of 7 years of chief-of-party experience in managing large (preferably $15 million and above), livelihood, agricultural development and/or inclusive market systems programs with a market-orientation, preferably within an African context preferred."

   Section A.7 Local Ownership and Sustainability (page 31) also states "The HRA implementing partner/s are required to coordinate and collaborate with all relevant stakeholders at national and local levels in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the activity. Local stakeholders at woreda and kebele level will be key stakeholders during the planning and implementation and play a critical role to ensure the sustainability of the services beyond the life of the activity."

   In line with USAID's prioritization of locally-led development, and the Section A.7 Local Ownership and Sustainability emphasis on relationships with national and local stakeholders, can USAID please confirm applicants can propose Chief of Party candidates if the candidate has 7 or more years of USAID program leadership experience and robust relationships with national and local stakeholders in Ethiopia?
   Response: It is clearly stated in the RFA that the candidate CoP should have a minimum of seven years of experience as CoP managing projects, preferably within an African context.

5. Section B.5 Authorized Geographic Code (page 35) states that the geographic code for HRA is 935. However, the description on page 35, "the United States, the Recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source," is code 937. ADS Chapter 310 states that Code 935 is "any area or country including the cooperating country, but excluding foreign policy-restricted countries." Can USAID please confirm the authorized geographic code for HRA?

Response: As stated in the NOFO, the Geographic code for procurement of commodities and services under this activity is 935. As provided, please refer to ADS 310 for more information on authorized geographic code.

6. Section C.2 Cost Sharing or Matching states that a "cost-share agreement isn't a prerequisite to making this award," yet "USAID expects the recipient/recipients to propose at least 10% in cost share". Since cost share is not required, can USAID please remove the expected 10% and give flexibility to applicants to propose any cost share, or confirm that applicants must propose at least 10% cost share in their Business (Cost) Applications?
   Response: Cost share is not a prerequisite, however, as per section C.2 of the NOFO, USAID expects applicants proposing a cost share of at least 10% and if provided, will be reviewed for compliance. USAID will make the final determination.

7. On page 38, USAID notes that "a cost-share agreement isn't a prerequisite to making this award," however, "USAID expects the recipient/recipients to propose at least 10% in cost share". Can USAID please confirm if inclusion of Cost Share is required for this application and therefore going to be included in the scoring criteria?
   Response: Please see the response for question #6.

8. Can USAID clarify if cost share is 10% of $57 million or $60 million?
   Response: USAID expects the recipient/recipients to propose a cost share of at least 10% of the $60 million.

9. Can USAID please confirm that Times New Roman size 10 font can be used for text boxes?
   Response: Yes, 10-point font can be used for text boxes, graphs and charts only.

10. Section D.5 Technical Application Format (page 44) states that the applicant "shall present a convincing approach to achieve the expected results and it shall be specific, complete and presented concisely," and "as part of the approach, the applicant shall outline an Implementation Plan (Work Plan), which must include illustrative planned activities for the activity's first year, planned events, planned expenditures, proposed target areas and knowledge management plans." Can USAID please confirm that the Technical and Implementation Approach shall include illustrative activities for all five years of HRA's implementation, not just the first year, in order to present a specific, complete, and convincing approach to achieve the expected results?
    Response: Yes. illustrative activities/interventions for the entire five-year life of the project. The list may not be complete with targets as those may be defined later.

    Alternatively, should the Implementation Plan (Work Plan) as outlined on page 44 be included as Appendix 2 Timeline of Milestones as outlined on page 45?
    Response: Yes. The illustrative plans for the five years will be presented as an annex.

11. Section D.3 (page 40-41) states "The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Business (Cost) Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues."

    Section D.5, Technical and Implementation Approach (page 44) states "the Applicant shall outline an Implementation Plan (Work Plan), which must include…planned expenditures."

    Can USAID please confirm that the Implementation Plan (Work Plan) should not include planned expenditures as these are costs aspects, to only be included in the Business (Cost) Application?
    Response: The Implementation Plan to be included in the technical application must not include planned expenditures.

12. Section D.5 Management Approach, Staffing Plan and Key Personnel states "The Applicant must include a clear management plan for the proposed activity including key personnel, sub-award structure (if proposed), technical and administrative management oversight, strategic partnership coordination and oversight of design, development, key initiatives and capacity strengthening activities.

    Section D.5 Appendix 3 is titled "Management plan including organizational charts".

    a. Can USAID please confirm that the Management Plan narrative should be included in the Technical Application Body?
    Response: The management plan is part of the application (including brief key personnel background) but the organizational chart or structure, lists of other personnel required, and their CVs (for the key personnel proposed) should be presented as annexes.

    b. Can USAID please confirm that Appendix 3 should only include organizational charts?
    Response: The organizational chart or structure, lists of other personnel required, CVs (for the key personnel) and signed letters of consent of their availability should be included in the annex.

