Amendment 03 to RFA-OAA-12-000003
Agricultural Commercialization & Innovation Activity

The purpose of this amendment is to answer the questions submitted to USAID by the question submission deadline. Please note that we consolidated duplicate questions.

NOTE: The application deadline is hereby extended to Tuesday, March 20 at 4:00pm local time Washington, DC.

Technical Questions

1. As regards subject grant, please confirm that Kenya is still on your list of Feed the Future nations, and your application deadline is still 29 Feb 2012. Also, please confirm that subject grants are for 5 years, and indicate the maximum funding amount for each year.

   USAID Response: Kenya is a Feed the Future focus country. Please consult the feed the future website for a full list of focus countries. http://www.feedthefuture.gov/countries All countries that receive Feed the Future resources are eligible to utilize the AC&I activity through commercialization and partnership sub-agreements. The AC&I activity is a 5 year Activity, contingent on the availability of funding. Within AC&I there will be solicitations released for commercialization sub-awards and partnership sub-awards which will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria..

2. I recently attended the USAID Webinar, University Engagement that laid out the guidelines for funding new collaborative project on food security. In the Webinar we were told that the RFP would be released at the beginning of February and applications due on 2nd April. In the RFP released on 1st February, Agriculture Commercialization and Innovation Activity it says grants are due on 29th February. Is this the same as the University Engagement program and if so can you please let me and my colleagues know the correct submission date?

   USAID Response: AC&I is a separate activity to the one referred to in the above question. The submission date for the AC&I Activity is March 20h.

3. Does this solicitation also seek training/education as part of commercialization and technical support focus areas?

   USAID Response: Please see page 7 of the RFA; technical support may be necessary in some commercialization sub-awards.

4. Are you considering applicants who can streamline the financing, commercialization, marketing, and partnering process?

   USAID Response: USAID will review and consider all proposals that are received and will evaluate proposals based on the stated evaluation criteria in the RFA.

5. Some of the tools we provide can assist USAID in the facilitation and management of this program. Is that something that would be considered in this solicitation?

   USAID Response: Applicants are expected to use their relevant expertise and capacities to meet the objective laid out in the Program Description (Section I.C). Within the proposal, applicants should describe their approach to the program, specifically addressing how they will achieve their proposed results in relation to the Program Description.

6. USAID's examples of innovative agricultural technologies that have not been commercialized include: "nutrition-enhancing technologies that could have important health benefits for many poor people, …new methods of harvesting, handling and processing of staple, orphan and horticulture crops" (pp.2-3), "storage, …[and] technologies, goods or services (i.e., financial or insurance products)." (p.6) Is USAID's interest in commercialization under this program limited to inputs that increase smallholder productivity, such as seed, feed, fertilizer, machinery, and irrigation systems, or does it extend to include the other illustrative technologies, goods and services listed here?

   USAID Response: The Illustrative examples in the RFA are not all-inclusive of technologies that will be considered for commercialization sub-awards. Please see page 6 of the RFA; technologies that further Feed the Future goals and that are new technologies, goods or services with demonstrated bottom of the pyramid market potential will be eligible.

7. The Background section of the Program Description states (p.4) that "special consideration will be given to partnerships with women's organizations, or with organizations that have significant female participation," and then instructs the reader to "see evaluation criteria." To which evaluation criteria is this referring?

   USAID Response: This sentence is referring to gender considerations in the sub-awards of the AC&I activities under Components 2 and 3. The entire paragraph references the importance of gender issues in the Feed the Future Initiative. Applicants should refer to the technical application format for Program Strategy (D.3.3.1) and describe their approach to the program, specifically addressing how they will achieve their proposed results in relation to the Program Description.

   The evaluation criteria has been revised as follows under A.1.1 Technical Approach:

   Proposed Approach (20 points): The extent to which the proposed approach outlines all activities showing technical soundness, feasibility, ambitiousness, gender considerations, innovation, impact, efficiency, and sustainability, results orientation, measurement of results and strategic use of resources; how the expected results will be achieved and how constraints will be addressed.

8. The description of Component 1 (p.6) states that “only new technologies …that have demonstrated commercial potential in BOP markets will be eligible for support.” Other places in the document refer to “shelf-ready” technologies. Please clarify the definition of “new” technologies.

   Page 5, Clause A 3.2, “Key Assumptions”, it is noted that in assumption one technologies exist that are ready for market commercialization and should be shelf-ready, bottom-of-the-pyramid (BoP) technologies, yet A 3.3.1 references in several places an intention to work with international firms that are looking to establish new product lines. These statements seem to be contradictory.

   Please clarify the status of a technology that BFS/MPI is requiring as an Innovation Grant technology recipient. Of the 10 – 12 promising BoP technologies BFS/MPI is expecting, how many are existing technologies vs. new technologies?

   > USAID Response: Under the commercialization component, the term ‘new’ technologies is referring to technologies that have been developed, but have not yet been commercialized. This component is not intended to fund research and development of technologies. Please see page 6 of the RFA, “the purpose of this component is to identify and bring to scale ten to twelve promising “bottom of the pyramid” (BOP) agricultural technologies that are ready for commercialization.”

9. The description of Component 1 (p.6) opens, “this component will not fund institutional strengthening, training, capacity building or technical assistance through Innovation Grants, as BFS/MPI will do that through other contracts/agreements.” A few paragraphs later, however, the description states that “sub-grants will be disbursed in two phases, beginning with the initial seed money, that could include technical assistance to develop key elements required for commercialization.” Step four of the commercialization process (p.7) is technical support, which “may help some awards and accompanying investments meet commercial objectives.”

10. Can USAID please clarify how technical assistance for activities related to component 1 will be funded? At the top of page 6 (component 1) USAID states that “this component will not fund institutional strengthening, training, capacity building or TA through innovation grants as BFS/MPI will do that through other contracts/agreements.” However, later in that section, USAID states that “sub-grants will be disbursed…. with initial seed money that could include technical assistance to develop key elements required for commercialization.”

