



January 9, 2023

Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72068823RFA00001– Amendment 1

Activity Title: USAID Doniya Taabolo Activity

Dear Prospective Applicants:

This amendment modifies the subject NOFO No. 72068823RFA00001, to provide answers to questions raised by potential applicants by the deadline for general consideration of interested parties.

With this amendment 1:

- The due date for receiving applications is modified to read: "February 10, 2023, close of business, Bamako Time."
- A.4. IR 2, last sentence is modified to read: "This activity will provide support for reading instruction in grades 3-4 and mathematics instruction in grades 2-4."
- A.4.Sub-IR 3.3, Target Beneficiaries, point 2 is modified to read: "Potential number of students reached in grades 2-4: 200,000, including approximately 50 percent girls and 3 percent children with disabilities."
- A.6., Flexibility/Crisis Modifier, first sentence of paragraph 2 is modified to read: "The recipient is required to set aside \$1,500,000 over the life of the activity for the 'Windows of Opportunity' fund."
- E.2.a, Criterion 1 Technical Approach, first bullet is modified to read: "The extent to which the applicant's proposed technical approach to achieve the goals and intermediate results outlined in the Activity Description is clear, ambitious, innovative, evidence-based, and appropriately tailored for each targeted region."

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "NH", written over a blue circular stamp.

Nathan Hilgendorf
Agreement Officer

Attachment A: Responses to Questions

Attachment B: Illustrative Local Compensation Plan

Attachment A: Responses to Questions

Technical:

1. Given the end of year holidays and many local organizations and ministry partners' staff are out of their offices during the last week of December, we respectfully request an extension of two weeks for the submission of the proposal to ensure adequate consultation and buy-in from local partners.

Response: The due date for receiving applications is modified to read: February 10, 2023, close of business, Bamako Time.

2. Additionally, can USAID provide access to USAID/SIRA final project report and final performance evaluation report on the Development Experience Clearinghouse to ensure that lessons learned from the project are properly incorporated into the design of Doniya Taabolo proposals?

Response: The Final SIRA Report is not yet in the DEC. The Report is being reviewed by USAID.

3. Can USAID please clarify the target grades for math interventions? On page 4 the NOFO states "math for grades 2-4" is mentioned, on page 10 "mathematics instruction in grades 1-4," on page 11, "potential number of students reached in grades 1-4" and on page 12 "mathematics instruction will be improved for grades 2-4".

Response: Math is for Grades 2, 3, and 4.

4. How much emphasis is/should there be on a trauma-informed/conflict-sensitive approach? What would/might that look like?

Response: The applicant should present its recommended approach.

5. Can USAID please clarify the extent that Doniya Taabolo is to include non-formal education?

Response: Non-formal education is not part of Doniya Taabalo.

6. On pg. 9, the NOFO states "Additionally, it is assumed that education will continue to be a priority of both the Government of Mali (GoM) and the USG and that resources will not be dramatically decreased on the USG side." Can USAID clarify what circumstances might result in dramatic decreases in resources on the USG side?

Response: Insecurity, political instability, delay in return to constitutional order and democratically elected government may negatively impact USG aid to the Government of Mali.

7. On pg. 11, it states "MNE will have a complete four-year Level 1 reading curriculum for primary school learners." Can USAID please explain what is meant by "Level 1"?

Response: Level 1 means Grades 1 and 2.

8. Can USAID please share what the MNE transitional model looks like? What percentage of the school day (by time or subject matter) is taught in French for each grade in primary school? In Grade 5, the language of instruction is French. Will the Bamanankan language be taught as a subject in Grade 5 and 6? Does Grade 1 include oral French? At what grade is French literacy introduced?

Response: a. Grade 1 does not include French language.
b. Grade 2 starts with oral French.
c. Grades 3 and 4 include oral and written French.
d. Grades 5 and 6 are not included in Doniya Taabalo.

9. Can USAID share more information on MNE's bilingual curriculum schools' math curriculum, and whether the scope and sequence, standards/competencies, etc. are different from those used for classic schools?

Response: The applicant should conduct the necessary research.

