UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
UNITED STATES EMBASSY ABIDJAN

Bolstering the Ability of African Governments to Conduct Sovereign Debt Negotiations
DOS-ABJ-FY23-02

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
31 JUL 2023 – edited 7 AUG 2023

QUESTION 1: Could you please define "non-traditional official lenders" in the context of this NOFO?

ANSWER 1: These lenders could include non-commercial creditors, such as foreign governments and their lending agencies, that are relative newcomers to international lending and have not historically participated in multilateral debt negotiation bodies, such as the Paris Club.

QUESTION 2: Should applicants identify potential locations for proposed activities in their proposal, or will the locations be decided upon award signature?

ANSWER 2: Per NOFO Section A.1., "Priority region is Africa. Locations for proposed activities would be selected in consultation with African host governments receiving the transaction advisory services and capacity-building programs."

QUESTION 3: Will the U.S. Embassy Abidjan submit location requests to the implementer? Or will the implementer be responsible for identifying technical assistance interest within African countries and submit location proposals to the U.S. Embassy Abidjan?

ANSWER 3: The implementer will be responsible for soliciting interest from African countries for technical assistance. However, U.S. Embassy Abidjan and other embassies throughout Africa may learn of potential interest by their host government in this assistance and pass along that information to the implementer.

QUESTION 4: How many countries do you expect to be covered within this program?

ANSWER 4: The project may benefit governments of the following member countries of the Africa Development Bank (AfDB): Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Togo, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, eSwatini, Zambia, Mauritania, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Burundi.
The following AfDB countries will not be eligible to benefit from this assistance: Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Niger.

Total number of countries benefiting from this assistance would depend on which countries express an interest in receiving the capacity-building and transaction advisory services.

QUESTION 5: "Key Personnel Summary": In addition to listing Key Personnel, could this 2-page document include short biographies of other relevant staff and experts to be deployed for the proposed work?

ANSWER 5: Per NOFO Section D.2.1.14, "Key Personnel Summary: (not to exceed two (2) pages, preferably as a Word Document). Include short bios that highlight relevant professional experience. Provides names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel **involved in the program**. Note the location where key staff will be based and percentage of their time (level of effort) that will be used in support of this program."

QUESTION 6: "Letters of support from project partners" and "Official permission letters": could you please clarify if applicants are expected to have secured interest from proposed countries at the time of proposal submission?

ANSWER 6: Per NOFO Section D.2.1.18 Additional Attachments, "Letters of support from **project partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner**, if applicable" and "**Official permission letters**, if applicable". These letters should be prepared by the partners the applicant has identified as potentially providing support to the proposed activities (such as consultants or law firms) and submitted by the applicant. Official permission letters are submitted by applicant organizations that are related to an entity under the hierarchy as reported in SAM.gov. Applicants should not secure interest from potentially benefiting countries during the application/competition process.

QUESTION 7: The NOFO application package checklist includes a "COVID contingency plan", which is not listed in the NOFO's page 11/12. Could you please clarify if this document is required as part of the application package?

ANSWER 7: The COVID Contingency Plan is not required however per NOFO Section D.2.1.17 a Contingency Plan is required "Contingency Plan (not to exceed three (3) pages). The Contingency Plan, **for proposed activities should the originally planned activities not be able to be implemented**, should be submitted as an additional annex. Applicants should demonstrate consideration of the **risks identified in the Proposal Narrative risk analysis and include specific alternative activities or locations as part of the Contingency Plan**. Any proposed "plan" must comply with 2CFR200.433 – Contingency provisions. Plans must not include unallocable or unallowable expenses and must not exceed the notified Total Funding. U.S. Embassy Abidjan requires prior approval by the Grants Officer of the "contingency reserve" before any activities can take place, or costs can be incurred against the "contingency reserve."

QUESTION 8: The NOFO application package checklist includes sam.gov entity registration - should this proof be submitted as an annex?

ANSWER 8: No. Per NOFO Section D.3, "All prime organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with SAM.gov **before submitting an application**. U.S. Embassy Abidjan may **not** review applications from or make awards to applicants that have not completed all applicable UEI and SAM.gov requirements. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards." Per NOFO Section D.3.1, "Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO in Section G at least **two weeks prior to the deadline stated in the NOFO and provide a justification for their request**. UEI/SAM.gov Exemption must be approved by a warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review." All applications will undergo a technical eligibility review by U.S. Embassy Abidjan that includes review of SAM.gov; proof of SAM.gov Entity Registration is not an application requirement.