    Page 6, Clause A 3.3.1, “Component 1 Description: Commercialization of FtF Technologies”, states that BFS/MPI “will not fund institutional strengthening, training, capacity building or technical assistance through Innovation Grants,” rather will do so through other contracts/agreements.

    Please identify what type of institutional strengthening, training, capacity building or technical assistance BFS/MPI is providing through other contracts/agreements and please identify any program already providing such assistance.

P.3 states, “The AC&I Activity will enable BFS/MPI to provide seed funding and technical support...”, but in (p. 6) it states, “This Component will not... fund technical assistance through Innovation Grants.” What Activity will support the Innovation Grants?

Section A.3.3.1 suggests that AC&I “will not fund institutional strengthening, training, capacity building, or technical assistance through Innovation Grants, as BFS/MPI will do that through other contracts/agreements.” So that applicants can better understand how to work with these other capacity building contracts/grants, could USAID please indicate if the anticipated actions will be country-specific, innovation-specific, or global in nature?

On page 6, USAID notes that Component 1 will not fund “technical assistance through the Innovation Grants, as BFS/MPI will do that through other contracts/agreements.” On page 7, however, USAID notes that “technical support may help some awards and accompanying investments meet commercial objectives” and that such support “would be drawn from AC&I Components 2 and 3, as appropriate.” Can USAID clarify whether or not it envisions technical assistance under Component 1, as well as the nature of the assistance?

USAID Response: This sentence is referencing grants that support research and development of innovations in order to distinguish Component 1 from those types of programs. One program in USAID that supports innovation is the Development Innovation Ventures and you can visit their website for more information- http://idea.usaid.gov/organization/div.

Component 1will not fund the development of new technologies. The seed money referenced on page 6 refers to potential funds needed to initiate the commercialization process. The technical support referenced on page 6 also would support the commercialization effort and would not be used for research and development..

11. Please clarify to what extent the provision of technical assistance to grant recipients is anticipated under Component 1, as well as the other project components. The terms for private sector partnerships designed and cultivated under Components 2, 3 and 4 appear to extend beyond commercializing BOP technologies to include scopes of work that contribute to the Bureau for Food Security’s broader mission.

    USAID Response: Technical Assistance under component 1 is anticipated to be minimal. Please see page 6: “Receipt of such support cannot be a decisive factor in a venture’s success or failure.”

12. What is the anticipated scope of work for the “Solicitation for Partnerships with USAID”?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for commercialization sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria..

13. Instructions about Key Personnel state (p.12) “applicants will propose a combination of other key personnel (up to 5)…” Does this mean up to 5 key personnel including the Program Director, or does this mean the Program Director and up to five *other* key personnel?

    USAID Response: Program director and up to four other key personnel

14. Please provide more specificity about the amount an applicant should budget for Management Office implementation, in order that evaluators can fairly compare the implementation and staffing strategies of each offeror.

    USAID Response: It is anticipated that $25 million in USAID Bureau for Food Security central funding will be allocated over 5 years, contingent on funding availability. This amount will fund (including but not limited to) Management Office expenses, commercialization seed grants, partnership start-up grants, short-term studies, and some commercialization and partnership sub-awards.

15. The new technologies or services that are seeded and funded under Component 1 are likely with companies that are "partners" in Component 2. Does USAID assume that there will be a sizable overlap between the entities AC&I works with under Components 1 and 2?

    Under Component 2, does USAID expect that Component 1 technology companies will be leveraged to become partners?

    USAID Response: USAID does envision that Components 1 and 2 could work together and ‘overlap’ when appropriate.

16. Are the partnerships to be targeted under Component 2 only related to the technology commercialization objectives of Component 1, or could be any partnerships related to the broader goals of BFS?

    Under Component 2, does USAID envision seed funding and conditional full funding, if the Recipient is working with partners that it did not work with under Component 1?

    Is the program’s intent for the Recipient to identify technologies (Component 1) and then partners (Component 2)? What is the relationship between the organizations that will receive seed grants in Component 1 and the partners in Component 2? Should Component 1 organizations become partners?

    On page 7, the first sentence of Component 1 states: “provide the platform necessary to develop 10-15 new, innovative partnerships…” Are these 10-15 new partnerships with the same organizations that will have “ten to twelve promising ‘bottom of the pyramid’ agricultural technologies ready for commercialization?”

    If component A and Component B grants and support are going to different organizations, can USAID clarify what kind of organizations will be partners or grantees under Component B versus those under Component 1?

Page 6, A.3.3.1, Component 1, states "the purpose of this component is to identify and bring to scale 10 to 12 promising 'bottom of the pyramid' (BOP) agricultural technologies that are ready for commercialization." Page 7, Component 2, states "the purpose of Component 2 is to provide the platform necessary to develop 10-15 new, innovative partnerships." Is it required that the agricultural technologies in Component 1 link directly to the partnerships in Component 2?

The discussion of partnerships in Component 2 says nothing about technology commercialization. Are the partnerships envisioned under Comp 2 expected to be focused solely on technology innovation, or is it expected they will more broadly support BFS/MPI priorities (eg innovative production/marketing systems that are gender inclusive, etc.)?

In cover letter, last sentence of second paragraph seems inconclusive ("ACI will enable....). Will this activity support these two things (commercialization of new technologies and provide funding and tech support to innovative new partnerships), or just one? Are all partnerships and partnership initiatives to be developed and supported under AC&I necessarily related to commercialization of new technologies, or may other BFS objectives be targeted?

> USAID Response: The Partnerships Component 2 is not limited to the technology commercialization sub-awards of Component 1 and can be any new and innovative partnership related to furthering Feed the Future goals.

