



USAID | WEST BANK/GAZA

Notice of Funding Opportunity No.: 72029418RFA00002

Title: Global Competencies Activity

Amendment No.: One (1)

Amendment Issuance Date: April 18, 2018

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Subject: 72029418RFA00002- Amendment No. One (1)

Dear Prospective Applicants,

The purpose of this amendment is to make the following changes to the subject NOFO:

I. Section C- Eligibility Information

- i. Delete the contents of section C.2 ‘Cost Share’ in its entirety and insert the following in lieu thereof:

“USAID does not require cost sharing under this RFA. Nonetheless, USAID recognizes that cost sharing may be an important element of the USAID-Recipient relationship. Accordingly, USAID welcomes Applicants who will pledge their own resources towards the activities for which they seek USAID funding. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.306, cost sharing cannot be used as a separate factor during the merit review of applications. However, for the purposes of this RFA, the inclusion of cost sharing may be considered to break a tie if all technical and cost factors between two applications are determined equal by the Agreement Officer. Please see ADS 303.3.10 for more information on USAID requirements on cost share.

If a cost share application is accepted and made part of an award, contributions must be supported by adequate documentation, be allowable under the applicable cost principles and meet the criteria set forth in 2 CFR 200.306. In-kind contributions are allowable as cost sharing in accordance with 2 CFR 200.306. Cost sharing contributions may include volunteer services provided by professional and technical personnel; valuation of donated supplies, equipment, and other property; and, use of unrecovered indirect costs.

Funds that are paid by the Federal Government through another source may **not** be used by an organization in cost share calculations (see 2 CFR 200.306). Cost share contributions must be reported on a periodic basis on payment forms, and USAID has the right to reduce its share of funding if the cost share reported is less than the agreed upon percentage or amount contained in the award. Grantees should be prepared to distinguish in their reporting the outputs and outcomes that result from cost share contributions versus USAID

monies. If a difference remains after an award has expired, the Recipient may be required to refund the difference.

USAID does not apply its source and nationality requirements or the restricted goods provision established in the Standard Provision "USAID Eligibility Rules for Goods and Services" to cost sharing contributions. The AO may authorize the Recipient to attribute cost sharing contributions from sub-recipients to the prime award."

II. Section D- Application and Submission Information

- i. Under Section D.5 'Technical Application Format', add the following under the second paragraph: "Applicants are allowed to use size 10 font in tables and graphics only."
- ii. Under Section D.5.h 'Past Performance', delete the first two paragraphs and replace with the following:

"Detailed and specific past performance information should be provide by the primary Applicant (as well as any partners substantially involved in implementation i.e. receiving 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost) as explained below under "Appendix A" – Relevant Past Performance Information. Any relevant performance issues related to past performance should be addressed as well.

- iii. Under Section D.6 'Cost Application Format',
 - a. Under item 'h', delete the second sentence and insert the following in lieu thereof: 'However, per Section A.5.b, the Applicant must not budget USAID funds for any performance evaluation or impact evaluation, as this will be externally ordered and funded by the USAID Mission.'
 - b. Delete the contents under item 'n' in its entirety and replace with "Reserved".
 - c. Under item 'o', delete the first sentence and insert the following in lieu thereof: 'The Applicant will complete the certifications in Section D.8. Required Certifications and sign and date in the signature space provided.'

III. Section F- Award and Administration Information

- i. Under F.6 'Standard Provisions', delete Provision F.6.14 'Additional Requirements for Personnel Compensation' in its entirety.

IV. Section H- Annexes

Add the following Annexes to the RFA

- i. Annex B- Mission Order 21
- ii. Annex C- Mission Order 203- Performance Monitoring
- iii. Annex D- Notice 2011-WBG-10 Local Salary Scale
- iv. Annex E- Palestinian Faculty Development Program Final Report

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V. USAID's responses to questions submitted

Provide responses to the questions received in response to the subject RFA in attachment one to this Amendment.

All other terms and conditions of NOFO No. 72029418RFA00002 remain unchanged and in full force and effect.

