

ATTACHMENT 1

Questions submitted by interested parties regarding RFA 7200AA20RFA00001 for Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU)

Q1. While this is not a grant per se but a cooperative agreement, is there a need to submit a concept note? If CN is needed, when is the deadline? Or do we only have to be aware of the November 26 deadline?

A1. Submission of a concept note is not considered under this NOFO. A full application must be submitted by the date specified on the cover page.

Q2. Can applicants propose scaling up a technology or platform that was implemented in one pilot project? It won't be a direct replication as the strategy will be tweaked or adjusted.

A2. Applicants must respond to all aspects of the NOFO and may propose to scale up a particular platform or technology consistent with the Donor Principles for Digital Development, as appropriate to the country context.

Q3. Is this a multi-country agreement?

A3. This mechanism will be based in the USAID Global Health Bureau and is expected to work in 20 or more countries over the course of the project as noted in Section A.7 of the NOFO. It will accept field support funds from USAID Missions working in the health sector.

Q4. What is the funding ceiling for Asian countries, given that the majority of the work will be in Africa?

A4. There is no funding ceiling for a given country or region.

Q5. Are local NGOs but part of an international federations allowed to submit a Technical and Budget narrative for this NOFO?

A5. Any organization or consortium of organizations may apply including local NGOs that may or may not be part of an international organization.

Q6. Does the solicitation's mention of prioritizing open source technology on page 10 of the solicitation preclude the project from harnessing closed source technology to meet project targets?

A6. While the project is able to include limited closed source technology where appropriate to meet project targets, overall project approaches should be consistent with the Principles for

Digital Development and the Donor Principles on Digital Health (www.donorprinciples.org), endorsed by USAID.

Q7. Could USAID please explain how this project will be expected to interact and work with the Translating Data for Implementation (DiFI) program and the implementing partners of DiFI?

A7. CHISU will focus on strengthening the host country capacity to enhance, manage and use health information systems and will coordinate with other USAID projects that may be underway in a particular country. As stated in the NOFO, the objectives are broader than that of the DataFI project that is more specifically focused on HIV/AIDS.

Q8. Does USAID expect the country buy-ins for DiFI to overlap with the countries who buy-in to CHISU?

A8. The Mission buy-in will depend on Mission needs and priorities. It is possible that a Mission may opt to have both activities supported; however, the approach and specific activities will compliment rather than duplicate services and activities. The CHISU objectives include work on enhancing the governance and enabling environment, technology and data use across the health sector which may supplement the types of activities targeted with the DataFI activity.

Q9. Could USAID please clarify the expected start date of the project?

A9. The expected start date is February 2020. The NOFO is being amended accordingly.

Q10. Could USAID please clarify if the length of the technical application and narrative is 25 pages or 30 pages, as described on page 20 of the solicitation?

A10. The Technical Application cannot exceed 25 pages. The NOFO is being amended accordingly.

Q11. Could USAID confirm if an LOE chart is required as part of the cost application following the percentages provided under each Objective in the RFA?

A11. An LOE chart is not required.

Q12. On Page 7, under subobjective 1.1, the RFA references: “The applicant will develop an approach to support host country partners in coordinating and/or developing HIS related policies and standards such as: HIS governance structures; terminology services; facility; IT procurement; connectivity; data security; interoperability of currently siloed data systems including health management information systems (HMIS), surveillance and data from NGO or private facilities; frequent reviews of data quality and data use.” Could USAID expand on “facility” in this reference?

A12. The term “facility” refers to a health facility. The NOFO is amended as follows:

*“The applicant will develop an approach to support host country partners in coordinating and/or developing HIS related policies and standards such as: HIS governance structures; terminology **for services and health facilities**; IT procurement; connectivity; data security;*

interoperability of currently siloed data systems including health management information systems (HMIS), surveillance and data from NGO or private facilities; frequent reviews of data quality and data use.”