17. Component 1 mentions \$200 to \$400K for each seed grant, and up to \$2m for each technology (company). If BFS is asking for 12 technologies to be commercialized, please confirm there is \$24m in grants under Component 1.

    The footnote on page 11 under the 5 Yr target states that while USAID targets12 awards, 19 awards are anticipated, 7 of which will not lead to successful commercialization. Is the \$22.5M expected to have to cover all 19 awards?

    > USAID Response: The budget figures for the commercialization awards include \$3,750,000 for seed grants and \$22,500,000 for commercialization sub-awards, totally \$26,250,000. These budget figures are for bidding purposes and do include potential Mission buy-in funding. USAID does not intend to completely fund the commercialization efforts, but rather the sub-awards will leverage commercial investment, especially investment in fixed costs that are necessary for a venture to reach profitability.

18. In the first paragraph of Section A 3.3.1 (p6) it states: "Only new technologies, goods or services (i.e., financial or insurance products) that have demonstrated commercial potential in BOP markets will be eligible for support." In this sentence is the "i.e." intended to strictly limit eligible services to only the two listed, or are these examples provided merely as illustrations, with AC&I component 1 being open to support a wider array of services that meet its base criteria?

USAID Response: The examples are meant to only be illustrative and the Component 1 is open to technologies that further Feed the Future goals and that are new technologies, goods or services with demonstrated bottom of the pyramid market potential.

19. The last paragraph under Component 1 states that non-profits would be eligible for the commercialization grants for promising technologies. Does this include grants to local and international NGOs in technical support roles, such as distribution, village-level exposure, and training?

    USAID Response: The specific roles of commercialization sub-award implementers, which can include NGOS, will be determined by each specific sub-award that is generated from the solicitation. So yes, the subawards could include those items.

20. Under Component 1, Section 3.3.1 point 3 states, regarding commercialization seed grant funding, "among the specific costs they could cover are survey designs, pricing assistance, licensing, certifications, distribution assessments, proof-of-concept pilots, market trials, demonstrations, customer satisfaction feedback, branding strategies, and similar start-up costs associated with establishing new product lines." The range of $200K - $400K is stated. There is no mention of capital costs such as construction or equipment, both of which might be required for the piloting costs of a "venture start-up". May any capital costs or equipment be covered under the commercialization seed grant funding? If so, under what terms?

    USAID Response: The list of specific costs that can be funded is meant to be illustrative and not all-inclusive. The commercialization seed funding is intended to cover initial piloting or test-marketing costs and potential sub-awardees under this component will submit a proposal for their seed funding grant request that describes what the funds will be used for. The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria..

21. For companies receiving seed grants or commercialization awards under Component 1, is there a cost-share or match investment required by the company? If so, what level is expected? Is there any limit to the types of capital sources the cost share/match investment (eg other grants, equity, debt)?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for commercialization sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria. It is envisioned that there will be significant cost share or leveraging of resources with partners required under Component 1.

22. Is the expectation that commercialization grants will be awarded in the last year of the 5 year program? If so, how will the success or otherwise of these grants be assessed?

USAID Response: Applicants should provide their plans for managing the activities discussed in the Program Description for each AC&I component and the Recipient will establish a performance management system to monitor progress against targets and report routinely on inputs, outputs and outcomes as required by the Feed the Future monitoring and evaluation system guidance.

23. Under Component 2, would new partnership initiatives with existing partners of USAID be regarded as "new, innovative partnerships" (p.7)?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for partnership sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria.

24. Does it make any difference whether the partnerships are identified through the solicitation process under component 1 or component 2 or through BFS staff or any other means, as long as they are "new and innovative"?

    USAID Response: Proposals for partnerships under the AC&I Activity will be submitted through a solicitation issued by the implementer and will be evaluated and awarded through an open and competitive process.

25. Under Component 2, what is the start-up funding range partnership?

    USAID Response: Start-up funding grants for partnerships are anticipated to be in the range of $200,000-300,000 each.

26. Under Component 2, are funds available for fixed and variable costs to buy-down the risks of the Partnerships (e.g, could the funds contribute to a new building with new processing equipment)?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for partnership sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria.

27. Under Component 2, what are the expected liabilities of the partner?

    USAID Response: The liabilities of the partner depend on the type of subgrant arrangement and will be determined at the time of award, as considered by the legal considerations of the country that the subgrant is in effect.

28. Page 17 requests partner organizations be listed on the cover page. Does that include resource organizations, or only organizations proposed as sub-Recipients at the time of submission?

    USAID Response: Only organizations listed proposed as sub-recipients should be listed on the cover page.

29. If the Recipient develops a partnership with a private sector entity under the AC&I, is the Recipient precluded from submitting an application to the Global Development Alliance APS/other USAID solicitation, for funding of the implementation of the specific partnership that is the focus of any award to be made?

30. According to the RFA, USAID is looking to support innovative agricultural technologies as well as innovative partnerships with the private sector to support Feed the Future goals and objectives. Both of these project components seem to have some overlap with USAID's Office of Innovation & Development Alliances which supports both the Global Development Alliance and Development Innovation Ventures program. Can USAID please provide additional information on how you envision the AC&I program, in support of the Bureau for Food Security, interfacing with the USAID IDEA Office, including the use of already-available resources and tools to support both investment in innovative technologies (DIV) and the development of strategic public-private partnerships (GDA)?

    USAID Response: Partnerships formed through this agreement will not submit an application under the Global Development Alliance APS, Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) or any other USAID solicitation The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for partnership sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and award criteria.

31. Who owns any intellectual property developed by partner(s) with AC&I support under Component 1?

    USAID Response: Component 1 will not fund the development of new technology, goods or services. It will promote the commercialization of already development technologies, goods or services that further Feed the Future goals and are not yet commercialized.