10. The NOFO is contradictory on the support that is required for literacy in Grades 1-2. The Activity Description suggests that materials and training (IR 1) should be provided for a "community-based education activity designed to meet the needs of children grades 1-4" (section A-4; 3.1, 3.2., 3.3), and yet also indicates that the Activity should now focus on Grades 3-4. IR 2 states, "At this stage of USAID support to the education sector, the MNE should be capable of scaling up the use of evidence-based reading instruction for grades 1-2 in local language nationwide on their own. The activity will provide support for reading instruction in grades 3-4 and mathematics instruction in grades 1-4."

Response: Math is for Grades 2, 3, and 4. Reading and writing in Bamanankan language is for Grades 3 and 4.

11. On page 10, the NOFO mentions under IR 2: "At this stage of USAID support to the education sector, the MNE should be capable of scaling up the use of evidence-based reading instruction for grades 1-2 in local language nationwide on their own." Can USAID confirm that the MNE is "capable" as well as committed to scaling up?

Response: The PRODEC II includes four languages: Bamanakan, Fulfulde, Songhai, and Tamasheq. The MNE supports all the four languages.

12. Can USAID share how the Mission came up with an estimate of the target for teaching and learning materials as 266,000?

Response: Materials are counted for each school director, teacher, and student.

13. The NOFO mentions Global Book Alliance (GBA) provided books to 200 schools. Are the GBA books to be delivered in all 1,000 Activity schools? Are they aligned to the curriculum?

Response: These books are supplemental books validated by the MNE and were already distributed to GBA schools in 2022. The books are open source thus can be printed by the Doniya Taabalo partner schools to support student reading.

- 14.** On page 9 of the NOFO, the Theory of Change mentions “inclusive tools.” Can USAID please clarify what is meant by inclusive tools?

Response: Gender, conflict, and inclusive education sensitive tools.

- 15.** Can USAID please clarify whether the COP and DCOP requirements, “have a minimum of 6 to 8 years of experience in early grade reading and math programs, teacher training and professional development, curriculum and material design or in similar context,” is a case where candidates must have technical experience in all the areas listed here, or at least one of the areas listed?

Response: The COP and DCOP must have the required experience in at least one the areas listed.

- 16.** Can USAID please provide the breakdown of funding by program area that is supposed to be found in Section B?

Response: Please see Section A.4. Activity Description and Section A.5. Technical Approach and Program Interventions, for the program area and propose the funding breakdown.

E.2.a, Criterion 1 “Technical Approach”, first bullet is modified to read: The extent to which the applicant’s proposed technical approach to achieve the goals and intermediate results outlined in the Activity Description is clear, ambitious, innovative, evidence-based, appropriately tailored for each targeted region.

- 17.** Is the Activity expected to work on teacher certification and supervision? (Purpose #3).

Response: Yes, see the section entitled Purpose, on page 8.

- 18.** Section B.2 includes Indicator 9 which is likely outside the capacity of applicants to influence without MNE support. Has USAID entered into discussion with MNE about teachers remaining in Activity schools for the duration of the Activity?

Response: The implementing partner of Doniya Taabalo should work with the MNE to acquire permission for the teachers to remain in the same Doniya Taabalo partner schools.

- 19.** On page 12, it states “Every effort should be made to enroll and retain children with disabilities in mainstream public schools and train specialized teachers on the use of sign language and braille.” Can USAID please clarify whether this statement means that the Doniya Taabolo Activity should aim to integrate specialized teachers who are able to teach using sign language and braille into mainstream schools or does it mean that specialized teachers in their existing schools should be trained on improved math and reading instruction using sign language and braille?

Response: Both approaches are fine.

- 20.** Does USAID envision an external evaluator being contracted to evaluate the project? Or that all project evaluations be internally led?

Response: An external evaluation will be conducted by the USAID/Mali Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Platform. The implementing partner of Doniya Taabalo will be required to work with the external evaluator.