Q13. On Page 8 of the RFA, it states: “The project will enable countries to obtain technical assistance to increase the interoperability of their information systems.”

- a. Could USAID clarify if the project is intended to provide and facilitate technical assistance under Objective 2?**
- b. Additionally, could USAID clarify if the project is expected to provide funding to third party organizations as part of the overall project budget for the facilitated technical assistance conducted outside of the awarded project team?**

A13a. Yes, the project is intended to provide and facilitate technical assistance under Objective 2.

A13b. The project can establish sub awards or contracts under assistance with other partners to achieve the expected results under this project.

Q14. On Page 16 of the RFA, it states: “There are costs associated with data security and the project. Host-country or related other stakeholders will need to include such considerations in the planning process.” Could USAID confirm if there is an expectation for host countries to contribute financially or in-kind?

A14. As part of the Journey to Self-Reliance, USAID has envisioned that this project may assist host country counterparts in planning for and contributing financially or in-kind as possible.

Q15. On Page 19 of the RFA, the start date is set at January 2019. Could USAID confirm the intended start date of the project?

A15. Please see the response to question 9 above.

Q16. On page 24 of the RFA, it states: “The narrative for the technical application must be no more than 25 pages. Pages exceeding this limit will not be evaluated. The cover page, acronyms list, table of contents, executive summary, and required annexes are not subject to the page limitation. Any figures and tables within the technical application (not the annexes) must fit within the 30-page limit.” Could USAID confirm the correct total technical application length?

A16. Please see the response to question 10 above.

Q17. On Page 28 of the RFA, the Management and Staffing Structure sections mentions the need for a staffing matrix table at 2 pages length to be included in the application. Could USAID confirm if this is to include advisory, technical, and administrative staff for all partners in the consortium?

A17. Yes, the staffing matrix should include anticipated advisory, technical and administrative staff for the consortium partners.

Q18. On Page 31 of the RFA, it states: “Major sub-recipient is defined as an entity receiving 5% of more of the total estimated budget, excluding funding to the networks.” Could USAID confirm the “networks” referenced here are the illustrative networks for coordination, communication, and collaboration listed on page 15 of the RFA?

A18. The reference to “networks” was in error. The NOFO is being amended to reflect “Major sub-recipients is defined as an entity receiving 5% or more of the total estimated budget.”

Q19. On Page 31 of the RFA, the cost application requires to budget for a total of 10 countries “...The applicant is asked to propose a budget based on 6 countries in Africa , 2 in Asia, 1 in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and 1 in the Europe and Eurasia or the Middle East region”, however on page 6 of the RFA it is stated that “It is anticipated that the project will work in 20 countries or more, over the course of the project ...”. Could USAID confirm that the offerors are to budget for 10 countries in the cost application?

A19. The NOFO is revised to require a budget for project activities in up to 20 countries. An illustrative country list may include the following: 12 countries in Africa, 4 in Asia, 2 in LAC and 2 in the E&E region. Applicants may propose regional offices or country programs that may not require an in-country presence.

Q20. On Page 31 of the RFA, the cost application requires to budget for “regional offices or may require only short-term technical assistance without in-country presence”. Could USAID confirm how many regional offices offerors should budget for?

A20. Applicants are not required to have regional offices but may propose such based on cost efficiencies, feasibility and a strategic plan to carry out the project objectives.

Q21. On Page 40 of the RFA, it states: “Profit is not allowable for recipient or subrecipients under this award.” Could USAID confirm if a Firm-Fixed-Price sub-contract would be allowable for subcontractors under this cooperative agreement?

A21. Subawards that are programmatic in nature must be sub-agreements or grants and profit is not allowed. However, contracts under a cooperative agreement are allowed if it is for ancillary services (such as computer support) and profit is allowed. If the Firm-Fixed Price contract is properly identified as procurement (purchase property or services needed to carry out the project or program) rather than a sub-award (to carry out part of a Federal award received by the pass-through entity) the prohibition against profit does not apply. Please refer to “Profit Under USAID Assistance Instruments” at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303sai.pdf> for guidance in establishing the relationship between the prime and the subawardee/subcontractor.