32. May any key personnel expenses (e.g., travel, per diems, etc.) to develop and support the partnerships come out of the $3.75M and/or the $22.5M estimated funds listed on p. 19 for Partnership Start-Up and/or Partnership Funding?

    USAID Response: Key personnel expenses were not calculated in the estimated funds for partnership development.

33. Could some of these same monies be used to cover STTA costs related to the provision of technical assistance by the Recipient to develop and implement the partnerships?

    USAID Response: Based on a given proposal, short term technical assistance needed for a specific partnership could feasibly be funded under the partnership start-up funding grants under Component 2 if evaluated as appropriate.

34. What is the maximum program duration of a mission buy-in? That is, if a mission buy-in was secured in year 5, for up to how many years could the length of project be?

USAID Response: Subgrants and mission buy-in contributions will not extend beyond the period of performance of the Cooperative Agreement.

35. Page 3 cites a USAID/World Bank partnership in Ghana. Is USAID considering partnerships with multilaterals and bilaterals, as well as private, commercial partners?

    USAID Response: This section was referring to AC&I's Component 3 of Investment Design and Modeling and how partnership modeling and analysis can be used. AC&I is focused on development of partnerships with the private sector. These partnerships can include other bilateral or multilateral partners as well as private sector partners.

36. P. 11, what does the indicator: Value of Investment design and modeling mean? Isn't this double counting with Value of partnerships?

    USAID Response: Investment design and modeling in the indicator chart is referring to measuring the value of the design and modeling work in Component 3.

37. On p. 2, what does "systematic market growth" mean?

    USAID Response: "Beyond traditional public-private partnerships, USAID is making deliberate efforts to collaborate with private sector partners and promote inclusive and systematic market growth." In the referenced sentence above, systematic market growth refers to those aspects of market growth that can be systematically addressed through partnerships, for example, addressing conditions attributing to market failures throughout the product's value chain,

38. Can you clarify how much money is allocated to Component 4?

    While USAID provides plug figures for Components 1-3, no such figure is provided for C4 – Knowledge Management. Is it to be understood that C4 costs are spread throughout C1-C3 and included in those figures? If so, approximately how much does USAID envision being dedicated to the Knowledge Management task?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Implementer will coordinate the Knowledge Management Cross-Cutting Component and will be required to work with the Feed the Future Private Sector Hub website, which is separately funded. Applicants can propose what structure and resources are necessary to successfully implement this Component.

39. Does USAID expect the applicants to pre-identify private sector partnerships during proposal stage, or merely demonstrate examples?

    USAID Response: USAID does not expect for applicants to pre-identify private sector partnerships during the proposal stage.
    `

40. The RFA cover page states that USAID "seeks applications from eligible institutions to implement one part of an Activity entitled "Agriculture Commercialization & Innovation."

Could USAID elaborate on the scope of the other planned part of this activity and clarify whether those will be separate procurements?

Page 1, paragraph one says "…seeks applications from eligible institutions to implement one part of an Activity entitled…..". Was this an oversight; does USAID seek one bidder to propose for all 4 components in the RFA?

Page 1, paragraph 1, states "USAID seeks application from eligible institutions to implement one part of an Activity entitled "Agriculture Commercialization & Innovation." Please describe other parts of the activity entitled "Agriculture Commercialization & Innovation" and identify any current implementers.

The RFA cover page states that USAID "seeks applications from eligible institutions to implement one part of an Activity entitled "Agriculture Commercialization & Innovation." Could USAID elaborate on the scope of the other planned part of this activity and clarify whether those will be separate procurements?

USAID Response: USAID seeks applications from eligible institutions to implement the Agriculture Commercialization & Innovation activity. There are no other planned parts of AC&I beyond what is described in this RFA. Consortia are likely to be necessary to achieve the objectives of this program. The actual applicant must be the consortium lead and should identify any other members of consortia or individuals tied to the implementation of the application, along with all sub-awardees.

41. Could USAID please clarify whether applicants should budget for separate office space for AC&I staff and whether those staff need to be based in Washington, DC, or whether those staff would sit within the Bureau of Food Security?

USAID Response: Staff would not sit within the Bureau of Food Security

42. Could USAID please further explain the term "Leader award budget" that is required under section D.4.A.1 (page 19)? Additionally, could USAID clarify what is meant by "separate and joint summary budgets of the Management Office and any partner organizations" under section D.4.A.4

USAID Response: This is not a Leader award, it is a straight forward Cooperative Agreement. USAID wants a summary budget for the entire program and break-down of each applicant and their consortium members.

43. Are there budget categories we should be following?

USAID Response: Please see section D.4 of the RFA, Cost Application Format.

44. Does this RFA cover Pakistan or not for applications?

USAID Response: The AC&I Activity and sub-awards can be implemented in any country receiving Feed the Future funding. Please refer to www.feedthefuture.gov for more information on the initiative.

45. Does USAID expect the recipient to develop and maintain the back end systems for the Private Sector Hub on the Feed the Future website, or will that software development be done outside of AC&I? If the latter, will the AC&I team be allowed to work directly with the programmers to refine the taxonomy and database design if necessary?

    USAID Response: The software and design development of the Private Sector Hub will be done outside of AC&I and the AC&I team will work together with the Private Sector Hub to ensure that information on the website is up to date and useful.

46. In component #3 there is specific reference to creating a partnership template and toolkits. Since the IDEA/GP office has produced a number of tools and templates over the years for partnership creation, how should the deliverables under AC&I coordinate or differ from these tools and model?

    USAID Response: Component 3 is intended to assist in the design and structuring of partnerships within the Feed the Future Initiative, conduct analysis of risk and liabilities of partnerships, and analysis of the partnership models' impact and create lessons learned. Component 3 has budgeted resources to conduct modeling and analysis to support the development and establishment of innovative partnerships that will benefit smallholder agriculture.