Sincerely,

/s/

Dana Rose
Agreement Officer
USAID/West Bank and Gaza

Attachment No. One (1) – Questions and Answers

1. **Question:** The solicitation indicates: “Organizations may submit only one application per Organization or Consortium of multiple organizations, under this RFA. In the instance of a consortium, see Section D.5.”

Our university is considering submitting a proposal as the lead institution and also participating in a separate proposal as a subaward (i.e., non-lead institution) – would this be allowable? That is, does the limit of one application per institution only apply to submissions for which the institution is the lead, or does the limit also apply for an institution that is participating in a proposal as a subaward?

Answer: The submission limitation is applicable to prime organizations only.

2. **Question:** Section A.4.a. On Page 11, the NOFO states: The Activity will work with, at least, two universities and two technical colleges in the West Bank. *Applicants must identify the higher education institutions that will participate in the Activity in the Technical Application.* It further provides critical factors for the selection of the higher education institutions. Considering the timeline for response to the NOFO, there is not sufficient time to issue a request for applications (RFA), receive applications, conduct pre-award assessments (per ADS 303.3.9), ensure compliance with Mission Order 21, and select winning higher education institutions for the grants. Alternatively, none of the exceptions to restrict eligibility and requirements seem applicable to sole source grants to specific higher education institutions consistent with ADS 303.3.6.5 (a)(2) a-i.

Conducting a full and open request for applications from higher education institutions in West Bank will allow a robust evaluation of the institutions based on selection factors listed in Section A.4 (a). For these reasons, we respectfully request USAID eliminate the requirement to name the institutions in the technical application.

Answer: USAID will not be eliminating the above stated requirement.

3. **Question:** Section A.4.a. On page 11, the NOFO requires the selection of two universities and two technical colleges. Will USAID please clarify if the Technical Colleges should be university colleges, community colleges, or either per the definition of AQAC for the purpose of this bid?

Answer: The technical colleges may be university colleges, community colleges that have the specializations mentioned in the NOFO, or either per the definition of Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC).

4. **Question:** Section A.5.a. On page 16, the NOFO indicates that the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan must be aligned to both ADS 201 and Mission Order 203. Would USAID kindly provide a link or .pdf copy of West Bank/Gaza’s Mission Order 203?

Answer: Please refer to Annex C 'USAID West Bank and Gaza Mission Order No. 203' under Amendment no. 1

5. **Question:** Section A.5.a., page 16, the NOFO states "Following the initial assessment of the participating higher education institutions, the Recipient will collect baseline data for the indicators in the MEL." and Section D.6.h, page 40, the NOFO states "However, per Section A.6.2, the Applicant must not budget USAID funds for any performance evaluation or impact evaluation, as this will be externally ordered and funded by the USAID Mission." Could USAID please confirm that baseline costs should be included in this RFA budget submission, but midline and final assessment costs are not to be included in the budgets for this solicitation?

Answer: Confirmed. The baseline costs should be included, but not the cost of the midline and final assessments. Applicants should also budget for the cost of M&E data collection throughout the life of the Activity.

6. **Question:** Section B.6, page 26, would USAID consider revising the Geographic Code to 935 to ease the procurement process for the recipient and ensure efficient and effective implementation?

Answer: The authorized Geographic Code is 937. USAID can only change the principal Geographic code when the waiver criteria are met. In this case no sufficient criteria or basis has been identified.

7. **Question:** Section D.6.k, page 40, lists seven (7) bullet points of information to be provided by the Applicant. Could USAID please confirm that this information is to be submitted as part of the Certs and Assurances and not provided in a separate attached document?

Answer: Yes, the information required under D.6.k must be provided under the Certifications and Assurances and not as a separate document.

8. **Question:** Section D.6.l, page 40, states "Applicants when requested must submit any additional information for the Agreement Officer to make a final determination of the applicant's risk." Could USAID please confirm that the Evidence of Responsibility responses are required by the successful Applicant and not required during the initial round of submissions? If the Evidence of Responsibility responses are required at the time of submission, could USAID please confirm they are only required by the Prime Applicant and not sub-recipients?