13. Section D.5 Management Approach, Staffing Plan and Key Personnel states "The Applicant must include a clear management plan for the proposed activity including key personnel, sub-award structure (if proposed), technical and administrative management oversight, strategic partnership coordination and oversight of design, development, key initiatives and capacity strengthening activities.

    Section D.5 Appendix 4 is titled "Staffing plan and key personnel candidates."

Can USAID please confirm that applicants should only include the Staffing Plan and proposed key personnel candidates in Appendix 4, and not discuss these in the Technical Application Body?
Response: Please see the response for Q #12.

14. Section D.5 Organizational Capacity and Experience states "a description of the applicant's technical and administrative experience and capabilities in the proposed activity must be included, no more than five projects/activities from within the past ten years." Can USAID please confirm that applicants can include information on the applicant's general administrative capacity (financial and staff management, etc) in this section in addition to the five projects/activities?
Response: It is assumed that the administrative capacity includes finance and staff management as well. It is the applicant's responsibility to include what is relevant for this application. The only limitation set here is the number of projects discussed/presented.

15. Section D.5 Organizational Capacity and Experience states "a description of the applicant's technical and administrative experience and capabilities in the proposed activity must be included, no more than five projects/activities from within the past ten years." Can USAID please confirm that applicants should only include a maximum of five projects/activities? Would USAID consider allowing applicants to submit more than five projects/activities as relevant experience for Highlands Resilience Activity?
Response: Please see the response to Question #14.

16. Section D.5 Appendix 5 (page 45) requires "Resumes for Key Personnel and any essential co-implementers for the proposed activity". Can USAID please define "essential co-implementer" for the Highlands Resilience Activity?
Response: Essential co-implementers are potential sub-partners or sub-grantees involved directly in the implementation of the HRA activity (e.g. Local NGOs) whose proposed costs exceed 20% of the proposed budget.

17. Section D.5 Appendix 8 (page 46) requires "Official letter from relevant federal and regional offices and from all proposed operational woredas offices confirming the support and cooperation with the implementing partner to operate in the region/woreda."

    a. Can USAID please confirm the relevant federal and regional offices from which Applicants should collect letters of support?

    Response: A support letter from woreda offices of Agriculture and letter from the regional bureau of agriculture are most relevant offices. A support letter from the federal Food Security Coordination Office of the MoA is required.

b. Letters from woredas Section A, Geographic Priority (page 10) states "USAID will make the final determination of the proposed operational woredas." Can USAID please confirm that letters of support from "all proposed operational woredas offices" are not required with the Technical Application, as USAID will make the final determination of the proposed operational woredas? In the spirit of Do No Harm, we are cautious of raising expectations for woredas who may not be selected in the final determination process.

Response: Letters of support from all proposed woredas offices are not required at the initial application submission stage. The Apparently Successful Applicant (ASA) will be required to submit letters of support from the woreda offices of agriculture, the regional bureaus of agriculture, and from the federal Ministry of Agriculture Food Security Coordination Office before implementation.

Alternatively, applicants may choose to provide letters of support with their initial application, but this is strictly at the discretion of the applicant. Submission of letters of support will not be evaluated under the merit review criteria.

18. Section D.5 Appendix 9 (page 46) requires past performance from the primary applicant and "any major partnering organization(s)". Can USAID please define "major partner organization" for the Highlands Resilience Activity, namely if there is a minimum budget allocation required to be considered a major partner?
    Response: A major partnering organization is one whose proposed cost exceeds 20% of the total amount.

19. Section E.2 Organizational Capacity and Experience states "This criterion will be evaluated on the organizational capability and experience of the Applicant and its major sub-recipients." Can USAID please define "major sub-recipient" for the Highlands Resilience Activity?
    Response: Major sub-recipients are those whose proposed cost exceeds 20% of the total proposed amount. Please see response to Q#18 above.

20. Section F.3 II. MEL Plan (page 59) states "The Recipient will have submitted a draft life-of-project MEL Plan with the application." Can USAID please confirm that the draft MEL Plan can be included as an Appendix (not included in the 25 page limit)?
    Response: The MEL plan text will be part of the application/proposal. But the detailed indicative MEL plan for the LoP could be annexed. Successful applicants will be asked to submit the detailed MEL plan together with the first-year detailed work plan.

21. Section A.5 Reporting Requirements (page 29) states "The Recipient shall submit a draft of the final report to the AOR within 90 days following the estimated completion date of the cooperative agreement."

Section F.V Final Performance Report (page 61) states "The final performance report will be due 90 calendar days after the period of the activity performance end date. The Recipient shall submit a draft of the final report to the AOR 45 days following the estimated completion date of the Activity."

Can USAID please clarify when the draft Final Performance Report is due to the AOR, and when the final Final Performance Report is due to the AOR?
Response: The draft final report will be submitted to the AOR 45 days after the formal completion of the activity (as stated). The AOR will review the report and provide comments to the IP. The IP will address the comments from the AOR and submit the final performance report 90 days from the formal completion of the activity.

