



USAID | MALI
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

September 25, 2017

**Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity - RFA-688-17-000005 – Amendment 1 for
Implementing the Mali Electoral Support Activity**

Dear Prospective Applicant:

The answers to questions raised by potential applicants by the deadline are provided in Attachment A (Questions/Answers) of this Amendment 1.

With this NFO/RFA Amendment 1, the due date for receiving application(s) remains October 20, 2017.

Except for the specific changes transmitted through this Amendment, all other terms and conditions of the RFA as published remain unchanged.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Schmidt, Jr.
Agreement Officer

Attachment A: Questions/Answers

ATTACHMENT A - QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

1. Can USAID/Mali provide specific election dates or should the project be designed around tentative dates in the summer (presidential) and fall (legislative) of 2018?

Response: The Government of Mali (GoM) has yet to announce an electoral calendar from which to plan. For planning purposes, Presidential (up to two-rounds) and legislative (two-rounds) elections should be held in the summer and fall of 2018, respectively. The target date for swearing of the President is September 4, 2018 and the mandate for the current parliament expires in November 2018.

2. Does USAID have an anticipated start date for the MESA program?

Response: USAID anticipates an award o/a end of February 2018.

Section A – Program Description

3. In Section A.II on page 5, the RFA discusses the lack of capacity of the three Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and the overarching objective in Section A.VI on page 9 is to assist the government of Mali in improving its electoral system. However, no activities to directly support the three EMBs/government are planned under any of the four Objectives (only through the CSOs and political parties). Can USAID/Mali confirm that all support for the EMBs is planned solely through PAPEM or if any activities to support EMBs directly should be planned under MESA?

Response: MESA was designed as a complimentary activity to PAPEM, which has traditionally focused on building the capacity of the EMBs. The scope and timing of PAPEM 2.0 is TBD. However, applicants may propose an approach that includes direct support to EMBs if deemed appropriate.

4. In Section A.III on page 6, the USAID/Mali CDCS Objectives and Intermediate Results are referenced. Twice, IR 1.3 is identified as “Citizen Participation in Malian electoral processes increased,” which matches the CDCS document, however in the paragraph just before Cross Sectoral Approach, Result 1.3 is identified as “Strengthened civic engagement to improve government accountability.” Can USAID/Mali confirm that “Strengthened civic engagement to improve government accountability” is not a result of the MESA program?

Response: USAID confirms that “Strengthened civic engagement to improve government accountability” is not a result of the MESA program. With this RFA amendment, the last sentence of the paragraph is revised to read: “... and Intermediate Result 1.3: Citizen Participation in Malian electoral processes increased”.

5. When does USAID expect to know whether or not funding for Objective four will be confirmed, per page 8 of the NFO?

Response: with this Amendment, USAID confirms that the funds are secured for implementing the Objective 4.

6. In the fifth paragraph of Section A.V on page 8, the third assumption listed for the program is “United States Government (USG) and/or other donor funding will be secured to support the activities under objective four.” Can USAID/Mali please confirm that this assumption is related to MESA Objective 4: Support political parties to contribute to a peaceful electoral

process and that the funding to be secured is already accounted for within the \$6 million overall MESA budget?

Response: with this Amendment, USAID confirms that the funds are secured for implementing the Objective 4.

7. On page nine of the RFA, applicants are asked to propose a name for the project. However, USAID uses the MESA acronym through the document. Can USAID please confirm that it wants this program to be renamed?

Response: Applicants may propose a new name for this project or retain MESA.

8. Given that USAID requires on page 10 that MESA align with and coordinate with the Mission's ongoing Peace and Democratic Governance portfolio, can the reports and other relevant information about the Civic Engagement Project (CEP) and Sub-National Governance Project (SNGP) programs, mentioned on page 10 of the NOFO, please be shared?

Response: Please refer to the information available about the PDG portfolio at [USAID Mali website](#) and reports from specific projects at the [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#).

9. In Section VI, on pages 10-16, the solicitation states for the Anticipated Results for each objective: "USAID expects that this activity will contribute to achieving the following results which will be measured, at a minimum, through the indicators listed below." However, where indicators are listed, the solicitation states "Below indicators are illustrative." Can USAID please clarify if the indicators referenced on pages 11, 13, 15 and 16-17 are illustrative or are required to be included in the applicant's proposed M&E plan?

Response: The indicators listed on pages 11, 13, 15 and 16-17 are illustrative.

10. Page 12 of the RFA lists Result 2.2 as "Coordination among domestic and international observer organizations improved." Does USAID know which organizations (if any) have committed to send international observers? Is USAID currently planning to host an in-country elections coordination working group?

Response: USAID has no knowledge of any commitments to send international observers and an in-country coordination working group is TBD.

11. Page 16 states that activities should be conducted in a multi-party format. Can USAID confirm that this means implementers should utilize a politically neutral approach consistent with USAID's Political Party Assistance Policy, rather than that each activity must have representatives from multiple parties?

Response: USAID confirms that a politically neutral approach consistent with USAID's Political Party Assistance Policy should be applied.