Answer: Applicants are not requested to address or respond to section D.6.l in their initial application submission. The information requested under D.6.l may be requested from the apparently successful applicant prior to the issuance of the agreement award.

9. **Question:** Section D.6.o, page 41, could USAID please confirm that completed and signed Certifications and Assurances are required for the Prime Applicant only and are not required of the sub-recipients?

Answer: Certifications and assurances are required for the Prime Applicant only.

10. **Question:** Section H. On page 67, the NOFO refers to Annex B, Mission Order 21. Would USAID kindly provide Annex B.

Answer: Please refer to amendment no. 1 which provides Annex B - Mission Order 21.

11. **Question:** In the description for the Activity Manager/Deputy Chief of Party on p. 24, the description lists a requirement of: at least 8 years of experience in the field of education and higher education activities”. No required sector-specific experience is listed for the COP, but the DCOP qualifications include 8 years of education/higher education experience. Neither position includes reference to industry/private-sector experience. Given the importance of private sector involvement in this Activity, can some portion of the DCOP’s experience be fulfilled in the private sector? As long as we assure that the COP/DCOP team has significant education/higher education experience, can this qualification be held by either of the two, and not specifically the DCOP?

Answer: The requirements as stated in the RFA remain as is. The proposed COP should have at least 15 years of progressively responsible experience implementing similar activities, as well as relevant management experience. The Activity Manager/DCOP should have at least 8 years of experience in the field of education and higher education activities.

12. **Question:** Please confirm that Palestinian universities and technical colleges cannot be exclusive to one application, but will work with the successful applicant.

Answer: USAID in no way encourages applicants to create exclusive partnering relationships with potential Palestinian universities and technical colleges.

13. **Question:** Please confirm that the ‘Required Certifications’ listed under D.8 (p. 42) are not to be submitted with the application, but would be requested at a later date from the Agreement Officer, prior to award.

Answer: Please refer to section D.6.o. The required Certifications listed under D.8 are requested to be submitted with the initial application submission as an annex to the cost application as printouts. Original signed hardcopy of the certifications will be requested from the successful applicant prior to the agreement award.

14. **Question:** Please confirm that the key personnel references (p. 35) are not part of the three page limit for each resume.

Answer: Key personnel references are not included in the three page limit for each resume.

15. **Question:** Please confirm that this program does not cover Gaza. Also, could USAID please clarify if East Jerusalem is included? What are the boundaries of East Jerusalem as they pertain to this project?

Answer: This Activity does not cover Gaza. The place of performance is the West Bank only.

16. **Question:** Does each target institution have to offer both ICT and engineering, or is only one permissible as long as both are covered among the institutions?

Answer: The target institution must have both specializations.

17. **Question:** Could USAID please elaborate on expectations regarding ICT as a field of study; does it exclude or include computer science, which is usually offered in a separate department?

Answer: USAID's expectation is that applicants will include any ICT specialization/s that is market-driven.

18. **Question:** On p. 5 a reference is made to 75% social science students is a major contributor to unemployment of graduates. Could USAID please cite the reference for this information?

Answer: Please see the reference below:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/overview/oPt.pdf

19. **Question:** In regards to the discussion of Partnerships with Foreign Academic Institutions on p. 12, is it USAID's intent to have 1:1 matches between Palestinian and foreign Higher Education Institutions? And, is it necessary to identify all U.S. or foreign partners at the proposal stage, or can this step be finalized with the involvement of the Palestinian partner institutions after award?

Answer: The partnership can be 1:1 or 1:2 depending on the capacity of the Foreign Academic Institution to provide technical assistance. U.S. or foreign partners can be identified after the award in collaboration with the Palestinian higher education institutions.

20. **Question:** Can project funding be used to compensate or incentivize industry participation?

Answer: Project funding can be used to facilitate industry participation. Applicants may propose options for USAID's review and approval.

21. **Question:** Page 37 of the solicitation states, "The Cost/Business Application is to be submitted in Excel format and the budget narrative in Word." Will USAID allow the budget narrative to be submitted in PDF format?

Answer: The budget narrative must be submitted in Word Format.