22. The NOFO provides an overview of the Innovation Fund (page 25). In terms of budget, is there an expected amount for the innovation grant fund pool?
Response: No. The applicant is expected to estimate the innovation fund required based on the specific situation (e.g. stakeholders to be engaged) of their proposed operation woredas, types of interventions/cooperation required and anticipated engagements.

23. In the NOFO under IR1 (p. 13-14) and IR2 (p. 15), there are specific expected results (indicators and targets) shown. The other IRs (IR3 through IR7) include illustrative indicators or general guidance but no targets. Does the offeror have flexibility to propose alternative proposed targets for IR1 and IR2? Or does the offeror only have discretion to propose targets for IR3 through IR7?
Response: For IRs where targets are not set/identified, applicants are expected to propose realistic targets that will be subject to USAID's review.

24. The NOFO states "The PSNP5 design is determined to focus on youth and high potential areas for wage employment in nearby small and secondary cities (page 16)." Can USAID kindly provide its definition of "secondary cities" as it relates to Ethiopia and HRA?
Response: The wage employment pathway will not be implemented in all PSNP implementing woredas but in areas of high potential and closer to towns. The size of the town is not a sole determinative factor, but the job generation potential is crucial. USAID does not have a list of defined secondary cities in the evaluative criteria for HRA, nor does it have preconceived assumptions about which towns are most suitable. In the HRA context, secondary cities are zonal centers or towns with sufficient infrastructure, population and connectivity to support the HRA goals..

25. Can USAID please share existing tools (paper-based and/or digital) PSNP uses to determine and track graduation?
Response: PSNP-produced reports and documents are available for public reference. It is the responsibility of the applicant to locate these documents and/or consult with federal and

regional stakeholders and other development partners involved in the implementation of the PSNP as applicable.

26. The percent allocation of the budget of crisis modifier has been well stated in the NOFO, but similar clarity is lacking on the innovation fund. Please clarify what percentage of the budget should be allocated for the innovation fund. Additionally, please clarify who will manage the innovation fund?
    Response: The innovation fund should be appropriately sized to partner with a variety of stakeholders and market actors to co-invest in solutions that address market system constraints and catalyze new innovations that are applicable to the activity's objectives. It is believed that the applicants should be able to estimate the size of the innovation fund based on the specific context of their proposed operation areas and their approach to private sector engagement. Please refer the response for Q#22.

27. Does the $53M capital mobilization target only include household lending, or also capital raised for SMEs in the zones of influence? If the latter, please clarify if it only includes debt financing or if equity would also contribute to the target achievement?
    Response: The $53M refers to finance mobilized to address the credit needs of targeted households. Additional debt or equity financing for MSMEs is in addition to this expected result.

28. The challenge of graduation assessment/measurement is well noted in the NOFO. Please clarify which method of measurement should be indicated by HRA. Is HRA expected to contribute to the challenge of graduation measurement?
    Response: Graduation from the PSNP is led and determined by the government while implementing partners are supporting/facilitating the process. Generally, it falls within the mandate of the government to determine what method of graduation parameter should be applied (e.g. income benchmarks, the HEA method, GPS). Applicants are expected to discuss with relevant stakeholders and explore the current thinking/direction on graduation determination and possibly reflect the results of the discussion in the proposal (as this is an on-going discussion). The goal of HRA is to ensure that 120,000 households no longer need PSNP benefits to meet their household nutritional needs year-round. Applicants may propose their own measurement for accomplishing this goal. USAID does not expect the successful applicant to engage in changing the GoE's approach to graduation measurement.

29. We see that the graduation of clients is key for HRA's success, yet the level of support that clients will receive from HRA appears to be small due to the small budget of the activity (program and admin costs). The one time grant by PSNP ($300 /HH) for all beneficiaries will invest $36M. If HRA invests at least $100/HH for graduation to be successful, the total figure amounts to $12M. If we think of investment in conflict sensitivity (rehabilitation/livelihoods intervention), and capacity building (training, technology, skill building and market system development), the overall budget of the mechanism is too small

to reach the desired goal of graduation in view of the high cost of living index in Ethiopia over the past 2 years (even assuming very good access to credit from MFI and ensured investment of PSNP for 120K HH). The cost of graduation is high compared with challenges (e.g. shocks) which calls for more investment of HRA. Thus, we presume that **the total activity budget (USD 60 million) is not sufficient to achieve the goal of graduating 120,000 HHs.**
Response: HRA is not prioritizing making a grant (of $300) though the opportunity may be explored. The priority will be for the HRA to focus on provision of full package livelihoods support (as set in the PSNP5 big push strategy). HRA is expected to facilitate access to credit and market linkages for both inputs and outputs for the beneficiaries. HRA is also expected to facilitate other changes within the market system that make it more inclusive and create increased and diverse income generating opportunities for targeted households. With planned and proper implementation of these strategies, past experience informed that graduation from the PSNP would be possible (even with small investment).