- 21.** SUB IR 1.4 states “improved early-grade reading and early-grade math assessment (EGRA and EGMA) tools. The EGRA tool created under previous interventions for beneficiaries with visual impairments can be used and adapted as necessary.” Does USAID envision assessments for students with disabilities other than low vision?

Response: Yes, assessments can include deaf and/or blind and partially sighted students.

- 22.** Pg. 4 of NOFO states, “the activity will continue efforts of the Selective Integrated Reading Activity (SIRA) but will focus on reading and writing in Bamanankan language for level 2 (Grade 3 and 4) and math for grades 2-4.” What is meant by “level 2”?

Response: Level 2 is Grades 3 and 4.

- 23.** “Since this activity continues the efforts made by USAID/SIRA, it will support some of the same communities, but implement primarily in safer areas of Bamako, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Segou, Bougouni, Koutiala, Dioila.” NOFO p6.

The region of San is not listed. Does this mean it is entirely removed for security reasons or other reasons? Or is it still to be included in the Segou region?

Response: San is included in the Segou Region.

- 24.** “Target Beneficiaries - The following targets are proposed: 1,000 public/community primary schools: schools where all teachers and materials are provided by the GOM, classes in which 100 percent of subjects in grade one are taught in Bamanankan, and oral use of French accounts for only 25% of instruction time starting in second grade.” NOFO p11

Does this mean that schools that do not respect the percentage of national language/French described by the bilingual curriculum (100% of national language in Gr1, 25% of French in Grade 2, etc.) would not be eligible to participate? Does this mean that schools with voluntary teachers, not assigned by MoE or district-level authorities are also not eligible to participate?

Response: Volunteer teachers should not be included in Doniya Taabalo. Schools that do not respect the MNE curriculum should not be included in Doniya Taabalo.

- 25.** Would USAID kindly provide the envisioned start date for this activity?

Response: June 30, 2023, is the envisioned start date of the award.

- 26.** Would USAID please confirm that per language included on pages 33-34 of the RFA, the applicant is not required to submit History of Performance and Branding Strategy & Marking Plan as part of its cost proposal.

Response: The applicant is not required to submit History of Performance and Branding Strategy & Marking Plan at the time of submitting applications. Please see Sections D.6.h and D.6.i.

- 27.** “USAID has determined that a Negative Determination with conditions applies to one or more of the proposed activities.” NOFO p. 18

Response: There is no question posed.

28. The page linked in Section A.7.II (https://ecd.usaid.gov/document.php?doc_id=57012) lists “None” under Specific Conditions. The “Source Files” link on that page directs the user to contact USAID to request a copy of the source file. Could USAID kindly clarify the conditions attached to the Negative Determination and attach a full copy of the IEE with the NOFO?

Response: The Doniya Taabalo IEE is in the process of being changed to a Request for Categorical Exclusion.

29. Can USAID please provide the list of schools that benefited from the SIRA project with information on their locations?

Response: The applicants should be conducting their own research on the DEC and other sources.

30. Can USAID please share additional documents (evaluation reports, etc.) about recently concluded or ongoing USAID-funded Education Activities in Mali, to ensure all applicants have the same access to information about current or recently concluded activities?

Response: The applicants should be conducting their own research on the DEC and other sources.

31. As USAID wants a continuation of the USAID/SIRA approach that developed the Bamanankan language reading curriculum for grades 1-2, can USAID please provide additional information on the approach utilized, and the curriculum?

Response: The applicants should be conducting their own research on the DEC and other sources.

32. Under the Introduction on page 4, the RFA states that Doniya Taabolo will focus on math skills for grades 2-4, however under IR 2, the RFA states that Doniya Taabolo will provide support for math instruction in grades 1-4. Can USAID please confirm that support for math instruction should cover grades 1-4?

Response: Math is only for Grades 2, 3, and 4.

33. Page 9 of the RFA, Sub-IR 1.2 refers to a supplement to the teacher training curricula which the MNE has agreed to develop. Can USAID please confirm if this supplement has already been developed (and if yes provide access to these materials), or if it would still need to be developed during the anticipated project period?

Response: The teacher training curricula were already developed by the MNE through support of USAID/SIRA.