22. **Question:** How does USAID West Bank/Gaza envision the Taylor Force Act passed on March 27, 2018 affecting this program?

Answer: The effect of the Taylor Force act is unclear at the moment. Therefore, applicants are required to design the proposed program as instructed under the RFA.

23. **Question:** What form of commitment does USAID require from local HEIs selected by applicants? If letters of commitment (LOC) are required, does USAID allow LOCs to be included in the proposal as an additional attachment?

Answer: Yes, LOCs are required as a form of commitment and may be included as an additional attachment to the application.

24. **Question:** How does USAID define a Public Private Partnerships (PPP) to be “forged” for the indicator under IR 2.3?

Answer: Applicants should advise on the best approach to forge sustainable partnerships.

25. **Question:** On page 14, under Supplementary and Non-formal Education, it states that the Activity will support universities to provide graduating students or new graduates with extra-curricular activities and/or complementary courses to supplement their knowledge about the labor market and enhance their job readiness skills. Does USAID envision that this activity will also support technical colleges in the same way?

Answer: Yes, this activity will support the technical colleges in the same way.

26. **Question:** Page 15 of the RFA states as a required indicator, “Percentage of students that demonstrate attainment of 70 percent of life and employability skills as a result of USG assistance.” Would USAID kindly clarify the definition of “attainment of 70%”? For example, does this mean attainment of 70% of a total set of skills (for example, a passing rate on 7 out of 10 skills) or an average attainment of 70% on a set of sub-skills related to life and employability skills, or some other definition of attainment?

Answer: The definition is the average of attainment of 70% on a set of sub-skills related to life and employability skills.

27. **Question:** Would USAID kindly make available any final evaluation of the PFDP program?

Answer: Please refer to amendment no. 1 which includes the final evaluation of the PFDP program as Annex E.

28. **Question:** Could USAID kindly clarify its understanding of the scope of engineering and perhaps list all the subdomains that would be eligible? Are any subdomains of engineering excluded as ineligible?

Answer: Applicants must propose the most market-driven subdomains where tangible impact can be made.

29. **Question:** Could USAID please clarify if, for the purposes of this Activity, 21st century skills are limited to engineering and ICT? May other majors/fields of study be included as well?

Answer: The activity is limited to ICT and engineering specializations.

30. **Question:** Please clarify if USAID will support the purchase of equipment or the creation of physical centers for beneficiary tertiary institutions.

Answer: USAID can accommodate the purchase of equipment to facilitate quality teaching and learning. Construction is not envisioned under this Activity.

31. **Question:** Can USAID clarify if the Activity will support student and faculty exchanges between Palestinian universities and US universities?

Answer: Applicants may propose faculty exchanges if that contributes to building the capacity of the Palestinian higher education institutions in the area of the 21st century skills and competencies.

32. **Question:** Would USAID please provide the anticipated start date for this activity?

Answer: The anticipated start date for this activity is September 2018.

33. **Question:** Section D.6.f seems to indicate in the Direct Labor note that Allowances should be included under Direct Labor. Please clarify if this is a requirement or if the applicant can include allowances under the ODCs.

Answer: Allowances may be included under the Other Direct Costs.

34. **Question:** Section C.2 on page 28 of the RFA states that cost share is not required. However, cost share is referenced in a couple of other places in the RFA (pages 7 and 38). Please confirm that cost share is not required.

Answer: As stated in Section C.2 of the RFA, cost sharing is not required. Nonetheless, USAID recognizes that cost sharing may be an important element of the USAID-Recipient relationship. Accordingly, USAID welcomes Applicants who will pledge their own resources towards the activities for which they seek USAID funding. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.306, cost sharing cannot be used as a separate factor during the merit review of applications. However, for the purposes of this RFA, the inclusion of cost sharing may be considered to break a tie if all technical and cost factors between two applications are determined equal by the Agreement Officer. Please see ADS 303.3.10 for more information on USAID requirements on cost share.

35. **Question:** Please confirm that the 2011 (Dated March 8, 2011) is still the current local salary scale or please provide an updated one if available. Would USAID kindly provide its most recent local compensation plan for CCN staff if this is not the most recent version?