Q22. On Page 47, the RFA reads: “It should highlight accomplishments against implementation plans; outline progress of benchmarks against targets; describe results; document lessons learned during implementation; and recommend strategies for sustaining the networks and their activities.” Could USAID confirm the “networks” referenced here are the illustrative networks for coordination, communication, and collaboration listed on page 15?

A22. The NOFO is amended to delete references to “strategies for sustaining the network” and is replaced with “strategies for sustainable results.”

Q23. Page 19 of the NOFO states it will start in January 2019; can you clarify the illustrative actual start date for this award?

A23. Please see the response to question 9 above.

Q24. For budgeting purposes, can you provide the anticipated percentage of funding that is core and field?

A24. USAID anticipates that the majority of funds will be from field support over the life of the project.

Q25. Will there be any USAID mission buy-ins at the start of the award?

A25. USAID cannot predict the potential mission buy-in at the start of the award.

Q26. Can you clarify the following statement?: Section D: (6)(d) Page 31: USAID anticipates that the project will have regional offices or may require only short-term technical assistance without in-country presence.

A26. Please see the response to question 20 above.

Q27. Can you confirm the timeline on the due date for the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan for the apparently successful applicant?

A27. The due date to submit a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan will be determined after the apparently successful applicant is identified.

Q28. What BGH office will manage this award?

A28. This award is a cross-bureau mechanism managed by the Office of Infectious Disease.

Q29. For the History of Performance, are PPIs (Annex 5) for all awards or only three total? The data in the bullets differ from the data requested in the Annex. Can you define “related programs” for the larger organizations because this list could be exhaustive?

A29. The Past Performance Information must be provided for awards within the last three (3) years for programs that are similar in scope to the objectives of CHISU.

Q30. Are PPIs required only for the prime applicant or major sub-recipients also?

A30. Past Performance information is required for prime and major sub-applicants. The NOFO is being amended accordingly.

Q31. We request USAID to extend the deadline for proposal submissions.

A31. The deadline for submitting applications remains unchanged.

Q32. On page 19, the start date of the activity is January 2019. Can USAID clarify whether this was meant to reference another month and year?

A32. Please see the response to question 9 above.

Q33. On page 6, it states that the activity will work in 20 countries or more. On page 31, the applicant is asked to “propose a budget based on 6 countries in Africa, 2 in Asia, 1 in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and 1 in the Europe and Eurasia or the Middle East region. USAID anticipates that the project will have regional offices or may require only short-term technical assistance without in-country presence.” Could USAID please provide the following clarifications:

a. Could USAID please provide specific parameters for the country budgets (anticipated value, scope of work, level of effort, duration of support, country size, etc.) to enable interested applicants to budget more accurately. This type of information was provided in the MOMENTUM (Moving Integrated, Quality Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health and Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services to Scale) Annual Program Statement (APS) under Round 2A and was helpful to applicants.

b. Could USAID clarify whether it anticipates the regional offices to be created as part of the Mission buy-in process or if it expects interested applicants to propose regional offices in our cost proposal budget as part of the core funds for CHISU?

c. Should interested applicants be budgeting for the 10 countries referenced for a total of \$200 million or 20 countries for a total of \$200 million?

A33a. USAID cannot specify the country parameters at this time as it will depend on Mission priorities.

A33b. Applicants are not required to have regional offices but may propose such based on cost efficiencies, feasibility and strategic planning to carry out the project objectives. Regional offices would be covered through Mission-buy-in and limited core funding.

A33c. Applicants should budget for activities in up to 20 countries for a total of \$200 million. Please also see the response to question 19 above.