30. Please confirm that the past performance must be submitted at the time of the application, even though it will not be scored and only reviewed for the top candidate.
Response: Offers should submit their past performance during the application. Additional information could be provided later as necessary.

31. Please confirm that the past performance is two pages maximum per consortium, not per organization; and whether it should include references for similar projects outside of Ethiopia or only those implemented in Ethiopia?
Response: Past performance should be summarized and included for all the consortium members (prime and the sub-partners). It may include performances in Ethiopia and in a similar context outside of Ethiopia as well.

32. Please clarify whether the draft life-of-project monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan (noted on page 59 as required) should be a separate annex. The MEL plan doesn't appear in the list of required annexes on pages 45-46, but some elements of the MEL plan (such as indicators, baselines and performance targets) are listed as being required elements of the applicant's proposed Results Framework. Please clarify whether the MEL plan should be included with the proposed Results Framework or whether the draft life-of-project MEL plan should be a completely separate annex (and if so, please indicate page limits and annex order).
Response: Please see response to Question #20.

33. Given the emphasis on ensuring that particularly women and youth's needs are weaved in and addressed through the various interventions and activities, is there room to have a gender and youth/social inclusion specialist within key personnel as an addition?
Response: The importance of gender and youth is critical. However, the already identified key personnel positions will have the responsibility to support the gender and youth

specialists and ensure the youth and gender aspects are fully addressed. The preference is to keep the number of key personnel as manageable as possible. It will also give some flexibility for the applicant in their staffing tasks. However, applicants may propose additional key personnel if deemed necessary and justified for the implementation of the activity. USAID will make the final determination based on the number of Key Personnel may not be more than five individuals or five percent of the employees working under the award, whichever is greater.

34. On page 9, the NOFO states: "An annual analysis on the progress of PSNP clients towards reaching the graduation threshold in selected HRA operation woredas would be undertaken in collaboration with the Household Economy Analysis (HEA)."
    Response: The HRA intends to get its beneficiaries to the graduation threshold level and progresses towards this goal should be assessed annually. It is believed that the HEA methodology provides a better tool to assess the status of beneficiaries towards the graduation goal. Successful applicants need to be familiar with this methodology and explore its application as necessary.

35. Does USAID expect the HRA implementation team to collaborate with a separate service provider which USAID identifies and resources to lead an HEA in all HRA targeted woredas, or does USAID expect the HRA implementation team to lead and resource the use of the HEA annually in target woredas?
    Response: The applicant should explore and be familiar as to how the HEA methodology would be applied to assess progress towards reaching the graduation threshold. This may be done internally unless the applicant believes engagement of an external partner/entity is necessary (using the HRA budget). The HEA methodology is publicly available for application.

36. Can USAID confirm if the HRA implementer will be expected to use HEA methodology for monitoring and evaluation of activities?
    Response: The HEA methodology helps to assess the thresholds level (livelihoods, subsistence) and assess the status of beneficiaries at a given time. It is not a regular monitoring and evaluation tool. But applicants may adapt some of the aspects of the HEA for their monitoring and evaluation purposes (if applicable). Refer to the response to Question #35.

37. Can USAID confirm if and when HEA baselines have been completed already for the five target regions, and whether those will be made available to the implementing partner?
    Response: The HEA baselines were completed some years back and are available for reference. USAID anticipates that HEA baselines will be available for reference during implementation of the activity.

38. On page 12, the NOFO states that "the topline goal of HRA is for 120,000 PNSP households to sustainably reach the PSNP graduation threshold." Would USAID allow applicants to propose alternative criteria to define the graduation threshold for targeted PSNP households, or must HRA follow the official PSNP V graduation criteria?
    Response: The HEA is for internal tracking of progress done by the IP/s annually. However, the result may not be accepted by the government to approve and declare graduation (even though beneficiaries have reached the threshold per the HEA assessment). For graduation to happen, the government recommended methodology (under the PSNPV) should still be used.

39. On page 12, the NOFO states, "HRA will implement the full package of the livelihoods component, unless the RFSA implementer or the GoE is already implementing the livelihoods interventions." However, IR1 (pages 12-13) indicates that "HRA will use market systems approaches to help targeted PSNP clients adopt a business and market orientation" and that HRA will be "connecting farmers to and developing…services via the private sector." Can USAID please confirm if HRA is expected to provide livelihoods support directly to PSNP households?
    Response: HRA is expected to provide the full package of the livelihoods support to its targeted beneficiaries as identified under the PSNP V livelihoods component (big push strategy). Concurrently, HRA is expected to use a market systems approach by partnering with strategic market actors that have the ability to foster a more inclusive market system that reaches PSNP households with inputs, goods, services, and sustainable market linkages.