Answer: Yes, USAID West Bank and Gaza's salary scale dated March 8, 2011 is the current local salary scale. Please refer to Annex D under amendment no. 1 for a copy of the local salary scale.

36. **Question:** Section D.6.g states: "Proposed sub-awards (contracts/grants) (if any): Applicants who intend to utilize sub-awardees who will be substantially involved in implementation (i.e. receiving 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost), should indicate that extent intended and a complete cost breakdown, as well as all the information required herein for the Applicant." Please confirm that this means that the offeror is not required to submit a cost package (budget, budget narrative, NICRA, certifications, etc.) from any sub-awardee receiving < 25% of the total project activity.

Answer: Confirmed.

37. **Question:** Section D.6.h (Monitoring and Evaluation) references Section A.6.2, please confirm that the reference should be A.5.b.

Answer: Confirmed. Please refer to Amendment no. 1 which reflects this change.

38. **Question:** Section D.6.o references section D.7 for the Certifications required, please confirm that the reference should be D.8.

Answer: Confirmed. Please refer to Amendment no. 1 which reflects this change.

39. **Question:** Appendix A – relevant Past Performance Information, requests five relevant PPRs be submitted. Can USAID clarify if five additional PPRs must be submitted for every partner receiving 25% or more of the budget? Would USAID consider revising this requirement to “up to five” PPRs?

Answer: Instructions remain as is. A listing in response to Appendix A of the five most relevant donor funded contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, etc must be submitted for the prime applicant and proposed partner(s) that are receiving 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost.

40. **Question:** Page 36 of the RFA states: “Applicants must describe all programs/projects/activities in which the primary Applicant (as well as any partners substantially involved in implementation i.e. receiving 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost) implemented similar programs over the past five (5) years.” Page 36 also states “Applicants must submit a list of the five most relevant donor funded contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, etc.” Given that applicants may have received a large volume of contracts, grants, cooperative agreements in the past five years, could USAID kindly confirm that only five past performance examples are required?

Answer: Confirmed.

41. **Question:** Appendix E – Illustrative First year Implementation Plan – can USAID confirm that for the application, the implementation plan need only include a Gantt chart of activities to be accomplished under the different components and sub-components, on a monthly basis?

Answer: Yes, a Gantt chart of activities to be accomplished under the different components and sub-components is sufficient.

42. **Question:** On page 32, under section D.5. of the RFA, USAID asks that offerors use size 12 font. May offerors use size 10 font only in tables and graphics to improve legibility and formatting?

Answer: Please refer to amendment no. 1 which allows applicants to use size 10 font in tables and graphics only.

43. **Question:** On page 24, under section A.10.1, the RFA states “The COP must have at least a master’s degree in a relevant field (education, international development, public administration etc.), including at least 15 years of progressively responsible experience implementing similar activities...” Would USAID be willing to adjust the total number of years of progressively responsible experience implementing similar activities from 15 to 10? This would provide more flexibility for staffing highly qualified candidates from alternative backgrounds to support USAID’s program objectives.

Answer: The requirements remain as is.

44. **Question:** May non US universities apply under the global competencies activity?

Answer: Yes. Qualified U.S. and non-U.S. colleges and universities may apply for funding under this RFA. USG and USAID regulations generally treat colleges and universities as NGOs, rather than governmental organizations; hence, both public and private colleges and universities are eligible.

45. **Question:** On page 35, under section D.5.f.3., the RFA states, “Applicants are not expected to identify known non-key personnel. However, the Applicant may discuss examples of identified non-key personnel throughout their application if they so choose. Non Key-position candidates will not be evaluated.” *Will USAID please clarify whether this section refers to including the names of illustrative personnel and their qualifications in the Key Personnel section of the application?*

Answer: The Key Personnel section should only include the Applicant’s proposed key personnel candidates. As stated on page 35 of the RFA, under section D.5.f.3, applicants may choose to discuss examples of identified non-key personnel throughout their application, i.e. in the technical approach section or under the proposed management plan section.