34. The last paragraph on page 17 of the RFA states that the Windows of Opportunity fund “will allow the recipient and USAID flexibility in responding to urgent, unexpected or politically sensitive situations which may not be foreseen at the time of the issuance of award.” This paragraph then states, “the recipient should be prepared to react quickly to opportunities or challenges that may emerge and offer the potential to advance the program’s objectives.”
- Does USAID envision the Windows of Opportunity fund to only be used for urgent, unexpected or politically sensitive situations, or does USAID also envision using this fund for other adaptations such as piloting potential solutions or capitalizing on opportunities in non-urgent contexts that offer the potential to advance the program’s objectives?

Response: The Windows of Opportunity fund should be used to allow the recipient and USAID flexibility in responding to urgent, unexpected or politically sensitive situations which may not be foreseen at the time of the issuance of the award.

- Can USAID please clarify if the intent is for USAID to activate the Windows of Opportunity fund/crisis modifier when it determines it is necessary, or if the Awardee would activate it based on agreed criteria and with USAID's review and approval?

Response: Prior to using the Windows of Opportunity funds, the recipient shall identify the activity to be funded, including the required amount for funding such activity, and obtain written approval from the USAID/Mali Agreement Officer. Funds from the Windows of Opportunity budget line item must not be expended without the prior written approval from the Agreement Officer.

- Can USAID please confirm that \$1,500,000 is meant to be set aside as the crisis modifier, as opposed to \$1,500,000,000 as listed in the RFA?

Response: Yes, \$1,500,000.00 is the amount.

- 35.** On page 19 under Applicant's Requirements, there is reference to Environmental Compliance and Management. Can USAID please clarify if and where in the proposal this approach should be included, or if this is something only necessary as a separate annex for the apparently successful applicant to complete at a later stage?

Response: Applicants should include it as part of their applications.

- 36.** Page 25 of the RFA states that tables must be in 12-point font, but on page 26 it states that tables may be in a smaller font. Can USAID please confirm that applicants are allowed to present tables in a smaller than 12-point font as long as it is legible?

Response: Technical Application must be written in English and must not exceed 15 pages. Page limitations include the following requirements: single-spaced paragraph, one-inch (1") margins, 12-point (minimum) Times New Roman font with each page numbered consecutively. Smaller fonts are permitted for graphics and tables as long as the words are clearly readable. Paragraphed texts in annexes must follow the font size requirements. Annexes should be numbered and are not counted into the 15-pages limit of technical application.

- 37.** Page 27 of the RFA states "At a minimum, applicants should describe the extent to which the applicant's proposed technical approach is clear, ambitious yet feasible, innovative, evidence-based, appropriately tailored to for each targeted department, and reflects the funding breakdown by program area." The Merit Review Criteria also references the "funding breakdown by program area as outlined in section B.1 of the NOFO," but there are no program areas listed in section B.1. Can USAID please clarify if this was meant to refer to the three core areas of section A.4, and what is meant by "the funding breakdown by program area"? Does USAID want applicants to present the percentage of budget allocated to each program area? If yes, can USAID please specify a list of program areas and any other guidance or expectations about funds available per program area or how funds should be allocated and presented across these areas?

Response: Please see Section A.4. Activity Description and Section A.5. Technical Approach and Program Interventions, for the program area and propose the funding breakdown.

E.2.a, Criterion 1 "Technical Approach", first bullet is modified to read: The extent to which the applicant's proposed technical approach to achieve the goals and intermediate results outlined in the Activity Description is clear, ambitious, innovative, evidence-based, appropriately tailored for each targeted region.

- 38.** On page 27 section (f) Management and Staffing, Key Positions, the RFA specifies a "Senior Pedagogy and Language Advisor", and a "Senior Math Advisor". On page 28, the titles are "Senior Pedagogy Language Advisor" and a "Senior Pedagogy Math Advisor". Can USAID please clarify which are the correct titles for these two positions?

Response: Senior Pedagogy Language Advisor and Senior Pedagogy Math Advisor are the correct titles.