40. On page 25, USAID references the Climate Smart Initiative (CSI). Could USAID clarify what this refers to and where to find additional information?
    Response: Ethiopia has a green economy strategy already developed and endorsed. There is also a project called Mainstreaming of Climate Smart Approaches in PSNP within the MoA, NRM directorate.

41. On page 44, the NOFO states that "the Applicant shall outline an Implementation Plan (Work Plan)" as part of Technical and Implementation Approach within the 25-page limit. Given the level of detail required, would USAID consider requiring this plan as an appendix?
    Response: The technical proposal should identify and propose interventions at least at the IR level. Indicative work plan/implementation plan could be submitted as annex. Please see the response for Question #20.

42. Can USAID please confirm that the "planned expenditures" referenced on page 44 as part of the Implementation Plan (Work Plan) should be included in the cost application and not in the technical application?
    Response: Please see the response for Q#11.

43. In Section D: Application and Submission Information, the NOFO requires a "Schedule of Milestones" as part of the Technical and Implementation Approach within the 25-page limit (page 44) as well as a "Timeline of milestones" in Appendix 2 (page 45). Given the life-of-program scope of this requirement, would USAID consider allowing applicants to include all required information on schedule and timeline of milestones in Appendix 2?
Response: Please see the response for #41

44. In the instructions for the Organizational Capacity and Experience section (page 45), the NOFO states: "If sub-awards with other organizations are proposed, to the extent possible, pertinent aspects such as technical roles, management relations, and level of effort of the organizations and individuals involved in the sub-award must be explicitly described." Can USAID please confirm that information on management relations and sub-award roles should be included in the Management Approach, Staffing Plan and Key Personnel section, and not in the Organizational Capacity and Experience section?
Response: Yes. The organizational capacity and experience refers to the past and the proposed management approach refers to implementation of the HRA (required here). Management relations and sub-award roles for HRA implementation should only be included in the Management Approach, Staffing Plan and Key Personnel section. The Organizational Capacity and Experience section should include an explanation of past sub-award relationships and roles, as relevant.

45. In Section D: Application and Submission Information, page 45, the NOFO requires that Appendix 1 include a "proposed results framework…with draft sub-intermediate results, indicators, baseline and performance targets." However, on page 59, the NOFO states that the "Recipient will have submitted a draft life-of-project MEL Plan with the application." Can USAID please confirm that applicants should not submit a draft MEL Plan with the application (in addition to Appendix 1)?
Response: Indicative MEL plan for the LoP will be submitted with the proposal as an annex. However, a MEL summary will be part of the technical application. Please refer to the answer to Question #20.

46. For Appendix 3, the NOFO requires a "Management plan including organizational charts" (page 45). Can USAID please clarify what information applicants should include in this appendix apart from organizational charts, if any, given that the technical application body includes a dedicated section for the management plan (the Management Approach, Staffing Plan, and Key Personnel section)?
Response: An organizational chart is the requirement (for the lead and the sub-partners as well) and must be annexed. Furthermore, description of positions (as indicated in the chart) and their responsibilities, signed letters of commitment and CVs for key personnel, and letters of commitment from consortium members should be included.

47. For Appendix 4, the NOFO requires a "Staffing Plan and key personnel candidates" (page 45). Can USAID please clarify what information applicants should include in this appendix, given that the technical application body includes a dedicated section for these components (the Management Approach, Staffing Plan, and Key Personnel section).
Response: Please refer to Question #46.

48. In the list of required appendices on page 46, the NOFO requires: "8) Official letter from relevant federal and regional offices and from all proposed operational woreda offices confirming the support and cooperation with the implementing partner to operate in the region/woreda." Given that USAID will confirm (or may change) the applicant's target woredas upon award, and to allow for adaptive prioritization of woredas during implementation, would USAID allow the applicant to submit official letters from relevant regional offices only?
Response: Please see response to question #17.

49. On page 12, the NOFO states: "HRA should target PSNP woredas in two or more highlands Regions…" Does USAID expect each applicant to apply in two or more regions or does USAID expect that HRA, in its entirety, supports PSNP woredas in two or more regions?
HRA will operate in all five regions under either one or two awards. USAID expects to cover a subset of selected PSNP implementing woredas in the five regions through this award. Some applicants may want to cover a subset of some of the five regions prioritized. In this case, the applicant should at least cover two regions (with either the full caseload of beneficiaries and budget OR with a reduced number of beneficiaries and proportional budget). Proposals will be reviewed on a merit basis considering management capacity and administrative budget requirements. USAID wants the applicants to propose according to their strengths and operational capacities, and may choose a combination of proposals rather than one proposal

50. If an applicant were to pursue a smaller portion of the award, are all of the qualifications for each Key Personnel required? Specifically, for the Chief of Party position, if all other requirements are met, may significant demonstrated ability, expertise and experience managing large livelihood, agricultural development and inclusive market systems programs in Ethiopia (including GRAD and other related activities) and East Africa be counted toward the 7 years minimum Chief of Party experience?
Response: All the key personnel positions are required to be identified and proposed regardless of the geographic coverage, # of beneficiary households or budget. The proposed CoP should have at least seven years of experience working as CoP (No equivalence!).

