NOFO Issue Date: March 4, 2021

Deadline for Submission of Questions:
Closing Date: March 15, 2021
Closing Time: 16:30 Pakistan Standard Time

Deadline for Submission of Applications:
Closing Date: April 16, 2021
Closing Time: 16:30 Pakistan Standard Time

Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72039121RFA00001

Program Title: Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 98.001

Potential Applicants:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for a cooperative agreement from qualified entities to implement the Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA). Eligibility for this award is restricted to the United States (U.S.) Higher Education Institutes or HEIs (including, but not limited to, U.S. universities) and U.S. HEI associations/consortia.

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant that best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this NOFO, subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements, and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov, and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D. The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section D. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to www.grants.gov.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Robert Parnell

Digitally signed by Robert Parnell
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government, ou=USAID, ou=People, cn=Robert Parnell
Date: 2021.03.04 14:55:58 +05'00'

Robert Parnell
Supervisory Agreement Officer
USAID/Pakistan's Office of Acquisition and Assistance

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## SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

**Introduction:** The USAID Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA) is a five-year (2021- 2026) activity with a total estimated cost of $19 million. The activity will be focused on increasing the employability (capacity, relevance, adequacy, and inclusiveness) of the Pakistani workforce (i.e. university graduates), and will directly contribute to Intermediate Result (IR) 3.2: *Employment Opportunities Increased,* Sub-IR3.2.1 *Workforce Capacity Strengthened* of the USAID/Pakistan Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2018-2023. To achieve this goal, HESSA will employ a partnership approach between U.S. and Pakistan HEIs and other relevant partners, ideally through a consortium approach, to strengthen HEIs in Pakistan (the key partner is the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and a group of yet-to-be-selected public and private universities in provinces across Pakistan). The selected applicant of this NOFO will provide direct technical assistance to the HEC and the selected Pakistani universities in the areas of: HEI policy and systems assessments and reforms; effective leadership and management training; formulation and implementation of student\ skills development plans with links to the Pakistani job market. The technical assistance will also include the promotion of academic and leadership competencies through HEI standard-setting, the cultivation of academic quality and its relevance to market needs, and the advancement of modernized research agendas, networks, and resource mobilization in collaboration with HEIs, the private sector, and the social sector to meet the 21st century needs of Pakistan. Improved capacity of the HEIs will result in improved quality of the graduates and employability of the university-educated workforce in Pakistan.

**Background:** Pakistan, the world's fifth most populous country, has a rapidly growing youth population. The 2017 Government of Pakistan (GOP) census estimated that nearly 35 percent of the population is under the age of 15, and 60 percent of the population is under the age of 29 (commonly referenced as Pakistan's youth bulge). It is estimated that 11 percent of youth[1] (age 15-29) are unemployed, and an even larger percentage is underemployed,[2] and youth lack access to education, skills development, and effective job placement services. More than four million youth seek to enter the job market every year, and forecasts suggest that 1.5-2.5 million jobs will need to be created annually in order to accommodate these young people.[3] With the youth population expected to grow through 2035, there is a risk that youth unemployment will continue to swell over the next twenty years. At the same time, Pakistani businesses routinely note difficulty sourcing skilled employees. The workforce quality and mismatch prevent Pakistan's economy from operating more efficiently. Access to good quality higher education remains a major issue for youth and the workforce. Pakistan's National Education Policy Framework 2018 also acknowledges tertiary education and skills training as a key challenge. The policy framework summarizes the issue as having low and inequitable access and participation, poor quality and relevance of teaching and research conditions. The HEIs also commonly have weak linkages with industry and inadequate sector governance and management.

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[1] According to the Government of Pakistan policy, Youth is defined as men and women of age 15 to 29.
[2] Male: 9.6%, Female:13% (blended average of 11% for youth aged 15-24), and it does not include young people employed in the informal sector and not actively seeking employment. Source: Social Data Indicators 2016; Per Pakistan Bureau of Statistics: Underemployed persons (i.e those who worked less than 35 hours during the reference week and were available/seeking for alternative or additional work).
[3] UNDP Editorial - Development Matters: December 2017.