46. **Question:** On page 37, under section D.5.i.4, the RFA states, “Applicants must submit a Staffing Plan that logically corresponds to the Management Plan section of the technical application and lists all proposed positions under the activity, including Key Personnel (requiring USAID approval) and support staff. *The applicant must specify whether the position is full-time, part-time, or intermittent, the position location, and the planned person months or days each position will devote to the activity.* The staffing plan must demonstrate how it will attribute to the implementation of this activity. The Applicant must justify the underlying rationale for determining the staffing configuration. Brief position descriptions must be included.” Will USAID please confirm that position descriptions for lower levels in the organizational chart (e.g., drivers, cleaners, clerical staff, etc.) do not need to be provided?

Answer: Position Descriptions for lower levels in the organizational chart are not required.

47. **Question:** Please confirm that the costs of the Annual Financial Audits referenced in Sections B.3 and F.6.10 will be paid by USAID directly to the audit firm selected by USAID, and that the Applicant and Sub-recipients should not budget for these costs.

Answer: As stated under Section F.6.10, USAID/WBG will contract with an independent audit firm directly who will then carry out the audit in line with the stated requirements. Payment to the selected audit firm will be made by USAID directly and therefore the Applicant and sub-recipients should not budget for these costs.

48. **Question:** The language in Section F.6.14.c Additional Requirements for Personnel Compensation, Annual Salary Increases: is common for acquisition awards, however it is unusual for an assistance award, which defers to an organization’s personnel policies and the costs principles for determining reasonableness. There might be times where a promotional increase of more than 5% is warranted and supported by organizational policy. Promotional increases of up to 10% are usually considered reasonable by USAID Contracting Officers. Would USAID consider removing the reference to “promotional increases” from this

section? Doing so would reduce the prior approval administrative burden for both USAID and the Recipient.

Answer: Please refer to amendment no. 1 which deletes section F.6.14.c

49. **Question:** Point n. on page 40 says, “*Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA)*”

On the template provided for the Certificate of Compliance under Supplementary Reference to the Mandatory Reference for ADS 303, 30359s1, we have noted the following issues:

- a. All references are made to the regulations that are no longer in existence: OMB Circular A-133, USAID Regulation 8
- b. The reference to OMB Circulars made on the first paragraph is vague, and not applicable
- c. The scope of the certification is general and does not clarify the applicability to USG funding.

Answer: Please refer to amendment no. 1 which deletes this section.

50. **Question:** Have you received any inquiries from institutions seeking to apply as a consortium? We are currently a USAID sub-contractor. We are very confident that we can deliver the technical college component of this project but would like to partner with a university interested in seeking to provide that part of the funding opportunity.

Answer: Organizations should independently seek opportunities with other organizations to form and apply as a consortium or any other forms of partnership.

51. **Question:** Can Jordanian firms apply?

Answer: Please refer to section C.1 which states that U.S. and Non U.S. NGOs may participate in this funding opportunity.

52. **Question:** Page 11, Section A.4.a, “The Activity will work with, at least, two universities and two technical colleges in the West Bank.” May applicants work with “for profit” universities and technical colleges?

Answer: In accordance with section F.2 of the RFA ‘Administrative and National policy requirements ‘Potential for-profit applicants should note that USAID policy prohibits the payment of fee/profit to the prime Recipient under grants and Cooperative Agreements. However, if a prime Recipient has a subcontract with a for-profit organization for the acquisition of goods or services (i.e., if a buyer-seller relationship is created), fee/profit for the subcontractor is authorized.’

53. **Question:** Page 11, Section A.4.a: “Presence of engineering and ICT related specializations at the higher education institutions.” Do the institutes need to have BOTH specializations or can they have one or the other?

Answer: The higher education institution must have both specializations: Engineering and ICT.

54. **Question:** Page 11, A.4.a: Are Centers of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELTS) expected to be established in both technical and vocational colleges or can they be serviced through other CELTs?

Answer: CELTs must be established at each higher education institution the Activity will work with.

55. **Question:** Page 11, A.4.a: Can you provide an estimated budget for the development of each new CELT based on the PFDP approach?

