

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

No.: 680-13-000001-RFA ANCRE

Advancing Newborn, Child and Reproductive Health (ANCRE)

AMENDMENT No. 01

TECHNICAL AND COST QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Question 1: Please clarify the mechanism for identification of the frequently referenced pages 2, 3, 11, 12, etc.) ten designated health zones – e.g. are these health zones to be pre-selected by USAID, proposed by the applicant, or determined upon award? If these have already been identified, can USAID please detail which ten zones will be targeted?

Answer 1: *These ten health zones have been designated by USAID/Benin as the geographic focus for ANCRE: Kandi-Segbana-Gogounou, Cove-Ouinhi-Zangnanado, Savalou-Bante, Djougou-Ouaké-Copargo, Bassila, Abomey-Calavi-Sô Ava, Allada-Ze-Toffo, and two health zones of Cotonou.*

Question 2: On page 3 of the RFA, USAID introduces the concept that ANCRE will work with pre-identified local NGO partners in designated health zones. Please confirm that this is a reference to local NGOs selected to receive rolling grants under Community Health Service Delivery of PIHI (referenced on page 20) or, alternatively, please clarify the process of selection of these NGOs.

Answer 2: *The local NGOs referred to will be chosen competitively to receive funding through an Annual Program Statement (APS) with separate funding. The selected local NGOs will be mentored to improve their technical and compliance capacities through a centrally funded mechanism, Advancing Partners and Communities (APC).*

Question 3: On page 5, the RFA mentions the 2012 Benin HS 20/20 health systems assessment – could USAID share with the applicant the aforementioned document?

Answer 3: *Please refer to Question #29 below on the Benin HSA document.*

Question 4: On page 8 of the RFA, Benin GHI I.R. 2 and its sub-results are as follows: IR 2. Improved private health sector performance in delivering integrated family health services

- Sub-result 2.1. Improved public sector policies, oversight, and supervision of private sector service delivery
- Sub-result 2.2. Improved quality service delivery, especially for women and young children, at private health facilities

- What is referred to as Sub-result 2.2 of Benin GHI on page 8 (above), is referred to on page 14 as IR 2.1, and Sub-result 2.1 of Benin GHI is omitted. Please explain the omission and clarify which version of IR 2 USAID would like the proposal to address.

Answer 4: *What is identified as IR2.1 on page 14 should be labeled as IR2.2. The preceding paragraph should be labeled as the illustrative activities for IR 2.1.*

Question 5: Under IR 2.1 (as stated on page 14 of the RFA), does USAID expect the project to be working directly with the private sector in the ten Health Zones only?

Answer 5: *Applicants should propose how the private sector can be assisted in Benin in the most effective and most efficient ways. It is not always possible to separate the private sector work in the ten health zones without working nationally.*

Question 6: On page 15 of the RFA, IR 3.3. does not include any designated illustrative activities. Please clarify whether USAID would like strategies and activities proposed under this sub-result.

Answer 6: *There are no specific activities assigned under IR 3.3. Health financing activities at the community level in Benin are evolving, and applicants should have a clear understanding of current discussions on this issue, and ensure their proposals support the emerging national vision of universal health coverage.*

Question 7: On page 18, the RFA states that ‘it is not expected that this program...pilot test new approaches or other financial incentives’. IR 3.2 requests that the program ‘pilot conditional transfers, vouchers and/or other financial incentives...’. Please clarify how USAID envisions this type of pilot to fit within the scope and budget level of the program.

Answer 7: *The key word in the text is “extensive”. The piloting of conditional cash transfers, vouchers and other financial incentives should not be a major component of the proposal.*

Question 8: On page 25, the RFA states that ‘all local institutions or affiliates of international organizations must be registered as a legal entity in Benin.’ Please clarify whether this includes international organizations that will open an office in Benin only if and when awarded this procurement.

Answer 8: *The statement refers to organizations and affiliates of international organizations that wish to start work in Benin. The GOB requires that agencies working in Benin must be registered as a legal entity, whether they be local or international organizations.*

Question 9: On page 27, the RFA states that one CD with the same contents as the Technical and Cost Applications hardcopy must be included in this package. On page 28, the RFA states one CD with the same contents as the Technical Application hardcopy must also be included within the original application and on page 38 one CD with the same contents as the Cost Application hardcopy must also be included within the Original Application. Could USAID clarify if the applicant will submit separate CDs for the Cost and Technical Application or one CD with both applications?