39. On page 28, the RFA provides similar requirements for the COP, DCOP, and Senior Pedagogy Language Advisor. There is concern that having 3 Key Personnel with similar profiles would create redundancies and limit the flexibility of applicants to propose a leadership team with varied expertise to maximize program effectiveness and impact in all aspects of implementation. We ask USAID to consider reducing these overlapping requirements to provide applicants more flexibility to identify strong local experts with a wider range of experience and expertise.

Response: The requirements for the Chief of Party, Deputy Chief of Party, and the Senior Pedagogy Language Advisor are not redundant and will not be modified.

40. On page 28, the RFA provides requirements for the M&E Specialist, with greater detail than is often seen in USAID solicitations. Would USAID consider reducing these extensive requirements in order to provide applicants more flexibility to identify strong local M&E and CLA experts?

Response: The minimum requirements for the Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist will not be modified.

41. What is the measurement tool for measuring environmental compliance? Can USAID please clarify the updated policy (if there is one)?

Response: The measurement tool (template) will be provided after the award is made to the successful recipient.

Cost:

1. Is there an exchange rate USAID would prefer us to use?

Response: There is not an exchange rate USAID would prefer you to use given the exchange rate fluctuations.

2. Are sub partners required to be registered in the SAM at the time of proposal submission?

Response: Pursuant to AAPD No. 22-04 UEI/SAM Registration Exception for Assistance Awards: 2 CFR 25.110(c)(2)(iii) dated September 26, 2022, and continues in effect *until January 31, 2023, unless rescinded earlier*, the Agreement Officer (AO) may share the special award condition with a recipient for use in any subawards where the AO has authorized the prime recipient to proceed with the subaward before the subrecipient has obtained its UEI.

3. Under Section D.6.f, can USAID clarify the information that must be provided for subawards? For example, can USAID clarify that only screenshots proving exclusion from OFAC, and other lists are required?

Response: The applicant must provide all the required information for all subawards as requested in Section D.6.f. The applicant may provide screenshots in addition to the required information.

4. What is the anticipated start date of this award? The NOFO states that the start date will be the award date but doesn't give a timeline.

Response: June 30, 2023, is the anticipated effective start date of the award.

5. Can USAID clarify if the categories to include should match those on the SF424 or match those listed in D.6.d of the NOFO. The NOFO states the budget format should match that of the SF424 but then also includes different cost categories that need to be included?

Response: The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series as indicated in Section D.6.b. The applicant must also submit the budget as described and required in Section D.6.d.

6. Pg.33-34: Can USAID please clarify whether any History of Performance information is required at the time of submitting proposals? If History of Performance information is required at the time of submitting proposals, can USAID state whether or not there are parameters on the past performance presented?

Response: History of Performance information is not required at the time of submitting applications. In accordance with Section D.6.h “History of performance reviews will be initiated only on the “apparently successful applicant” as part of the applicant’s risk assessment/responsibility determination”.

7. On page 40, it states, “USAID has established a suggested cost share of 5 percent of the Award’s projected value of \$1,800,000 (5% of \$36,000,000) for the recipient of the award,” While on page 23 it states, “The percentage of cost-share contributions is required, at a minimum of 5 (five) percent, over the life of the five-year project.” Can USAID please clarify whether cost share is suggested or if it is required and at a 5% minimum?

Response: Cost share is required and at a 5% minimum.

8. In order to propose salaries that are comparable with USAID’s salaries, would USAID kindly provide its local compensation plan for CCN staff?

Response: The illustrative Local Compensation Plan is provided in attachment B of this amendment.

9. On page 30 where detailed budgets and budget narratives are requested, can USAID please confirm that only budgets for sub-recipients with substantial portions of the budget are required to be submitted and that detailed submissions are not required for all sub-recipients who would not be considered core partners?

Response: This is incorrect. Detailed budgets and budget narratives are requested for all proposed sub recipients to the extent they are known at the time of application development and must align with the same requirements as the applicant’s budget.

10. The RFA requests several cost documents from the applicant (such as Representations and Certifications, SF424B, and Certificate of Compliance as described in Section D.6.c, page 30). Are these items required from proposed subrecipients, or only from the prime applicant?