Pakistani higher education faced serious budget and economic issues in the last few years. During 2018-19, HEC's budget was cut down to almost 60%. Due to the stagnant economy and low purchasing power, students from low income families and disadvantaged areas are increasingly unable to afford even the highly subsidized and minimal cost of a public higher education. While several programs, like the Merit- and Need-Based Scholarship Program, funded by USAID, and the newly introduced Ehsaas Scholarship Program of the GOP are available to needy students, there remains a need for HEIs to adopt sustainable models to strengthen their financial aid offices and outreach to the private sector to fund endowments and scholarships. Systems strengthening of the HEIs and Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs) also need more attention in order for the Government of Pakistan's Ehsaas Scholarship Program and other such financial aid programs to be managed well.

Problem Statement: Despite the fact that the number of universities in Pakistan has almost quadrupled in number from 2001 to 2020 (from 52 nationally-accredited institutions to over 200 accredited institutions), access to quality higher education linked to 21st century workforce needs remains a major issue in Pakistan. Per HEC records, while tertiary education enrollment has increased from less than 2.7 percent of the college age population in 2002 to 10.1 percent in 2019, this still represents one of the lowest enrollments in the region. Among the existing public universities, efficiency, effectiveness and financial sustainability remain key challenges. Without a quality higher education, the workforce can not serve as the "engines of economic growth" in the country, as envisioned in the HEC Vision 2025[4]. The inadequacy of workforce quality and misalignment with local industry and business needs prevent Pakistan's economy from operating in an efficient manner, hinder innovation, and limit Pakitsani competitiveness in world markets. Pakistani HEIs lack the capacity to strengthen and reform their own systems in order to be effective, efficient, and self-reliant in producing the much needed quality workforce for employment in the private sector.

Higher Education Leadership and Management: Leadership and governance of HEIs in Pakistan remain fraught with mismanagement and misaligned priorities which affect the HEIs' overall operations and the quality of their graduates and programs, especially in the public sector. Antiquated governance structures that emphasize academic qualifications of administrators in their respective fields as opposed to management of the institutions impact teaching and learning, private resource mobilization, and have slowed down the transition to efficient, student-centered policies. A lack of gender sensitive policies, private sector engagement strategies/action plans, industry linkages and networks, and models for financial sustainability result in inefficiency, inequality, and dependency of HEIs on public funding. The concept of campus-based enterprises and the commercialization of university-based research, fundraising for sustainability and growth of programs, marketing of products and services, diaspora engagement and other similar concepts that enable institutional financial sustainability are foreign to many in HEI leadership positions at most public sector universities across the country. HEC's leadership identifies this as one of the major areas of improvement and continually seeks out technical assistance to guide major reform efforts in this area.

[4] HEC Motto: Facilitating Institutes of higher learning to serve as an Engine of Growth for the Socio-Economic Development of Pakistan.

Quality and Relevance:
Inadequate quality and relevance of university level programs (including undergraduate and graduate training) and research is another important issue affecting employability of the graduates. HEC works with HEIs in revising or upgrading degree programs curricula, however the efforts are not consistent and standardized across all public sector universities. Inclusion of the feedback from industry and the private sector is often missing. HEC has faced challenges in setting good quality education standards and a culture of competitiveness for the public sector universities. To set this model, HEC is currently developing a program to have 15 public and private sector universities (P-15) across Pakistan that will competitively receive public funding and will be seen as local role model universities in Pakistan. The selected group of P-15 universities is being planned by HEC to include international higher education institutions for support with improvement of policies, structures, quality, and relevance of degree programs to the market needs. HESSA's technical assistance to set quality standards and support to HEC's quality assurance unit will also support HEC's work on developing these role model institutions in Pakistan.

Research and Innovation: HEC established the Offices of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORICs) in all public sector universities in 2010. ORICs role was to link research and commercialization from universities with emerging and existing firms across Pakistan and around the world and work closely with researchers, vice chancellors, on-campus incubators, and science and technology parks to serve as a conduit to local, regional and federal partners to ensure research results aid the growth of Pakistan's economy. However, the governance and management structure of ORICs and their reliance on public funding did not keep ORICs at the forefront of university strategic thinking or business planning and curriculum reform. Thus, they did not have much success in most public sector universities. HEC recognizes the issues related to the structure and performance of ORICs, and is keen to bring structural changes through the technical assistance to be provided through HESSA.

Resource Mobilization and Self-Reliance: A heavy reliance on public sector funds is seen by HEC as a major issue in public sector HEIs across Pakistan. There is a need for a paradigm shift in the leadership and management of HEIs that can enable better resource mobilization and management aiming for self-sustainability. Funds for HEI research grants and scholarships can be generated through better and consistent partnerships with local private sector entities, philanthropies, and alumni networks. Significant investments have been made by HEC in faculty development through overseas and indigenous scholarships and training programs. More effort is now required to enable the HEIs to initiate and manage such programs without donor or HEC's financial assistance to support their recent graduates in the job application process, entrepreneurship, and business ownership. HEC is planning to make public grants more competitive for HEIs.