Answer 9: *Applicant will submit separate CDs for the cost and technical application.*

Question 10: On page 28, the RFA states that the Technical Application should not exceed 33 pages. Further down on page 28, the RFA references a 18 page limitation. Please clarify what the 18 page limit refers to.

Answer 10: *The Technical Application should not exceed 33 pages in length, exclusive of annexes.*

Question 11: On page 28 of the RFA, could USAID please clarify the difference between the Past Performance program narrative section mentioned under 3) iv) and (4) Annex ii) Past performance references. Keeping in mind the page limit, could USAID clarify if the organizational past performance description on page 31 of the RFA refers to the annex past performance references or the program narrative past performance?

Answer 11: *The two references to past performance are one and the same. This may be added as an annex.*

Question 12: On page 28, the RFA requests the applications in Word and/or in Excel format. Since certain signed annex documents such as letters of support and letters of commitment will be in PDF format, is it acceptable to submit the complete technical application in PDF along with the program narrative in Word? Subsequently, is it acceptable to submit the cost application in PDF along with the proposal budgets in Excel?

Answer 12: *Signed annex documents may be submitted in PDF format. The technical and cost applications may also be submitted in PDF format.*

Question 13: On page 31, under ‘Required Qualifications for Key Personnel’, each position description, with the exception of the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Advisor, states that ‘Qualified Beninese nationals and international candidates are encouraged to apply’. The Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Advisor description states, ‘Qualified Beninese nationals are encouraged to apply’. Does this mean that the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Advisor is required to be a Beninese national?

Answer 13: *Beninese nationals are encouraged to apply for any of the positions mentioned in the proposal that they qualify for.*

Question 14: The RFA states on page 36 that the resumes must be no longer than 2 pages and also requests the inclusion of 3 references. Are the references included within the 2 page limit or can they be added on another page in the annex?

Answer 14: *References are included in the two-page limit for resumes.*

Question 15: Please clarify whether delivery by hand to USAID Benin is acceptable for proposal submission.

Answer 15: *USAID Benin is confirming both methods of submission. Electronic submission will be sent to Grants.gov 48 hours before the closing date. This is to allow for uploads.*

Question 16: In addition to the ten health zones referred to in the RFA, what are USAID's expectations in relation to continuing supporting the zones of intervention under PISAF?

Answer 16: *There are no expectations related to continuing USAID support to the zones of intervention under PISAF.*

Question 17: Fistula repair is part of the Benin GHI country strategy and under PISAF-supported activities. Does USAID consider strengthening services for fistula repair as part of the ANCRE scope of work?

Answer 17: *No. This activity is now covered under a different funding mechanism.*

Question 18: Could USAID please clarify the N.B statement on page 36 of the RFA stating that “any individual that was involved in the design of this program description at any level is precluded from participation in this procurement process i.e. evaluation, recruitment of any position for any potential applicant.” Does USAID mean that personnel involved in the design of the program are precluded from being proposed as project staff for the proposal?

Answer 18: *Personnel involved in the design of the program are precluded from being proposed as project staff for the proposal.*

Question 19: Page 39 of the RFA states “Applicants must submit an overall summary budget as well as a detailed annual budget defined by result area or component. Stated another way, the budget should relate to results while also showing a type of cost for each result.” Please clarify if USAID requires a detailed budget for each of the three IRs

outlined on pages 2-3? Or a detailed budget for the entire program and a summary budget for each of the three IRs outlined on pages 2-3?

Answer 19: *A detailed budget for the entire program and a summary budget for each of the three IRs will suffice.*

Question 20: On page 42, the RFA states that for organizations (including partner organizations) that have never been awarded a U.S. government contract or grant must present the following documentation:

- (a) Audited financial statements for the past three years
- (b) Organization chart, by-laws, constitution, and articles of incorporation, if applicable
- (c) Copies of the applicant's accounting, personnel, travel and procurement policies.

As these are lengthy documents, could they be submitted to USAID in French, for local Beninese organizations who are partners to a US-based lead organization? If not, should we include both the translated documents and the originals? Is it acceptable to submit the audited financial statements submitted to the boards of local non-profit organizations?

Answer 20: *Copies of documents originally in French are acceptable, including audited financial statements submitted to the boards of local non-profits.*

Question 21: Page 28, Section E - Technical Application Format: RFA states "Technical Application should not exceed 33 pages in length, exclusive of annexes;" however, on the same page the following instructions are noted "Cover pages, dividers, table of contents, graphs and attachments (specifically key personnel resumes (no more than 2 pages each)), and letters of commitment, supporting documentations do not count within the 18 page limitation." Could USAID confirm the page limit for the technical approach and the annexes?