Response: The requested representations and certifications, SF424B, and certificate of compliance are only required from the prime applicant as described in Section D.6.c.

11. “Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to: 1. Provide a valid UEI number for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients...” NOFO p 33

Given that many organizations have struggled to obtain a UEI, and given the supplementary guidance provided by USAID via AAPD 22-04 relative specifically to the exception at 2 CFR 25.110(c)(2)(iii), could USAID kindly confirm that the applicant may propose sub-recipients who have not yet obtained UEIs? Assuming that is the case, can USAID kindly confirm whether providing a case number of a helpdesk ticket in lieu of a final UEI will be sufficient for the approval of subawards as described in Section D.6.f, page 33?

Response: Pursuant to AAPD No. 22-04 UEI/SAM Registration Exception for Assistance Awards: 2 CFR 25.110(c)(2)(iii) dated September 26, 2022, and continues in effect until January 31, 2023, unless rescinded earlier, the Agreement Officer (AO) may share the special award condition with a recipient for use in any subawards where the AO has authorized the prime recipient to proceed with the subaward before the subrecipient has obtained its UEI.

12. On page 25 section D.3. General Content and Forms of Application bullet 6, the RFA states that “the estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application.” Section B.3 on page 20 states that the start date will be the “effective date of the award.” In order to make cost estimates as accurate as possible and comply with section D.3, could USAID please provide an estimated start date to use in the Cost Application?

Response: June 30, 2023, is the anticipated effective start date of the award.

General Format:

1. Can USAID please clarify what content is expected in the Management and Staffing Section of the Technical Approach (as a part of the 15-page limit), and what content is expected in the Management and Staffing Annex, other than the organigram?

Response: It is required that the Management and Staffing Section contains resumes for the candidates proposed as key personnel and for any long-term candidates not proposed as key personnel.

2. “USAID’s preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, e.g., that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.” NOFO pp 25-26 In the case that consolidation is not possible, is there a limit on the number of attachments (per email) for the electronic submission?

Response: There is not a limit on the number of attachments for the electronic submission. However, the total size for all attachments must not exceed 10 megabytes in one email.

Attachment B: Illustrative Local Compensation Plan

Grade	Basic Rate	Currency (CFA)	Salary Minimum	Salary Maximum	Job Title (Function)
	No Benefits included		Step - 1	Step - 13	Titles
FSN 1 - 2	Annual	Mali	2,551,273	4,890,628	Janitor, Driver, Janitor, Gardener, Warehouseman, File Clerk, Duplicating Equipment Operator
FSN 3 - 4	Annual	Mali	3,717,263	6,478,866	Guard, Mail Clerk, Clerk Typist, Distribution Clerk, Clerk Typist, Receptionist, Office Machine Repairman, Telephone Operator
FSN 5 - 6	Annual	Mali	5,248,668	10,695,805	Supply Clerk, Data Entry Clerk, Telephone Operator, Shipment Assist, Document Control Clerk, Files Mgr., Motor Pool Supervisor, Property Records Manager
FSN 7 - 8	Annual	Mali	8,836,454	17,785,637	Secretary, Office Manager, Maintenance Foreman, Maintenance Inspector, Procurement Assistant, Voucher Examiner, Cashier, Payroll Liaison Assist, Executive Admin Assist, Human Resources Assistant, Development Program Assistant, Property Mgt Supervisor
FSN 9 - 10	Annual	Mali	15,473,415	29,002,527	Budget Analyst, Sup. Voucher Examiner, Maintenance Specialist, Human Resources Assistant, Procurement Specialist, Management Assistant, Dev Assist Specialist/Financial Analyst, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, Acquisition Specialist, Project Management Specialist.
FSN 11 - 12	Annual	Mali	21,897,069	41,137,714	Financial Analyst, Dev Program Specialist, Budget Specialist, Conflict Specialist, Executive Specialist, Systems Administrator, Project Management Specialist, Chief Accountant, Supervisory Financial Analyst, Development Program Specialist.