12. Page 17 of the RFA states that the M&E plan should include "Proposed themes for evaluation and learning that might contribute to the evidence base that are related to program objectives and/or proposed innovative approaches." Can USAID provide further details on what type of information should be included to meet this requirement?

Response: Applicants are free to propose themes.

13. Page 17 of the RFA states that “the performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan shall include the process by which indicators will be developed and the role of local partners in their monitoring.” Can USAID provide more clarification regarding the definition of “process”? Does this refer to providing methodological justification for each indicator or explicitly taking a participatory approach to developing indicators with local partners?

Response: In this case, “the process” refers to how data will be collected and who will be responsible for collecting the data (i.e. the role of local partners). The application, in this section, should define the methodological approach for justifying indicators and collaborating with local partners.

14. Page 17 of the RFA states that “Accurate and timely monitoring will enable this Activity to improve approaches, adapt to changing conditions. The applicant’s approach to learning and adaptive management should ensure that processes are in place to foster learning and flexibility, and that they are central to the proposed activity. “ How is monitoring, learning and adapting different than USAID’s CLA approach as defined in USAID’s Program Cycle guidance (ADS 201.3.5.19)?

Response: Please follow USAID’s CLA approach as defined in USAID’s Program Cycle guidance (ADS 201.3.5.19).

Section B – Award Information

15. Section B.2 on page 21: Please clarify the breakdown by Program Objective percentages since they do not add up to 100%.

Response: The percentage for Objectives 3 and 4 must read “17%” respectively. The NFO/RFA is modified accordingly with this Amendment.

Section D – Application and Submission Information

16. Section D.4.1 on page 26 in the fourth paragraph of the Management Structure and Staffing Plan section states “The applicant must include full job descriptions and resumes of proposed Key Positions/Personnel and other important managerial and technical personnel to be assigned to this activity...” Please confirm that job descriptions and resumes are only required of key personnel.

Response: Yes, the position descriptions and resumes of proposed incumbents are only required for key personnel/positions.

17. Section D.4.1 on page 26 states that the technical approach shall contain the following sections... 1) a theory of change, 2) Flexibility, 3) Inclusion, and 4) Gender. However, in Section E.1.I on page 34, the first section is Theoretical Framework. Please clarify whether the applicant should use Theory of Change or Theoretical Framework.

Response: with this RFA amendment, Section D.4.1, Technical Approach, the last sentence of the paragraph is revised to read: “The technical approach shall contain the following sections and provide information that will ease the review/evaluation as described in Section E.1 below: 1) Theoretical Framework, 2) Flexibility, 3) Inclusion, and 4) Gender.”

18. Section D.4.1 on page 27 states that “The Applicant shall propose qualified candidates for the following key personnel positions...” However, Section B.3 on the bottom of page 21

states “for the purposes of this funding opportunity, the following illustrative positions are identified as Key: Chief of Party and Senior Technical Advisor – Observations.” Please confirm that the Chief of Party and Senior Technical Advisor – Observations are not illustrative, and are the only required key personnel for this opportunity.

Response: The two key positions are not illustrative and are the only required key position for this activity.

19. Can applicants include their past performance references in an annex to the technical proposal?

Response: USAID confirms that the past performance references can be included as an annex to the technical application.

20. Section D.4.1 on page 27 requires relevant past performance for “up to three Activities/Programs implemented over the past five years which best illustrate the applicant’s (and any partners’) performance...” Please confirm that the applicant must submit past performance information for three Activities/Programs each for the prime applicant and any partners.

Response: Yes, a total of 3 past performance references from both the prime and any partners are to be included as an annex.

21. Section D.4.2 Cost Application Format: Content on page 29-30 and Annex 4 on page 51- 52: Please confirm that the budget should be arranged in accordance with the Object Class Categories of the SF424A and that the additional categories described for “Activity Support Costs” and “Sub-awards/Sub-contracts” can be included under the Other Direct Costs or Contractual categories (per the SF424A) as appropriate.

Response: The applicants are requested to fill the SF-424 as guided, and submit a detailed budget in accordance with the format provided as Annex 4 (Cost Application Template) of the NOFO.

22. In Annex 4 on page 52, under Detailed Budget Spreadsheet, consultants are listed as part of Labor. Please confirm that consultants can be budgeted under the Contractual category.

Response: the applicants are requested to list the consultancies under the Labor cost category.

23. Can USAID please confirm if a six-day work week is approved for STTA under this activity?

Response: USAID confirms that a six-day work week is authorized for STTA under this activity.

24. Does USAID have a suggested percentage of the total budget that should be allocated to subgrants to local organizations?

Response: USAID does not have a suggested percentage of the total budget to be allocated to subgrants.

25. Would USAID please provide the local compensation plan?

Response: The Illustrative Local Compensation Plan provided as Annex 3 of the original NFO/RFA is still valid.

Section E – Application Review Information

26. Section E on page 34 does not assign any weight to the technical evaluation criteria. Could USAID/Mali please provide points or weights to the technical evaluation criteria?

Response: The Technical evaluation criteria are listed in descending order of importance. Under this RFA, as written on page 36, the technical application will be evaluated by a Committee using an adjectival system, and technical considerations are more important than cost.