Q34. On page 31, USAID requests detailed budgets for each major sub-recipient for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the project. Per 2 CFR 200.306(b)(6), please confirm that applicants may reflect their proposed cost share by year for the entire implementation period of the activity, accompanied by a detailed cost share plan included in the prime recipient’s and each partner’s cost narratives.”

A34. The applicant and sub-applicants may reflect their proposed cost share by year for the entire implementation period of the activity, accompanied by a detailed cost share plan.

Q35. On page 31, USAID notes that: “Major sub-recipient is defined as any entity receiving 5% of more of the total estimated budget, excluding funding to the networks.” Can USAID please clarify what networks it is referencing here?

A35. Please see the response to question 18.

Q36. On page 35, Section h (History of Performance), it states “The completed forms [Past Performance Information (PPI)] should be included in the application’s appendix/annex.” Can USAID please clarify the following:

- a. Is there a limit on the number of relevant PPIs references that the applicant should submit within the 3-year limit?**
- b. Please confirm that PPIs should be submitted in the applicant’s cost submission.**

A36a. Please see the response to question 29 above.

A36b. Past Performance information should be submitted as part of the cost application.

Q37. In Section D3, (b) on page 23, the RFA states that “10-point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables however, must comply with the 12-point Times New Roman requirement.”

- a. For continuity with the requirements for graphs and charts, and to ensure there is enough space to expound upon all required aspects of the technical application, would USAID consider allowing tables to be submitted in 10-point font?**
- b. Additionally, could 9-point font be used text boxes?**

A37a. Yes, 10-point font is acceptable for tables. The NOFO is being amended accordingly.

A37b. Text boxes can use 10-point font. The NOFO is being amended accordingly.

Q38. On page 24, USAID references that the technical application must be no more than 25 pages but later on in the same paragraph USAID mentions a 30-page limit. Please clarify the correct page limitation for the technical sections (Technical Design; Key Personnel, Management and Staffing Structure; and Institutional Capacity and Experience) without the annexes.

A38. Please see the response to question 10 above.

Q39. On page 36, USAID references a “Branding Strategy and Marking Plan.” Should applicants submit the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan in their application?

A39. Please see the response to question 27 above.

Q40. On page 51, USAID states that applicants should mark the cover page with the following: *“This application includes data that must not be disclosed duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government’s right to use the information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. Data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}. Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following: ‘Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page.’”* May borrowers who would like the restriction to apply to all sheets be exempted from the requirement to mark every page in this manner?

A40. The applicant must mark each page it wishes to restrict.

Q41. Can USAID please confirm that the term “applicants” in the line, “**Applicants** may be included as sub awardees in only two (2) applications,” on page 21 under SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION, 3 Other, refers only to prime applicants and thus allows those applicants who are not priming to be included as sub awardees on more than two applications? If the “Applicants” does not refer to only prime applicants and refers to any applicant, then prime applicants would be allowed to submit (3) three applications (1 one as a prime and 2 as a sub awardee) while non-primes would only be allowed to be part of two (2) applications.

A41. The term “Applicant” refers to prime applicants. Sub-awardees not submitting as prime can be included in more than two (2) applications.

Q42. Under Objective 2, could USAID please confirm whether it prioritizes the integration of various routine health information systems, or more specifically the integration of data from select routine health information systems?

A42. USAID recognizes the importance of different health information systems (HIS) and being able to share data across systems (through interoperability). USAID cannot prioritize the integration of various systems versus the integration of data from select HIS for the project as this will be country driven and will need to be consistent with national strategies, in line with the Donor Principles for Digital Development.

Q43. Does USAID expect that system integration efforts under CHISU will make it feasible to phase out certain information systems?

A43. The project will be country specific and could include technical assistance provided by the project to support host country counterparts in the process of rationalizing or aligning separate systems. This may include phasing out systems that support only one health area in coordination with country, donor and Mission partners, if appropriate.