Answer: The cost of establishing CELT at each higher education institution varied in accordance with the existing capacity of that particular institution. USAID cannot provide a cost estimate at this phase.

56. **Question:** Pages 12&13 state, “there are five top skills (21st century skills) that could increase the odds of success across all outcomes (income, employment, performance, and entrepreneurial success) and which employers expect to see in interviews as well as on the job”. There are other global frameworks for life/employability skills from organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, etc. that have variations from the one mentioned in the RFA. Are applicants required to use the skills listed in the RFA, or can they use other evidence based life/employability skills frameworks?

Answer: The five skills categories in addition to the global competencies are “clusters of more specific elements.” So each category mentioned in the RFA include a sub set of related skills. Applicants in collaboration with the higher education institutions shall select skills that are highly desired by the labor market.

57. **Question:** Page 14: An indicator for IR1.2 is “Percentage of targeted students who showed 40 percent improvement in a set of skills (see component 1) as a result of USG-assisted activities.” Please clarify if the indicator will measure improvement in all skills combined or improvement in each skill individually by having 5 separate sub-indicators.

Answer: The indicator will measure improvement in all skills combined.

58. **Question:** Page 15: An indicator for IR2 is “Percentage of students that demonstrate attainment of 70 percent of life and employability skills as a result of USG assistance.” Please clarify to which life skills the indicator is referring. If it refers to the five skills highlighted in component 1, please clarify how this indicator is different, in terms of the five skills measured, from the second indicator for IR.1.2, “Percentage of targeted students who showed 40 percent improvement in a set of skills (see component 1) as a result of USG-assisted activities”.

Answer: The indicator “Percentage of students that demonstrate attainment of 70 percent of life and employability skills as a result of USG assistance.” will capture results achieved under component two of the Activity; such as skills gained through community-based learning and

internships. While the indicator “Percentage of targeted students who showed 40 percent improvement in a set of skills (see component 1) as a result of USG-assisted activities” will capture results achieved under component one of the Activity; the cluster of skills mentioned under component one.

59. **Question:** Page 36, Section D.5.h: Please confirm that all past performance information should be submitted in Appendix A – Relevant Past Performance Information, and that no additional past performance material or section is required in the main narrative portion of the technical application.

Answer: Yes, the relevant past performance information should be included only under Appendix A.

60. **Question:** Page 36, Section D.5.i states, “Similar information should be provided for every partner organization that would represent 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost.” May applicants submit similar relevant past performance information for partners that do not represent 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost?

Answer: As indicated under section D.5.i ‘similar information should be provided for every partner organization that would represent 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost’, applicants should not provide information for partner organization that would not represent 25% or more of the total proposed activity cost.

61. **Question:** Will the instruction and assessment content be provided in English, Arabic, or both? What other languages, if any, will instruction and assessment content have to be translated into?

Answer: The instruction and assessment content must be provided only in English and Arabic. No other language should be used.

62. **Question:** Is the use of off-the-shelf assessment and instruction instruments and content, i.e. materials that ACT has previously developed, acceptable?

Answer: Assessment tools should be adapted and customized to the local context.

63. **Question:** Is the grant mentioned at the end of page 11 of the RFA for higher education institutions providing funding in addition to the funding awarded to the recipient selected for the work described in the RFA?

Answer: No. This is a grant that shall be awarded to the selected higher education institution by the prime recipient in order to achieve the desired results stated under the RFA.

64. **Question:** Will the customization of skills for different specializations be led by the recipient, or is its role just to coordinate?

Answer: Customization of skills shall be done in collaboration with the higher education institutions and the labor market.

65. **Question:** Please elaborate on the higher-order thinking skills mentioned as the second indicator of IR1.1 (page 12)?

Answer: As mentioned on page 12 of the RFA, higher-order thinking skills consist of problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making.

66. **Question:** Regarding the second indicator of IR2 (page 15), is the recipient supposed to contact institutions beyond the targeted ones?

Answer: No, the recipient must contact only the targeted institutions that will receive assistance under this Activity.