51. The applicant recognizes that a "Timeline of milestones from the beginning to the completion of the proposed activities, including all deliverables; monitoring, evaluation, and learning; and dissemination of reports and information" is included as a part of the required

annexes but a MEL Plan is not listed in this list of required documents for the application. Is an applicant expected to submit a full MEL Plan with the application?
Response: The summary MEL plan text should be presented in the technical proposal section but the illustrative M&E plan can be annexed. The successful applicant will be required to submit the final MEL plan as determined by USAID.

52. On page 42, the NOFO asks that we use "the estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application". Can you please confirm what the estimated start date of this award is?
Response: The estimated start date will be upon signature of the award or as determined by the Agreement Officer. Applicants can use an illustrative activity start date of August 1, 2023 for their cost application.

53. On page 46, the NOFO asks for past performance. Is the requirement for this section 2 pages per activity or 2 pages total?
Response: A 2-page summary of past performance for the main and sub-grantees should be included in the proposal. However, a maximum of two pages (of past performance) per project/activity could be presented as an annex for the main and the sub-grantees.

54. On page 44 , the Technical and Implementation Approach subsection mentions the inclusion of a draft Schedule of Milestones. Can USAID please confirm that draft Schedule of Milestones be included in Annex 2 and not as a part of the Technical Application body?
Response: It can be included in Annex 2.

55. On Page 23, the RFA provides a link to the USAID Youth Policy. This link goes to an archive page. Can USAID please provide an updated link?
Response: The document is uploaded in grants.gov as an attachment in pdf format.

56. The Implementation Plan (Work Plan) is part of the Technical and Implementation Approach (Page 44):
What are "planned events" and "planned expenditures"?
Response: Planned event means a scheduled operational activity including, but not limited to, MEL workshops, conferences, official visits…. Planned expenditures are corresponding budgeting/expenditures to conduct these events….

57. Do we need to provide a work plan for Year 1 as well as a Schedule of Milestones from beginning till completion of activity (Year 1-5) within the Technical and Implementation Approach? Or should the Schedule of Milestones be included as an Annex?
Response: Yes, it can be included as Annex.

58. Is there a page limit for the Work Plan within the 25 pages?

Response: Illustrative work plan is presented as an annex and will not have a page limit.

59. The NOFO refers to use of a Loan Guarantee Fund (LGF). Is there a recommendation that HRA implement an LGF or does this refer to a separate USG global LGF (Agricultural Development Credit Authority (DCA)?
Response: LGF refers to a strategy to engage mainly local financial services providers (MFIs and Cooperative Unions) to share their risks and encourage them to provide loans to beneficiaries. LGF is not a separate fund nor a DCA facility, but it is part of the HRA design. Previous livelihood activities funded by USAID (e.g. GRAD and L4R) applied the strategy to facilitate loan access. Please note that this is not a prescription, and the intention is to share lessons from the LGF application. Applicants are encouraged to explore and propose different relevant evidence-based strategies, if viable.

60. USAID notes on Page 15 that "This is especially positive given the evidence that women oftentimes retain influence in decisions about how to use self-generated cash." Can USAID please provide evidence for this assertion?
Response: Please refer to the many gender assessments made over the years in different parts of Ethiopia and triangulate the data/statement.

61. On Page 30, the RFA states "This (Crisis Modifier) provision can be activated as many times as USAID/Ethiopia determines is appropriate over the period of performance of the Cooperative Agreement. However, no additional activities will be required until the Recipient and USAID/Ethiopia jointly agree in writing to a revision or update to the Implementation Plan." Does this mean suspension of all development activities in the budget or just those in the geographic area(s) of CM activation and use?
Response: No. All planned interventions proceed as planned, if possible, even during the crisis. The Crisis Modifier is activated when a crisis happens, and the purpose is to protect the gains of the HRA. Activation of the CM (the 5% budget) will be done based on the triggers agreed by the IP and USAID. The 5% CM budget could be appropriated based on the type and number of responses/modifiers required. Successful crisis modifiers usually include responses included in the general scope of the activity's work plan. Proposed crisis modifiers that include interventions not in the work plan will require a revision or update approved by USAID.

62. On Page 14, what is the difference between the below expected results? Is the intention for a) to mean commercial sales of SMEs, or b) household sales?
    a. Value of $60 million in sales of producers and firms receiving USG assistance
    b. HRA clients increase the value of sales of on-farm commodities by at least $80 million.