47. Page 1 indicates that the RFA title is "Agricultural Commercialization & Innovation Activity" but on page 2, the program is called "Agriculture Commercialization and Innovations (AC&I) Activity." Please confirm the official program title.

    USAID Response: Agricultural Commercialization & Innovation Activity (AC&I Activity)

48. Page 6, Clause A.3.3.1, pg. 6, states that "This Component will not fund institutional strengthening, training, capacity building or technical assistance through Innovation Grants as BFS/MPI will do that through other contracts/agreements." What is the assurance that the current implementers of those related activities will not receive a competitive advantage for this competition?

    USAID Response: There are no current implementers.

49. Page 6, Clause A 3.3.1, "Component 1 Description: Commercialization of FtF Technologies", first paragraph, last sentence states "…all proposals will be evaluated for potential impacts on women. This will be analyzed in advance through feasibility studies and market analyses." Does BFS/MPI anticipate that these analyses will be funded through the AC&I activities or will BFS/MPI fund these analyses separately from the AC&I activities?

On page 6, USAID notes that potential impact on women “will be analyzed in advance through feasibility studies and market analyses.” Does USAID envision that AC&I will undertake these studies and analyses? Or will they be conducted by USAID or another party and provided to the AC&I Activity?

USAID Response: Analyses will be funded under the AC&I Activity.

50. Page 6, Clause A 3.3.1, “Component 1 Description: Commercialization of FtF Technologies”, fifth paragraph, Step 4, “Technical support” indicates that “Technical support may help some awards and accompanying investments meet commercial objectives.” Is this technical support expected to be funded through Component 1 Commercialization Fund?

    Page 7, Clause A 3.3.1, “Component 1 Description: Commercialization of FtF Technologies”, fifth paragraph, Step 4, “Technical support” seems to address technical support that would be provided under component 1 but funded through Components 2 and 3. Please confirm that the funding pools (identified as plug numbers) may be used to provide technical support via the Innovation Grants.

    USAID Response: AC&I Component 1 will not fund Innovation Grants. Any Technical Support for Component 1 is not expected to be funded by Component 2. It is feasible that Component 3 could assist Component 1 in partnership modeling and analysis.

51. Page 11, Clause A.4, “Performance Monitoring Plan” Table One, in the column for the 5 Year Target, the maximum target number is included. Please insert the range stated in earlier sections for each component, i.e., 10 – 12 technologies.

    USAID Response: Once AC&I is awarded, the recipient will work with USAID to develop a complete Performance Monitoring Plan that can address target ranges for each component. For bidding purposes, please use the maximum target numbers referenced on the chart on page 11.

52. Page 14, Section III, Clause C, “Cost Sharing”, states that cost share requirement is not mandatory. Under ADS 303.3.10.2, Leveraging is preferred when USAID is looking for “resources that third-parties bring to the program without necessarily providing them to the recipient. These parties may include the host government, private foundations, businesses or individuals.” This is especially true since the majority of funds are intended for local organizations, for which cost share might be more onerous than leveraging. The applicant respectfully requests that USAID allow leveraging to be proposed in lieu of cost share. Page 19, Section IV, Clause D.4, “Cost Application Format”, third paragraph, Item A.6, requires a breakdown of cost share in the budget. The Applicant respectfully requests that USAID allow leveraging to be proposed in lieu of cost share

    USAID Response: Leveraging and/or cost share are acceptable.

53. Page 19, Section IV, Clause D.4, "Cost Application Format", third paragraph, Item A.4, and Clause B, Item refer to a Management Office. Please clarify the reference to a Management Office and if it there is a specific location required.

    USAID Response: There is no specific location required for the Management Office.

54. The instructions for the technical application format state (p. 17, D.3.3.1, second paragraph) that the program strategy for Component 3 should include plans for "technical/diagnostic responsiveness." Please explain what this means. To what, specifically, are the technical/diagnostic activities responding?

    USAID Response: Technical/diagnostic responsiveness refers to the applicants' ability to respond to needs that can include, but are not limited to, cost/benefit analysis, risk management, and the commercialization pathway for innovations.

55. USAID specifies on page 18, section D.3.3.2 that the application should include a past performance description for the Applicant and major sub-contractors or sub-grantees (responsible for 20 percent or more of the total budget). Can USAID confirm that major sub-contractors or sub-grantees would be responsible for 20 percent or more of the total budget ***less*** the grants and partnership funds, since those funds are expected to make up between 70%-80% of the ***total*** budget?

    In section D.3.3.3 Past Performance (p. 18) the RFA states that past performance references for major sub-grantees can be included. USAID further defines "major sub-grantees" as "responsible for 20 percent or more of the total budget." Can USAID please confirm that the 20 percent refers only to the "core funds", ie. the total budget minus the plug figures stipulated on page 19?

    USAID Response: USAID confirms that major sub-contractors or sub-grantees that need to submit past performance information referenced in the RFA include those who would be responsible for 20% of more of the total budget **less** the Commercialization and Partnership sub-awards funds.

56. Will USAID be willing to consider the introduction or expanded use of Genetically Modified Organisms as possible game-changing innovations that may be a part of proposals for funding under component 1?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for commercialization sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria.

57. As a follow up to Amendment 2 to this RFA, should the bidder's cost proposal be for a ceiling amount of $60,000,000 to $74,000,000, of which $53,300,000 is allocated as described on page 19?

Based on USAID's Amendment 2 to this RFA, should the bidder assume a core funding level of $25,000,000, of which $7,500,000 is to be allocated for commercialization and partnership funding?

Per page 13, "USAID intends to award a five-year Cooperative Agreement ranging between $60,000,000 to $74,000,000. The first year amount ($5,000,000) will be obligated in FY 2012." Please clarify that the $5,000,000 is only an initial obligation for Year 1 and not the total budget amount for Year 1.

Can USAID please provide an estimated breakdown of the plug figures by year?