The COVID-19 Challenge: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected higher education services globally. As a result of the pandemic, HEIs around the globe, including all those in Pakistan, have enacted travel bans, quarantined individuals, households, and communities, and suspended face-to-face learning. HEC has assumed the charge of setting directions for HEIs nationwide. Since the start of the pandemic about six different policies and procedures[5] have been issued to

[5] https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/pages/home.aspx

provide guidance and mitigate the effect of face-to-face education services suspension. HEC and HEI leadership and institutional capacity gaps were even more visible when after the HEIs closed for two months, HEC directed the HEIs to start online classes, devise online examination and admission policies ,and establish a Learning Management System (LMS) in the HEIs where LMS did not exist.

The ongoing crisis has also revealed the severe inequality and inequity that exists among higher education institutions in Pakistan. For example, issues surrounding access to distance learning, available IT infrastructure, equipment, software, faculty/staff training, and availability of online learning materials  have taken on heightened importance. As a result of moving teaching and operations virtually, the inability, and sometimes resistance) of students in remote areas to access online services impacted learning. Some institutions were able to train faculty/staff, roll out online learning, and put in place learner support services quicker. Others are still struggling, constrained by the lack of access to technology and expertise in the remote HEIs located across Pakistan.

The COVID-19 challenge highlights a great opportunity to strengthen  the Pakistani higher education system, especially the distance higher education. HESSA will work with HEC and HEIs to evaluate system and institutional policies, procedures, and services to improve capacities for uninterrupted education services, post-pandemic by adjusting, advancing and expanding online learning, study program, examination and policy procedures in Pakistani HEIs.

## Purpose and Scope of HESSA

***Goal:*** *Workforce Employability Increased*

**Purpose:** Enhanced capacity of higher education institutions and systems to develop employable graduates. (Workforce capacity strengthened IR3.2.1).

**Sub-Purpose 1:** Strengthened institutional capacity and self-reliance of Pakistani HEIs through links to U.S. institutions of higher education.
**Sub-Purpose 2:** Improved access, quality, and relevance of higher education programs (particularly for marginalized communities).
**Sub-Purpose 3:** Improved skills and pathways to connect graduates to market-led, demand-driven employment (including self-employment and entrepreneurship and jobs).

**Description:** HESSA will support Pakistani higher education through institutional strengthening resulting in a better trained workforce, leading to improved economic outcomes. This activity will build on past investments, such as the Merit and Needs-Based Scholarship Program, the Centers for Advanced Studies Project, and other past USAID interventions in higher education.
The activity will utilize evidence-based best practices learned in the Asia region, global higher education, and U.S. higher education to increase the Pakistani higher education system's capacity to sustainably manage and enhance equitable access to quality higher education services, particularly for marginalized communities, especially women, students from underserved areas, and people with disabilities. HESSA will also be responsive to the needs of industries, the business community, and sectors contributing to Pakistan's economic growth at-large.

This activity should also engage U.S. HEI's through partnerships to contribute to the capacity building of Pakistan's higher education sector. This activity will support policy reforms with HEC and other relevant departments to improve HEI leadership's visioning, strategic thinking, planning, and management to ensure self-sustainability. It will enable HE leadership to proactively and effectively prepare and implement their own business plans, marketing strategies, long-term fundraising initiatives, and private sector engagement strategies. HESSA will also assist the government in developing its capacity to reform and administer higher education programs and policies geared towards HEC and USAID's shared goal of preparing self-reliant HEIs ready for 21st century challenges. Technical assistance will be provided to HEC in reviewing existing graduate and undergraduate programs and identifying reform needs to improve graduate' learning outcomes for positive youth and workforce development, including soft skills that promote social tolerance and cohesion. These skills may include effective communication, positive social interaction, increased self-confidence, strategic problem-solving, critical thinking, and self-discipline.

**Technical Components of HESSA**

**Component A**: To achieve Sub-Purpose 1, this component will focus on interventions to resolve the leadership, governance and management challenges at HEIs.