Answer 21: *Please refer to question 10#above*

Question 22: Can USAID confirm the proportion of the package of high impact services that are to be the focus of the ANCRE project – the entirety of the PIHI package or only those services pertaining to MNCH?

Answer 22: *USAID/Benin expects that the focus of ANCRE will be the MNCH components of the PIHI. The proportion for non-MNCH activities should be at the discretion of the Applicant.*

Question 23: Page 30, Technical Approach (vi): RFA states that the illustrative First Year Implementation Plan be included in the technical approach. Would USAID consider allowing the illustrative First Year Implementation Plan to be included as an annex to improve the readability of the technical proposal?

Answer 23: *The First Year Implementation may be included as an annex.*

Question 24: Page 36, E.4 – Annex: Resumes and Letters of Commitment: Could USAID please confirm that resumes and letters of commitment are to be included as an Annex for each proposed long-term staff member?

Answer 24: *Resumes and letters of commitment may be included for each key personnel. The maximum is two pages for each.*

Question 25: Can USAID please provide a copy of the IEE report (Program/Activity Number 680-232 of September 2012) referenced on page 37, under E.5 Environmental Compliance Requirements, 2nd paragraph in section 1c?

Answer 25: *The IEE report is attached*

Question 26: Can USAID confirm that the provision for sub-grants referenced on page 38 (first paragraph) is referring to sub-recipients that may be proposed on this application?

Answer 26: *Sub-grants refer to any sub-recipients proposed by the applicant.*

Question 27: Page 40 of the RFA under Budget Narrative, section iv. Equipment states that bidders should “Specify all equipment to be purchased, including the type of equipment, the manufacturer, the unit cost, the number of units to be purchased and the expected geographic source.” In order to allow recipients to seek out the best value to the government upon implementation, would USAID consider removing “manufacturer” from this list? This way, bidders could determine specifications for different types of equipment at the proposal stage but not be locked down to a specific manufacturer at implementation, allowing them to shop for the best price while still following USAID Procurement Procedures.

Answer 27: *The specific requirement for manufacturer may be waived, for as long as the appropriate procurement regulations are adhered to.*

Question 28: Can USAID provide applicants with an anticipated project start date for budgeting/planning purposes?

Answer 28: *February 2014*

Question 29: We are having difficulty accessing the first two links referenced in Annex A on page 60. Can USAID please provide updated links or PDF copies of the two materials - the “Revue Rapide de la Strategie Nationale” and the “Benin HSA 09_28_212”?

Answer 29: *The two documents are attached to this Amendment.*

Question 30: Page 28 of the RFA makes reference to an 18 page limit; however we understand the technical application has a page limit of 33 pages (excluding annexes). Could USAID confirm what the 18 page limit is in reference to?

Answer 30: *Please refer to question #10 above*

Question 31: Are PDF attachments acceptable for the technical application? These will be necessary for the signed letters of commitment from key personnel, at a minimum.

Answer 31: *PDF attachments are accepted for the signed letters of commitment.*

Question 32: Page 30 asks for the First Year illustrative Implementation Plan (paragraph vi). May this be included as an annex and therefore not counted against the 33 page limit?

Answer 32: *The First Year Illustrative Implementation Plan may be included as an annex.*

Question 33: In regards to the program implementation plan (paragraph v) requested on page 30, is this separate from the First Year Illustrative Implementation Plan (paragraph vi)? If it is a separate request, should this be included in the body of the technical narrative or as annex? Should it be for all four years of the program? How should it differ from the First Year Illustrative Implementation Plan in terms of content?

Answer 33: *The Program Implementation Plan is for the life of the program. The First Year Illustrative Implementation Plan provides details for the implementation of the first year, and may be included as an annex.*

Question 34: Page 31 requests a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). Could USAID whether the PMP counts toward the 30 page limit of the technical narrative, or whether it is to be included as an annex?

Answer 34: *The PMP should be part of the technical narrative and counts against the page limit of 33.*

Question 35: Advanced degrees are requested for all key personnel positions. Can lower level degrees combined with years of experience substitute for advanced degrees?

Answer 35: *Commensurate experience may be substituted for an advanced degree.*

Question 36: Page 36 of the RFA notes that the M&E Advisor should, as one responsibility, "Supervising the design and implementation of operational research..." whereas page 18 of the RFA notes that "it is not expected that this program include extensive operations research" Could USAID kindly confirm the extent to which it expects operations research to play a role in the program or not?