How much are the core funds available to this project stated in section D.4. "The cost application must cover the budget for all core funds"? How much are the anticipated buy-in funds for each of the categories outlined at the top of page 19? What are the approved uses for core-funds, and anticipated buy-in funds?

In Section D.4 (page 19) USAID provides plug in figures consistent with the program components. Can applicants assume that technical assistance directly related to some of the activities funded under the plug figures will not be part of the "core funds"?

Page 1 of the RFA indicates $5 million obligated funds for the first year. Is it correct that the total budget for Year 1 should be $5 million, leaving the balance of funding of $55 to $69 million in Years 2 through 5?

> USAID Response: Bidders should assume $25,000,000 over 5 years in central funding from USAID/Bureau for Food Security, of which management and administrative costs, the Commercialization seed funding, Partnership start-up funding, Short-term studies and a portion of the Commercialization and Partnership sub-awards are funded. The additional USAID funds would be contributed through Mission Buy-In to specific commercialization or partnership sub-awards that are in line with Missions' priorities and complement other Mission activities.

58. Is it anticipated that the $52,500,000 in commercialization and partnership funding described on page 19 is solely for activity costs, and not for management or administration costs?

> USAID Response: Home office management and administrative costs are not calculated in the commercialization and partnership sub-awards.

59. On page 6, USAID notes that "support valued at up to $2 million" will support initial commercialization of technologies. On page 7, USAID notes that commercialization seed grants "should range between $200,000 - $400,000 each." The 5-year target of 12 agricultural technologies commercialized and ceiling of $2 million in seed grants means that the maximum seed grant amount would be $166,666. Can USAID clarify the range for seed grant amounts and total value of seed grant support?

USAID Response: The amount allocated for commercialization seed grants, for bidding purposes, is 3,750,000. Please see page 19 of the RFA.

60. On page 17, USAID notes that Component 1 includes a "due diligence checklist." Does USAID envision that the checklist will outline criteria by which to evaluate grant applications? If not, what does USAID envision as the purpose of the checklist?

    USAID Response: The Due Diligence Checklist on page 17 references a process to research and evaluate proposed commercialization sub-awards and the parties and processes involved to identify any potential problems or liabilities. The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for commercialization sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria.

61. Under Component 2, the RFA suggests that AC&I might be tasked with drafting partnership agreements beyond the 15 partnerships generated by AC&I activities. How many such partnerships does USAID anticipate AC&I will support and to what degree?

    USAID Response: The number of total partnerships generated by AC&I is dependent on the quality of solicitations received and the amount of Mission support and buy-in for proposed partnerships.

62. Under Component 2, can you clarify the expected volume of queries generated by the Hub, their scope, and the nature of collaboration between AC&I and USAID as queries are fielded?

    USAID Response: As the Private Sector Hub is redesigned, USAID expects a large increase in inquiries into partnering with USAID on Feed the Future and other initiatives. The AC&I Activity will have the tools to effectively follow up on those leads relating to Feed the Future through AC&I staff, a solicitation for partnership sub-awards, partnership start-up and sub-award funds, and modeling and analysis funds. Collaboration between USAID BFS/MPI and AC&I will be close when fielding leads generated by the Hub and the USAID BFS/MPI Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR), as stated on page 13 of the RFA, will approve all solicitations released by AC&I and all sub-awards.

63. Under Component 2, "Support for Partnership Development": to what degree does USAID envision the implementer generating partnership leads itself as opposed to facilitating leads generated by USAID? In other words, does USAID expect the implementer to play a lead role in generating partnerships or a supporting role to USAID?

    USAID Response: The AC&I Implementer will have a lead role in partnership development. The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for Partnership sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria.

64. On page 8, “Partnership Start-up Funding”: USAID notes that the implementer will provide technical assistance and start up grant funding. Can USAID clarify the nature of technical assistance it envisions under Component 2?

    USAID Response: The nature of technical assistance is dependent on the specific partnership sub-awards. Technical assistance may or may not be necessary depending on specific partnership sub-awards.

65. Can USAID provide additional information on the goals of the start-up grant funding under Component 2?

    USAID Response: Partnership Start-up funding is designed to allow the AC&I Activity implementer to support new partnership opportunities through start up grant funding and technical assistance. The AC&I Activity Implementer will release a solicitation for Partnership sub-awards once the program is launched that will describe the processes and procedures, requirements, timing, and evaluation criteria.

66. On page 22, under USAID Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), the RFA reads: “No award will be made until an Environmental Threshold Decision, as defined in 22 CFR 216.3(a)(2), has been reached for that activity and documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). Calls for innovations will stipulate that all awards will be individually assessed for their potential environmental impacts through an IEE Amendment.” Is it envisioned that the grantee will make provision for this examination or will evaluations be conducted by a third party under separate contract to USAID? If this examination shall be done by the grantee, will USAID appoint a POC at the BEO’s office to streamline all requests?

    USAID Response: USAID and AC&I will work together to ensure that IEEs are completed for all commercialization and partnership sub-awards. There will be no third party contractor conducting the IEEs.

67. Section D.1 “Preparation and submission guidelines” (page 16) provides the sections to be covered under the technical application. Can USAID please confirm that under (b) Technical Approach, sub point 1. Should be “proposed approach” to match the outline on page 17 and the evaluation criteria on page 24?

    USAID Response: The application must be prepared in accordance with the structural format set forth in section D of the RFA and should demonstrate the applicant’s capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of the program. While applicants are expected to follow the format and the instructions contained therein, they should also be aware of the Selection Criteria in the solicitation and ensure that their applications reflect and address these criteria.

68. Can USAID kindly share with applicants any details on countries or regions that have expressed interest in buy-in in components 1 and 2 (per the break-down on p. 19).