67. **Question:** Is IR2 referring to the targeted institutions that will end up implementing the career- and job-readiness services?

Answer: IR2 is referring to the higher education institutions that will receive assistance under this Activity.

68. **Question:** On page 8, the RFA states that the program will also target vocational institutes – are these under the higher education umbrella? Or are these considered non-higher education tiers of vocational training, i.e. MOL TVET centers, TVET centers affiliated with local partner organizations?

Answer: The RFA refers to colleges or vocational institutions that offer diploma degrees in fields related to ICT and engineering.

69. **Question:** If a university has both a university arm and a technical college arm under one administrative umbrella, are these considered as one entity, or can we treat it as one separate university, and one separate technical college?

Answer: If both technical and the university arms are under the same administrative umbrella, then both are considered as one entity.

70. **Question:** Can you please provide more clarity on the type of modifications required for ICT and Engineering curricula? Is this linked to theoretical/academic modifications or to the integration of 21st century skills/competencies?

Answer: The integration of the 21st century skills/competencies will require modifications to the learning and teaching pedagogies. This might require modifications to the curricula to support the introduction of the 21st century skills/competencies.

71. **Question:** Can you clarify the MEL process as outlined on page 16 section A.5 and in particular the sequencing of the plan to co-develop tools with the Mission and relevant ministries/agencies to “capture a baseline and conduct midline and final assessments to address evaluation questions similar to the illustrative evaluation questions below...” Will these tools be developed post-

award and pre-implementation and therefore should be part of the official workplan we submit as applicants or will these be developed as part of a pre-final award co-design process?

Answer: The MEL plan will be developed in full collaboration with USAID after the issuance of the award.

72. **Question:** What level of budget detail is required for partners that are under the “major partner” threshold?

Answer: As stated under D.6.g the proposed budget for major partners should follow the same cost format as submitted by the Applicant.

73. **Question:** Can the Mission provide any clarification regarding guidance on how awardee will work with higher education partners? Will such partners be eligible to receive sub-grants under this program? Or will awardee’s engagement with higher education partners be restricted to service provision by awardee?

Answer: Applicants must propose the most suitable approach/es that can achieve the desired results under this Activity.

74. **Question:** Can the Mission provide clarification regarding the implications of the Taylor Force Act, and this Act’s potential application or non-application on collaboration and activities anticipated under this bid, such as:

- a. What level of coordination is permitted with public bodies, such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education?
- b. Per our understanding of the higher education system, there are three levels of higher education institutions in the West Bank: governmental, quasi-governmental (public), and private. What are the limitations around working with governmental and quasi-governmental universities (which in the West Bank are referred to as public universities)?
- c. Will the program be permitted to work and build the capacity of governmental universities and quasi-governmental universities (public)? Including their staff?
- d. Will the program be permitted to provide universities with computers, laptops, and other required materials for the CELTs for example?
- e. What are the implications of working with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC)?

Answer: The effect of the Taylor Force act is unclear at the moment. Therefore, applicants are required to design the proposed program as instructed under the RFA.

This Activity will work with non-governmental higher education institutions. The Palestinian Higher Education Law refers to non-governmental higher education institutions as Public Institutions.

75. **Question:** Page 11 of the RFA mentions “the Activity will award grant to the winning higher education institutions” and lists five separate sub-activities.

- a. Per the Taylor Force Act, will the program be permitted to give grants to governmental universities and quasi-governmental (public) universities?
- b. Will the implementing partner be permitted to pay professor / university staff salaries, in addition to per diem, transportation costs? If yes, is this also permitted for staff in public universities considering the Taylor Force Act?

Answer: The effect of the Taylor Force act is unclear at the moment. Therefore, applicants are required to design the proposed program as instructed under the RFA.

This Activity will work with non-governmental higher education institutions. The Palestinian Higher Education Law refers to non-governmental higher education institutions as Public Institutions. USAID-funded activities may provide the staff of non-governmental higher education institutions per diem, transportation costs or other cost of programming. Grants are only allowed to non-governmental higher education institutions that are referred to as public higher education institutions (universities & colleges).

End of Attachment One (1)