Q44. Sub-objective 2.1 (p.9) and sub-objective 2.2 (p.10) contain similar language that seems to focus both sub-objectives on interoperability. Could USAID please confirm that the focus of sub-objective 2.1 is on data quality and data alignment between systems, whereas sub-objective 2.2 focuses more specifically on the mechanisms of interoperability?

A44. Sub-objective 2.1 is focused on improving the quality of data within the system(s) and expanding the availability of quality data throughout a geographic area. Sub-objective 2.2 is targeting the technology aspects to enhance and allow for interoperability of various systems, including sustainable solutions to maintain and monitor interoperable systems.

Q45. Can USAID please clarify the difference between the results of sub-objective 3.1 and sub-objective 3.2?

A45. Sub-objective 3.1 is focused on enhancing the capacity of the health workforce to use HIS data at the facility level. Activities may be linked with supportive supervision and health workforce training. Sub-objective 3.2 is intended to support innovative approaches to improve data entry and validation of data quality at the point of service. Ultimately, the activities within sub-objective 3.2 will improve facility-based reporting and tracking of health trends and priorities.

Q46. In addition to the buy-in budgets, based on the guidance provided on page 31 of the RFA, should the offeror budget for core activities?

A46. Yes, applicants should budget for limited core activities that contribute to global leadership on related health information and data priorities as referenced in Section A.7. (page 6) of the NOFO.

Q47. Can USAID kindly confirm the technical application page limitations in the following paragraph: a. “The narrative for the technical application must be no more than 25 pages. Pages exceeding this limit will not be evaluated. The cover page, acronyms list, table of contents, executive summary, and required annexes are not subject to the page limitation. Any figures and tables within the technical application (not the annexes) must fit within the 30-page limit. Annexes not specifically requested in the NOFO instructions will not be evaluated.”

A47. Please see the response to question 10 above.

Q48. On page 21 of the NOFO, under Eligibility, 3. other, it reads: “A prime applicant may only submit one application in response to this NOFO. However, the prime applicants may also be proposed as a sub awardee as part of a consortium in another application. Applicants may be included as sub awardees in only two (2) applications” Are there any restrictions on how many applications a subawardee only may be on? Or does this restriction only apply to prime applicants?

A48. This restriction only applies to prime applicants.

Q49. On page 19 of the RFA, Section B, number 2, Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards, USAID states that the estimated start date is January 2019. Please confirm that USAID meant to state January, 2020.

A49. Please see the response to question 9 above.

Q50. On page 19 of the RFA, Section B, number 1, Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated, USAID states that it is expected to work in 20 countries or more depending on funding. However, on page 31 of the RFA, USAID then states that applicants should propose a budget based on “6 countries in Africa, 2 in Asia, 1 in Latin America and the Caribbean region and 1 in the Europe and Eurasia or the Middle East region”. Can USAID please confirm that it was intentional to ask applicants to budget for 10 countries as opposed to 20?

A50. Please see the response to question 19 above.

Q51. Can USAID confirm that the transmittal letter mentioned on page 23, will not count towards the 25 page limit for the technical narrative?

A51. The transmittal letter will not count towards the 25 page limit.

Q52. On page 24 of the RFA, USAID references two different page limits for the technical narrative, 30 and 25 pages. Kindly confirm which is the correct page limit?

A52. Please see the response to question 10 above.

Q53. On page 31 of the RFA, Section D, number 6, Business (Cost) Application Form, USAID states that major sub-recipient is defined as any entity receiving 5% or more of the total estimated budget, excluding funding to the networks. Can USAID please clarify what is meant by “funding to the networks”?

A53. Please see the response to question 18 above.

Q54. On page 19 of the RFA, Section B, number 1, Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated, USAID states that “USAID intends to provide up to \$200 million in total USAID funding not to exceed five (5) years..” and that “the project will be able to accept all forms of USAID GHP funding, both core and field support.” Can USAID please clarify what percent of funding will be dedicated to core vs. field support, as this will inform applicants budgeting process?