USAID Response: Mission Buy-In will be specific to each commercialization or partnership proposal and how it aligns with Missions' priorities and complements other Mission activities. All countries that receive Feed the Future resources are eligible to utilize the AC&I activity. Please consult the feed the future website for more information on the initiative: http://www.feedthefuture.gov/countries

69. Page 19 of the RFA indicates that the SF-424 form should be provided in summary and detail for the Leader award budget only. The RFA then indicates to reference page 2 of the Cover Letter for the Government Estimate of funding available. But, page 2 of the RFA does not indicate any Government estimates of available funding. Should page 19 have referred to page 1 of the Cover Letter, and is the Leader award budget the $60 - $74 million referenced on page 1 of the Cover Letter?

    USAID Response: Please disregard Leader award budget references and refer to Section II A, Estimated Funding Level, for estimates of available funding.

Assistance Questions

70. Please confirm that a 6 day workweek is allowed for STTAs.

    USAID Response: Yes

71. Section D.4 H (Geographic Code) on page 21 states that the authorized geographic code of this project is 000. Does USAID plan to change this code to code 937 in light of the recently revised 22 CFR 228?

    USAID Response: Yes, the authorized geographic code is now 937.

72. Component Two, Partnership Start-Up Funding, on page 8 of the RFA states that "… the Recipient will support partnerships … [that] will bring out [USAID's] funding and procurement cycles in line with the timelines of the private sector." To what extent will the AC&I program have access to USAID's Office of Acquisition and Assistance to explore/influence the development of innovative procurement mechanisms that support the goals and objectives of the AC&I Activity as well as the USAID Forward Implementation and Procurement Reform objectives?

    USAID Response: Implementation and Procurement Reform is an Agency process. As the rules and regulations are updated, they will flow from the prime recipient to the subawards.

73. Under Component 2, who signs the contracts with the partner companies, USAID or the Recipient?

    USAID Response: The recipient

74. I also was hoping you could clarify whether or not there are any incumbents for this award?

USAID Response: There are no incumbents for this award.

75. Given that email submission of the proposal is now permitted, is submission via grants.gov still required?

Do both the electronic and hard copies need to be received by the date and time on the application?

USAID Response: Submission via grants.gov is no longer required. Electronic and hard copies must be received by the submission deadline.

76. Can my organization submit only hard copies of the application and not an electronic copy?

USAID Response: Yes, only a hard copy is acceptable; however, please notify both Natalie Thunberg at nthunberg@usaid.gov and Christine Dwulet at cdwulet@usaid.gov of your intention. All hard copies must be received by the submission deadline and must include a CD of the application documents.

77. Do tables, charts and diagrams count against the 25 page limit?

Are the CVs of Key Personnel considered an annex? The instructions seem to indicate that CVs are included within the 25 page limit.

Could USAID please clarify the difference between the past performance section that should be included within the 25-page technical proposal (Section D.1, page 16) and the past performance references that should be included as an attachment to the 25-page technical proposal (D.3.3.2, page 18)?

On page 22, USAID notes that "technical and cost applications shall be submitted in a single volume three ring binder with a divider separating the two." Can USAID confirm that they do not expect technical and cost applications to be submitted separately, but together in the same binder?

Page 22 of the RFA (Section D.5) indicates that four copies of both the technical and cost applications should be ensconced in a single volume three ring binder with a divider separating the two. Is it acceptable to submit more than one three ring binder, should eight applications not fit within one single three ring binder?

In section D.5 The Deadline for Submission of Application (p.22), USAID requests that "five copies must be submitted, one copy must be unbound and unstapled and must include original signatures." Can USAID please confirm that five copies of the technical and five copies of the cost are required?

USAID Response: Hard copies of the technical and cost applications should be submitted in separate binders. Five copies of the technical proposal and two copies of the cost proposal are required, for a total of seven binders. The following documents are excluded from the 25 page limit for the technical application: CVs of key personnel, tables, charts, diagrams, list of acronyms, project management plan (PMP), transmittal letter, table of contents, cover page, and organizational chart.

78. On pages 15 (Section IV.C.) and 19 (Section IV.D.4(C)) of the RFA, USAID states that "Annex F" includes a full text of the required certifications and assurances. However, Annex F is not included as a part of the RFA. Can USAID please post Annex F through an amendment to the RFA? Page 19 of the RFA indicates that the cost application must include required certifications and assurances, and then notes to see Annex F of the RFA. Please confirm that the referenced certifications and assurances are found in Annex C of the RFA.

    USAID Response: The referenced Certificates and Assurances can be found in Annex C of the RFA. Please disregard any references to Annex F.

79. Page 40, "PART V - SURVEY ON ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR APPLICANTS" requests that applicants fill out an "attached Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants." Can USAID kindly send this survey?

    USAID Response: The "Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants" is attached to the end of this Amendment.

80. Can applicants use past performance short-forms as part of the Past Performance Section?

    The instructions on page 18 note that past performance references must be "for current programs or those completed during the past five years," but then notes that "(a)ny past performance references older than three years will not be evaluated." Can USAID clarify their preference regarding the timeframe for references?

    Could USAID please clarify the difference between the past performance section that should be included within the 25-page technical proposal (Section D.1, page 16) and the past performance references that should be included as an attachment to the 25-page technical proposal (D.3.3.2, page 18)? Does USAID request that applicants use the standard USAID Contractor Past Performance Reference short-form or can the applicant present the information in any format that meets the RFA instructions?

    USAID Response: Past performances references older than three years will not be evaluated. The applicant may present past performance information in any format that meets the RFA instructions.

81. If a sub-Recipient develops a partnership with a private sector entity under the AC&I, is the lead Recipient precluded from submitting an application to the Global Development Alliance APS/other solicitation for funding of the implementation of the specific partnership?

Will recipients be restricted from bidding on future Feed the Future Opportunities in the countries where there may be AC&I activities?

Would managing the AC&I program preclude the prime from bringing its own innovative partnerships to the AC&I for grant or other funding from USAID?