Strengthened institutional capacity and self-reliance of the Pakistani higher education system through links to U.S. HEIs aligns with HEC's quality enhancement agenda. HEC, in consultation with USAID, has proposed a solution by providing technical assistance through HESSA for implementation of HEC's HEI leadership and management reform under the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE)[6]. HESSA will provide technical assistance to the NAHE's Center of Excellence for capacity building, skill development, and promotion of academic and leadership competencies through standards setting, the cultivation of academic quality, and the advancement of relevant research in collaboration with HEIs, industries, and the social sector. It will also create and promote sustainable partnerships with international development agencies, NGOs, civil society, and social organizations. Furthermore, it will develop international collaboration with U.S. and other higher education entities. Through HESSA and NAHE, HEC will foster leadership competencies and skills required in the implementation of higher education policies. It will work on capacity building in the areas of HEI leadership, management and R&D. It will design a framework for embedding graduates employability through quality teaching and learning and will create partnerships among community, HEIs, and industry at national and international level.

Expected Results (Sub-IRs A):

- Implementation of the higher education reforms through mentorship to HEC and higher education leaders in Pakistan
- Private sector engagement policy and implementation framework for HEIs developed
- HEIs strategic business planning done through direct technical assistance to HEC and universities
- HEI's planning and actions for resource mobilization promoting self-reliance

[6] https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/services/faculty/NAHE/Pages/intro.aspx

**Component B:** To achieve the Sub-Purpose 2, this component will address the challenges of access, quality and relevance of higher education programs, particularly for marginalized communities.

Improvement in the quality and relevance of higher education programs and services to the job market and the private sector is a top priority for HEC. HEC has already established the Offices of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORICs) in all public sector universities in 2010 but these entities are dormant or under utilized in most of the universities due to structural issues. ORICs role is to link research and commercialization from the university with emerging and existing firms across Pakistan and around the world. ORIC works closely with the researchers, vice chancellors, and on-campus incubators, science and technology parks and serves as a conduit to local, regional and federal partners to ensure research results aid the growth of Pakistan's economy. However, the ORICs are poorly managed with low capacity and their performance varies significantly across universities. HESSA will also focus on strengthening the ORICs to enhance private sector engagement and resource mobilization for self-reliance.

To improve the quality of educational programs and research at Pakistani HEIs, HEC is planning to launch the P-15 University Model to set an example for other Pakistani universities for institutional and system improvements and competitiveness for public sector grants and funds. Through this model, HEC will provide competitive grants and global and local challenge funds to top selected fifteen high performing universities all across Pakistan that make efforts to meet certain structural changes and quality improvement in their teaching and learning outcomes.

Expected Results (Sub IRs-B):

- Development of policies and implementation framework for distance learning and assessments (digitization of higher education)
- Undergraduate and graduate curriculum reform (e.g. inclusion of soft skills development components; courses on tolerance, diversity, and community service) through technical assistance
- Industry-academia linkages revamped and/or improved through ORICs
- Conduct a needs assessment for the development and revision of HEIs policies through technical assistance to HEC

Results will be disaggregated to report on the number of persons benefited from the marginalized communities.

**Component C:** To achieve the Sub-Purpose 3, this component will focus on improved pathways to connect women and youth/graduates to market led, demand-driven jobs, improving soft skills development for better employability with the private sector, improved access to financial aid/scholarship and other on-campus engagement services supporting at-campus students networks and community engagement and students development activities including sports.

This will include other activities, not limited to, career counselling, job placement service/offices, job fairs, digital services etc, to connect women and youth (university graduates) to market led, demand-driven employment and jobs. Significant investments have been made by HEC in overseas and indigenous scholarships and training programs; now more effort is required to enable the universities to initiate and manage such programs without donor or HEC's financial assistance and support these newly trained scholars in applying for relevant internships and jobs, be entrepreneurs/have own businesses and contribute to the economy.

Expected Results (Sub-IRs C):

- HEIs' financial aid systems strengthened, established, and/or operationalized
- Student services improved including mentorship, career counseling and advising, soft skills development, and scholarships/internships/placement opportunities with the private sector
- Technical assistance for HEIs for campus and student financial aid management and information systems

**Expected Reporting Indicators:**

1. Number of activities proposed for systems improvement in the Women-Only-HEIs across Pakistan to support women HEIs and women leaders in higher education
2. Number of HEIs that implemented inclusive and equitable diversity, gender, and workplace harassment guidelines and policies
3. Number of policies, laws, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve education quality, access or management
4. CBLD-9 Percent of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance
5. ES.2-52 Number of individuals affiliated with higher education institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance
6. EG.6-13 Percent of individuals with improved soft skills following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs
7. ES.2-54 Number of USG-supported partnerships that address regional, national, and/or local development objectives through or with higher education institutions.
8. ES.2-1 Number of host country higher education institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance
9. CBLD-9 Percent of organizations with improved performance (outcome indicator)
10. ES.2-2 Number of individuals attending higher education institutions with USG scholarship or financial assistance
11. Number of improved technologies and practices adopted for job placement through USG assistance
12. Number of university graduates benefiting from USG supported pathways services.