QUESTION 9: Could you please clarify if the two Performance Indicators listed on p.3 of the NOFO are required or illustrative?

ANSWER 9: Performance indicators included in the NOFO and in the DRAFT Scope of Work are required in the application/proposal as indicated in Section A.5 "All applicants will be required to address **A. Project Description** in the **Scope of Work** (*Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)*) attachment (see Section D.2.1.6)."

QUESTION 10: Could you please clarify if the priority region "Africa" means strictly Sub-Saharan Africa?

ANSWER 10: Priority region is Africa. Locations for proposed activities would be selected in consultation with African host governments receiving the transaction advisory services and capacity-building programs. The project may benefit governments of the following member countries of the Africa Development Bank (AfDB): Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Togo, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, eSwatini, Zambia, Mauritania, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Burundi.

The following AfDB countries will not be eligible to benefit from this assistance: Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Niger.

QUESTION 11: Could you please clarify if applicants can submit in one combined Word Document the following sections: 1) Cover Page/Executive Summary; 2) Table of Contents; 3)

Proposal Narrative; 4) Timeline; 5) Gender and Inclusion Analysis; 6) Key Personnel Summary; 7) CV or Resume of Key Personnel; 8) Security Plan; 9) Contingency Plan; 10) COVID Contingency Plan; 11) Additional documents (e.g., Letters of Support, Official Permission Letters, Letters of Disclosure; Letter of Institutional Support)?

ANSWER 11: For ease of technical eligibility review and potential revisions/negotiations it is preferred, but not required, that each document be submitted as a stand-alone document.

QUESTION 12: Could the list of recent/relevant USG Awards be submitted in a separate annex?

ANSWER 12: This list must be included in the Proposal Narrative. Per NOFO Section D.2.1.5, "Proposal Narrative* (not to exceed ten (10) pages)… The Proposal Narrative **must include** the following: "Introduction to the Organization: A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the project, including information on all relevant or similar type projects from previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. Government agencies."

QUESTION 13: Documents SF- 424 424A 424B and SFLLL could not be opened, so we are unsure of their content or if they are applicable?

ANSWER 13: Please review the version of Adobe Acrobat that your organization is currently using. If that version is outdated, your organization may be unable to open pdfs. Grants.gov is the official repository for all SF forms, and links are provided as follows:

https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html

and

https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html

QUESTION 14: Certain items on the package checklist state "*only if applicable*". Please confirm which items are applicable to the XXXX'S proposed application;

ANSWER 14: The following documents were listed as "only if applicable" in the 2023 NOFO Application Package Checklist - Overseas: Gender and Inclusion Analysis, Security Plan, Contingency Plan, and Burma Due Diligence Assessment.
Per the NOFO, the following documents are required for application submission: Gender and Inclusion Analysis, Security Plan, and Contingency Plan.

QUESTION 15: Please clarify who will constitute a Program Partners for the purpose of this application? – E.G. Would you require letters from all our panel law firms and/or development partners that we may be working with on potential projects that would be supported by this funding? Is so, how many letters are required?

ANSWER 15: In response to Question 6 above, the answer indicated that "these letters should be prepared by the partners the applicant has identified as potentially providing support to the proposed activities (such as consultants or law firms) and submitted by the applicant." At this time, please provide letters from the key firms that your organization may work with specifically those dedicated to sovereign finance.

QUESTION 16: Letter(s) of Institutional Support to indicate that organization's leadership – Is a letter from our Governing Council and Management board sufficient for this purpose?

ANSWER 16: Yes.

QUESTION 17: The checklist states we have to attach a "NICRA Letter". We understand that a NICRA letter relates a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement. We do not have this document and our research into this suggests the process for establishing a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) can take up to six months (180 days) from the time an Indirect Cost Proposal (ICP)is submitted. Please confirm how we should proceed in respect of the NICRA letter

ANSWER 17: Per NOFO, Section D.2.1.12 "**NICRA Letter: If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA letter should be included as a PDF file.** This document will not be reviewed by the Merit Review Panel but will be used by project and grant team if the submission is recommended for funding. Organizations that have previously established indirect cost rates must submit timely indirect cost proposals to their cognizant agency as required by Appendix III & IV of 2 CFR 200. If indirect cost proposals have not been submitted for re-negotiation, as required, out-of-date NICRAs may not be considered. If your proposal involves subawards to organizations charging indirect costs, please submit their NICRA, if applicable.