Answer 36: *The key word is “extensive”. ANCRE’s focus is to improve health service delivery in Benin’s public and private sectors. Limited OR may be included as part of the overall strategy, but not as the major focus.*

Question 37: Would USAID kindly consider allowing 3 pages for resumes of key personnel to allow us to demonstrate the expertise of staff against the list of requirements noted in the RFA?

Answer 37: *There should be enough space in two pages to show expertise of each staff being proposed.*

Question 38: The RFA makes reference to ten designated Health Zones several times. Will USAID share the 10 designated Health Zones which the project should focus on, or should Applicants proposed these zones in their applications? Are the health zones of Benin’s three largest cities (Cotonou, Porto-Novo, and Parakou) included in the designated health zones, or are these in addition to the 10 designated health zones?

Answer 38: *Please refer to Question #1 above.*

Question 39: Could USAID please clarify whether applicants are expected to acquire commodities for the relevant health areas designated under this solicitation for public and/or private sector activities? Will these be acquired through another mechanism?

Answer 39: *A different mechanism is used by USAID/Benin to procure commodities.*

Question 40: Given that the designated indicators outlined under the IRs are reflective of service delivery outcomes, “e.g., percent of children who received DPT3 vaccine by 12 months of age” it is unclear whether this project’s success will be based on health impact or the technical assistance provided to achieve these health outcomes? Could USAID kindly clarify this point?

Answer 40: *The success of the project will be reflected by the improvements in health service delivery outcomes in Benin. The applicant will coordinate with the other implementing partners listed to ensure that efforts are synchronized for maximum effect on outcomes.*

Question 41: Some of the illustrative indicators requested pertain to health outcomes achieved in areas that are supported by US government (USG) projects, e.g., “percent of deliveries using active management of third stage labor in USG-assisted departments” whereas other indicators do not specify a geographic area, e.g., “percent of children with diarrhea receiving treatment with ORS & zinc”. Are applicants to assume that all indicators pertain only to USG-assisted areas?

Answer 41: *The geographic areas of focus were chosen partly on the basis of lagging indicators. It is expected that as indicators improve in the ten health zones, they will also contribute to the national health picture.*

Question 42: In several sections of the RFA, it is stated that the project will work “in the 10 designated Health Zones”. Can USAID clarify in which departments and Health Zones the project is expected to carry out activities?

Answer 42: Please refer to Question #1 above.

Question 43: Requirements for the key positions of Private Sector Technical Advisor and Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Advisor include a Master’s Degree. In addition, the key positions of MNCH Technical Advisor and Community Health Systems Technical Advisor require an advanced degree. Can commensurate experience substitute for either an advanced degree or a Master’s degree?

Answer 43: Please refer to Question #35 above.

Question 44: In addition to the CVs, letters of commitment and past performance references, may we include other attachments in the annex such as the: Performance Monitoring Plan indicator table, technical skills matrix, and the illustrative First Year Implementation Plan?

Answer 44: Please refer to Questions #31 and #32 above.

Question 45: May the technical and cost applications be combined into one CD, or does USAID expect one CD each for the technical and cost applications (i.e. two CDs total)?

Answer 45: Please refer to question #9 above

Question 46: The RFA requires hard copy submission. Can you confirm that date postmarked package for date of submission is considered to demonstrate bidder’s adherence to required timely submission?

Answer 46: No, Postmark does not constitute acceptance of Application. Acceptance is the date when the Application is received at the facility.

Question 47: On page 31, the guidance for Organizational Past Performance stipulates that the primary applicant (as well as partners substantially involved in implementation) provide references of programs implemented “over the past three years”. Is it possible for applicants to provide references for relevant projects that have been implemented for less than 3 years?

Answer 47: It is possible to provide details of projects for less than three years.

Question 48: On page 38, under Cost/Business Application Format, it is stated that all applicants are to submit an “acknowledgement of any amendments to the RFA”. This type of requirement is required for RFP, would USAID clarify the need for this request?

Answer 48: *This acknowledgement is not required. Please disregard.*

Question 49: On page 38, under Cost/Business Application Format, it is stated that applicants are also to include any “teaming documents (if any)”. Is USAID referring to Teaming Agreements or Joint-Venture documentation? Please clarify.

Answer 49: *USAID refers to teaming agreements, if any.*

Question 50: On page 31 of the RFA, the title of the Monitoring & Evaluation position is “Specialist” whereas on page 35, the title indicated is “Advisor”. Can USAID clarify the actual title for the M&E position?

Answer 50: *The M&E position can be designated as either Specialist or Advisor.*

Question 51: Regarding the Past Performance References, can applicants provide the total amount awarded for each project?

Answer 51: *The total amounts may be provided.*