Would managing the AC&I program preclude the prime from partnering with AC&I participating companies in USAID funded programs (e.g. GDAs) outside of AC&I (e.g., an agribusiness is a partner organization in AC&I; the prime is managing AC&I: and the prime and an agribusiness put together a GDA outside of AC&I)?

USAID Response: Managing the AC&I program would not preclude the prime from partnering in other USAID funded programs (e.g. GDAs, Feed the Future,) outside of AC&I; however, the implementing partner for the AC&I Activity cannot bid on solicitations for subgrants under the AC&I Activity.

82. Can you confirm for-profit small businesses are eligible to submit under this RFA (provided they are willing to forego a fee)?

USAID Response: Yes

83. Page 19, D.4., A.7. states "proposed cap on Indirect rates" implies that a requirement to establish ceiling indirect rates is incorporated. Q: Please delete the requirement "proposed cap on Indirect rates" or amend to state this is optional only and that in no way will proposals be negatively impacted should a cap not be proposed. As no points are given to costs for purposes of evaluation, this change will not impact any other part of the RFA. In the absence of clear authority from OMB to authorize the blanket use of caps on Indirects, all NICRA agreements are considered independent contractual agreements between contractor/recipient and the U.S. Government. Contracting/Agreement Officers do not have the authority to interfere with this privity of contract. In addition, the following statement has been issued by the Office of Overhead and Special Costs and Contract Closeout Branch (OCC): "Organizations should not be pressured to change the terms of their established NICRA".

USAID Response: This reference to "proposed cap on indirect rates" has been deleted from the RFA.

84. We understand USAID would not cover full overhead burden on the total grant fund. What is an allowable range for an administration fee for the administration of such grants. What is allowable?

USAID Response: No set limit, NICRAs will be used.

85. Will any of the sub-recipients (i.e. implementing partners) need to propose caps on their indirect rates?

USAID Response: No, we will allow Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements (NICRA).

86. USAID states on page 19 in Section D.4 (B) of the RFA that applicants that do not currently have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from their cognizant agency shall submit copies of financial reports which have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID. If a proposed partner organization does not have a NICRA, and does not have audited financials, will USAID allow that the organization submit a financial review from a Certified Public Accountant?

    USAID Response: You may submit the information for review; however, this does not represent approval of indirect costs.

87. Please confirm whether for-profit firms that are sub-recipients as consortium members may be able to charge a fee as part of their budget.

    USAID Response: Will be negotiated at time of award, not a disqualifier.

88. Do you offer grants for start-up cattle/livestock business?

    Please confirm that USAID has not already overtly or covertly selected an NGO to receive these funds.

    Would an integrated fish and vegetable production system be something that would be considered in your grant cycle?

    Would the program consider a project on small island developing states fishing?

    Can you please tell me if there is a limit to the number of applications you will accept from a single organization? Specifically, can (University), as an institution, submit more than one application to this program?

    USAID Response: There is no incumbent for this Cooperative Agreement and no NGO has been preselected to receive these funds. The intent of this solicitation is to award a cooperative agreement to one organization. The recipient of this Cooperative Agreement will award subgrants through a competitive process; therefore, applicants interested in submitting concept papers/applications for the small grant activities should not submit applications for this solicitation and should instead wait until after the award of the Cooperative Agreement.

SURVEY ON ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR APPLICANTS

OMB NO. 1894-0010 EXP. 05/31/2012

Purpose: The Federal government is committed to ensuring that all qualified applicants, small or large, non-religious or faith-based, have an equal opportunity to compete for Federal funding. In order for us to better understand the population of applicants for Federal funds, we are asking nonprofit private organizations (not including private universities) to fill out this survey.

Upon receipt, the survey will be separated from the application. Information provided on the survey will not be considered in any way in making funding decisions and will not be included in the Federal grants database. While your help in this data collection process is greatly appreciated, completion of this survey is voluntary.

Instructions for Submitting the Survey: If you are applying using a hard copy application, please place the completed survey in an envelope labeled "Applicant Survey." Seal the envelope and include it along with your application package. If you are applying electronically, please submit this survey along with your application.

Applicant's (Organization) Name: ____________________

Applicant's DUNS Number: ____________________

Federal Program: ____________________ **CFDA Number:** ____________

1. Has the applicant ever received a grant or contract from the Federal government?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Is the applicant a faith-based organization?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Is the applicant a secular organization?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Does the applicant have 501(c)(3) status?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Is the applicant a local affiliate of a national organization?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. How many full-time equivalent employees does the applicant have? *(Check only one box).*

   ☐ 3 or Fewer ☐ 15-50
   ☐ 4-5 ☐ 51-100
   ☐ 6-14 ☐ over 100

7. What is the size of the applicant's annual budget?

   (Check only one box.)

   ☐ Less Than $150,000
   ☐ $150,000 - $299,999
   ☐ $300,000 - $499,999
   ☐ $500,000 - $999,999
   ☐ $1,000,000 - $4,999,999
   ☐ $5,000,000 or more

Survey Instructions on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants

Provide the applicant's (organization) name and DUNS number and the grant name and CFDA number.

1. Self-explanatory.

2. Self-identify.

3. Self-identify.

4. 501(c)(3) status is a legal designation provided on application to the Internal Revenue Service by eligible organizations. Some grant programs may require nonprofit applicants to have 501(c)(3) status. Other grant programs do not.

5. Self-explanatory.

6. For example, two part-time employees who each work half-time equal one full-time equivalent employee. If the applicant is a local affiliate of a national organization, the responses to survey questions 2 and 3 should reflect the staff and budget size of the local affiliate.

7. Annual budget means the amount of money your organization spends each year on all of its activities.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1890-0014. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average five (5) minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. **If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to:** The Agency Contact listed in this grant application package.

OMB No. 1894-0010 Exp. 05/31/2012