Response: (a) refers to sales of firms/SMEs and private sector stakeholders benefiting from the HRA . (b) refers explicitly to the HRA beneficiaries/clients sales. On-farm implies crop and livestock.

63. Page 9 states "An annual analysis on the progress of PSNP clients towards reaching the graduation threshold in selected HRA operation woredas would be undertaken in collaboration with the Household Economy Analysis (HEA)." Is the applicant expected to conduct an annual HEA, or is this going to be conducted separately by an outside firm contracted by USAID?
    Response: Please refer #35 and #36. The applicant is expected to conduct the analysis (either internally or through contracting an outside firm as appropriate).

64. Page 27 states that "the Mission has invested significantly in generating baseline performance data on graduation interventions and related interventions, the draft MEL plan should be informed by these investments". Can USAID share the outputs of these investments in order to inform the MEL plan?
    Response: The Household Economy Analysis (HEA) provides information on setting graduation/livelihoods thresholds. And the HEA regional level baselines are publicly available. Shared as per request.

65. The NOFO does not indicate if MEL/CLA should be included in the technical approach/narrative – is it expected to only be in the appendix (MEL Plan)?
    Response: The summary MEL plan text and CLA approach should be included in the technical proposal. Illustrative MEL plan/details are annexed as stated.

66. Due to the slightly overlapping nature of some IR focus areas and outcomes, would USAID consider allowing a slightly reorganized set of indicators and targets per IR, as long as all indicators are covered?
    Response: Proposing/including customs indicators are possible. And slight reorganization of the indicators is allowed but it is not acceptable to change the targets.

67. The expected result for IR 2 says 2000 SMEs (page 15). Is USAID requiring for the result to exclude micro level SMEs?
    Response: SMEs are the prime targets. However, microenterprises can also be targeted under this result if the applicant is able to demonstrate that their inclusion would advance HRA outcomes more than targeting 2000 SMEs.

68. Would USAID consider providing Local Compensation Plan thresholds for national key personnel?
    Response: As stated in the NOFO, Salaries and Allowances – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. Also, must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and conforms to the established written policy of the non-Federal entity consistently applied to both Federal and non-Federal activities.

The Mission Local Compensation Plan is a sensitive document that cannot be shared. However, for budgetary purposes please see a summary for various categories of locally employed professionals, who are subject to the Local Compensation Plan (LCP). The figures noted are stated as gross annual pay and based on a 40-hour work weeks/80 hour pay periods, 2080 hours per year. The LCP is subject to the annual adjustments and the recipient is requested to seek/consult with the CO for updates if any.

Category of Employees	**Salary Range**
Driver/Attendants/runners	$ 2,770 - $ 9,600
Reproduction Clerk/Junior Clerk	$ 7,171 - $12,911
Junior Assistant	$ 8,847 - $22,964
Senior Assistant	$14,759 - $26,555
Accountant/Officer Manager	$19,728 - $43,420
Professional/Senior Professional	$29,075 - $52,355

69. Given the importance of Management/Staffing and Key Personnel in the scoring criteria, would USAID please clarify which KP qualifications are required because some of the terms used in NOFO are “can also be considered relevant”, “preferred” and “is an asset.” On which criteria will each KP role be scored?
    Response: The key personnel positions are identified and listed in the NOFO and the required qualifications are indicated. The “preferred” qualifications would receive the highest review but are not the only considerations (including relevance and additional assets).

70. How does USAID define “Level IV English” (COP/DCOP qualifications) and how would USAID like applicants to test it?
    Response: Fluent in reading, writing, speaking and listening English. There will be no test but the applicant must make sure that the level of English language skills should be clearly stated in the CVs.

71. Do text boxes need to be 12-point New Times Roman, or is it possible to reduce the font to 10-point New Times Roman or another font?
    Response: The text in the boxes could be size 10 New Times Roman.

72. The Annexes must include a Timeline of Milestones, how is this different from the Schedule of Milestones under the Technical Application?
    Response: The milestones in the technical application could be the major ones (given the page limit). Annexes provide flexibility to include all relevant milestones. The applicant has to determine what to include or not.

73. The NOFO requests Past Performance Information (not to exceed 2 pages). Could USAID please clarify if the 2-page limit is for combined past performance information for both the lead applicant and any major partnering organization(s).
Response: Yes. It is for the lead and partnering organizations (summary). However, project level past performance information could be presented in annex (2 pages per project) for the prime and the sub-grantees.

74. On page 46, the NOFO indicates that Appendix 9) Past Performance must not exceed two pages but must include "all contracts, grants and cooperative agreements which the organization, both the primary applicant as well as any major partnering organization(s) (if proposed), has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past ten years" with detailed information for each of those programs. In addition, the NOFO notes that the past performance information is not reviewed at the merit review stage. Given the level of detail the NOFO requires for each program and noting that applicants may have implemented several similar or related programs over the past ten years, can USAID please confirm what information must be included in Appendix 9 within the two-page limit?
Response: It is clearly stated in D.5.d. Appendices- item 9 what information to include under past performance information. Summary of major past performance information for the prime and sub-partners should be included in the technical proposal. All the details could come as annexes.