A54. Please see the response to question 24 above.

Q55. On page 31 of the RFA, Section D, number 6, Business (Cost) Application Form, USAID states that detailed budgets are required for major sub-recipient, which is defined as any entity receiving 5% or more of the total estimated budget. However, on page 33, under number 5) Subawards, USAID then states that sub-recipients budgets must align

with the same requirements as the applicants budget. Can USAID please confirm that detailed budgets are not required for non-major sub-recipients?

A55. Detailed budgets are required only for major sub-applicants.

Q56. Will USAID please confirm that applicants can use their own budget templates if it complies with the cost categories included in the SF-424 forms and all other USAID requirements?

A56. The applicant can use their own budget templates as long as it complies with cost categories included in the SF-424 and all other USAID requirements.

Q57. On page 36 of the RFA, Section H) History of Performance, USAID states that “The applicant must provide the following information regarding its recent history of performance for all cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed three (3) years,...”.

- a. Can USAID please clarify the minimum and maximum number of completed past performance information forms that are requested from each consortium and consortium partner?
- b. Can USAID please confirm whether this is intended to mean that each completed Past Performance Information form submitted must be for a project that is active or has been active within the past three (3) years? Technical Approach/Merit Review Questions

A57a. There is not a pre-established minimum or maximum number of PPIs to be submitted. However, USAID recommends limiting from 3 to 5 PPIs. Please see also the response to question 29 above.

A57b. Please see response to question 29 above.

Q58. Can USAID please confirm that although only 15% LOE is allocated towards Objective 4, that capacity building of local, non-governmental partners should be incorporated throughout Objective 1-3 as well?

A58. USAID confirms that aspects of the project’s objectives 1-3, include capacity building and technical assistance to host country counterparts, which in some cases includes non-governmental organizations. Objective 4 is specifically focused on capacity building of local partners that may, in the future, seek direct USAID or other donor funding and would benefit from direct capacity building and readiness for meeting USAID pre-award requirements and compliance responsibilities.

Q59. On page 42 of the RFA, under a) Merit Review, USAID states that “Applications will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the following criteria shown in descending order of importance.” Can USAID please confirm that “Technical Approach” is most important and “Institutional Capacity and Experience” is least important?

A59. Yes, “Technical Approach” is the most important and “Institutional Capacity and Experience” is less important in the criteria scale provided.

Q60. On page 26 of the RFA, under 2) Performance Monitoring and Measurement, USAID states that in addition to a draft A-MELP, applicants should “Include indicators and tools proposed, along with methods for collecting and analyzing performance data....” Due to the 3 page limitation for this section, could USAID kindly consider allowing the indicator table or draft A-MELP to be included as an annex?

A60. The draft A-MELP and indicator table must be submitted within the three (3) page limit.

Q61. Can USAID confirm if applicants can include consortium partners’ experience in the Institutional Capacity and Experience section #2 - Experience in Managing Complex Health Information Systems and Capacity Building for Data Use?

A61. Yes. Consortium partners’ experience should be included in the Institutional Capacity and Experience Section #2 - Experience in Managing Complex Health Information Systems and Capacity Building for Data Use.

Q62. Can you USAID please provide further clarity regarding how much applicant’s should focus on data use at the facility level?

A62. Objective 3, which focuses on data use is estimated to be 35 percent of the LOE for the project, as such the project is envisioned to have a strong focus on data use at the facility level. However, the degree to which each country will focus on each objective is subject to the priorities identified by USAID Missions and the host country.

Q63. Can USAID confirm that Vital registries is not a priority area for CHISU?

A63. Vital registries may be considered as a component of health information systems, similar to Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response systems (IDSR), or RHIS. Priority areas will be country driven and will need to be consistent with national strategies, in line with the Donor Principles for Digital Development.

[END OF ATTACHMENT 01]