75. Section D.5 Appendix 9 (page 46) states that Past Performance is "not to exceed 2 pages" and must include "all contracts, grants and cooperative agreements which the organization, both the primary applicant as well as any major partnering organization(s) (if proposed), has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past ten years."

In order for applicants to provide sufficient information on all contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements over the past ten years, can USAID please confirm that each Past Performance reference is limited to two (2) pages, and Appendix 9 can exceed two pages total?
Response: Please see response to question #74

Alternatively, if USAID prefers Appendix 9 is two (2) pages total, can USAID please confirm that applicants can submit Appendix 9 in a table, in size 10 font, with a very brief (1-2 sentence) description of each activity in order to provide "all contracts, grants and cooperative agreements which the organization, both the primary applicant as well as any major partnering organization(s) (if proposed), has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past ten years"?
Response: Appendices have no page limit.

76. The NOFO includes references to "major partnering organizations" and "major sub-recipients" (pages 46 and 56). Can USAID please clarify how it defines major partnering organizations and major sub-recipients for this program?
    Response: Please see response to question #18.

77. Can USAID please clarify if the Cover Page, Table of Contents, and Acronyms List must comply with the format and font requirements included on page 42 (single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, left justification)?
    Response: Yes.

78. Can USAID please confirm if headers, footers, and footnotes are required to comply with the font requirements on page 42 (12 point Times New Roman font), or may they be a smaller font?
    Response: The main text should comply with the font size as directed. Headers might be in CAPS (but with the same font size). Footnotes could be in smaller fonts but not less than 10 in Times New Roman.

79. On Page 41, the NOFO states "the estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application." However, in Section B of the NOFO, it states "The estimated start date will be upon signature of the award or as determined by the Agreement Officer". Is there an illustrative activity start date that USAID would like applicants to use for their cost application?
    Response: The estimated start date will be upon signature of the award or as determined by the Agreement Officer. Applicants can use an illustrative activity start date of August 1, 2023 for their cost application.

80. Given the format of the summary budget template, can USAID please confirm they are expecting a detailed breakout of the $3 million crisis modifier reserved costs?
    Response: No detailed budget plan is required for the crisis modifier (as crises are unpredictable). This will be a separate line item to respond to the crisis when it happens; however, applicants are encouraged to explore crisis modifier interventions, anticipated types of disasters and responses, and potential locations of the interventions with estimated amount of budget for each and present in their applications. The detailed budget can be submitted when the crisis happens with the proposal for activating and implementing the crisis.

81. Given the Word format of the budget summary template, as well as the description of the Excel workbook to be submitted as part of the cost application, can USAID please confirm that they wish to see the information contained within the budget summary template in the Excel workbook, and not in a Word document?
    Response: Per Section D.6 the Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file and the Budget narrative in Word or PDF format.

82. If there will be more than one award, will the $3 million crisis modifier be split proportionately? Will each award budget 5% of the total award value for a crisis modifier?
    Response: In cases of two or more awards, the crisis modifier fund would be 5% of the total budget of the specific award.

83. According to Annex I, section II. SUMMARY BUDGET TEMPLATE FOR NOTIONAL BUDGET - [CRISES MODIFIER ACTIVITIES ONLY]", we are supposed to submit a separate detailed budget for the crisis modifier. Section B, on page 34 mentions including a crisis modifier "line item to respond to an emergency"; this would suggest a detailed budget rolled into one line item. Can USAID please confirm what is expected with the crisis modifier budget?
    Response: Please see response to question #80.

84. Can USAID please confirm that Annex 1: BUDGET FORMATS is a template and that the applicant does not have to include as a part of the cost application?
    Response: Per NOFO Section D.6 Business (Cost) Application Format, cost application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. For uniformity in information presented, Applicants are provided the Budget Template in Annex 1, however, applicants can adjust the format as long as the required information is provided.

85. On pages 25-26, USAID notes that the applicant will need to create a grant mechanism that provides innovation grants up to $50,000 to NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), research institutes, Universities, MFIs, Cooperatives and the private sector to carry out a wide range of activities. Can USAID please confirm that these grants are not subawards (and are therefore not subject to FFATA reporting)? Will grantees need to obtain UEIs?
    Response: The $50k is the maximum that a sub-grantee could receive. The innovation fund amount would be determined based on the necessity of the service and are subject to all appropriate USAID regulations and approval.

86. On page 42, USAID states that "the estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application," however, an estimated start date is not provided in Section B.3. Can USAID please provide an estimated start date to be used in the cost application?
    Response: Please see response to question #79.

[END OF AMENDMENT 000001, 72066323RFA00004]