**END OF THE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

The Recipient will submit a draft Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan. At the post award stage, this MEL plan will be discussed and finalized in collaboration with USAID/Pakistan In order to ensure that the activity is contributing to the overall objectives of USAID/Pakistan and HESSA, the MEL Plan must incorporate USAID/Pakistan program area indicators that the activity contributes to, mandatory program-area indicators, and activity-specific indicators. To measure the progress against these indicators, the Recipient will set the targets to meet the expected outcomes as described in the program description and will set other/additional targets based on its own research and publicly available information, including government statistics, NGO statistics, and studies. The targets will be set with a mutual understanding between the Recipient and USAID that are realistic and contribute towards achieving the overall objectives. USAID/Pakistan has an internal database, PakInfo, which will be used by the partner(s) for recording targets and progress towards achieving results. An internal evaluation - with baseline and endline plans - will be developed by the Recipient to evaluate the activity performance and document lessons learned. Policy recommendations should be based on lessons learned and evaluations conducted as a part of HESSA.

**AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION/APPLICABILITY OF 2 CFR 200 & 700**

This award is authorized in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. 2 Code of Federal Regulation (2 CFR) 200 and 700 are applicable to an award to a U.S. organization made under this solicitation and to any sub-award to a U.S. entity resulting from this award. For US NGOs, the Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients (Non-US NGOs) referenced in ADS 303 will apply to any award or subaward. For non-U.S. organizations, the Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients (Non-US NGOs) will apply. While 2 CFR 200 and 700 do not directly apply to non-U.S. applicants, the Agreement Officer will use the standards of 2 CFR 200 and 700 in the administration of the award.

**END OF SECTION A**

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## SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

### 1. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

USAID intends to award Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this Notice of Funding Opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide 19 Million in total USAID funding over a 5 years period.

### 2. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards

The anticipated period of performance is 5 Years. The estimated start date is July xx, 2021.

### 3. Substantial Involvement

a. Approval of the Recipient's Implementation Plans

- Approval of annual work plans
- Approval of the final report
- Approval of MEL Plan

b. Approval of Specified Key Personnel

The following positions have been designated as key to the successful implementation of the program objectives of this Cooperative Agreement and require USAID approval. The applicant may propose additional key personnel positions, based on the focus and specific activities included in the application. USAID/Pakistan recommends gender balance in the team of proposed key personnel. The applicant may propose additional key personnel, based on the specific needs of the program design. In accordance with the Substantial Involvement clause of this award, these personnel are subject to the approval of the Agreement Officer:

- **Chief of Party (Based in Islamabad)**
- **Deputy Chief of Party (Based in Islamabad)**
- **M&E Specialist (Based in Islamabad)**
- **Communications Specialist (Based in Islamabad)**
- **Project Manager (Based at the home office)**

c. Agency and Recipient Collaboration or Joint Participation
d. Agency Authority to Immediately Halt a Construction Activity (Note: No construction activity under the HESSA)

### 4. Authorized Geographic Code

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is 937 for Pakistan.

## 5. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA) which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

**END OF SECTION B**

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## SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### 1. Restricted Eligibility

Eligibility for this NOFO is restricted. The eligibility to implement the HESSA is open only to United States (U.S.) Higher Education Institutes, or HEIs (including, but not limited to, U.S. universities) and U.S. HEI associations/consortia. Applications will not be accepted from any other types of organizations or individuals.

The following paragraphs document the programmatic rationale for restricting eligibility:

- The limited competition is made pursuant to the authority of ADS 303.3.6.4 “Eligibility and Preference for Maximum Competition,” which states that “USAID encourages unrestricted competition in the award of discretionary grants and cooperative agreements. USAID expects unrestricted competition in the award of discretionary grants and cooperative agreements, unless otherwise restricted following the requirements and procedures of sections 303.3.6.4 and 303.3.6.5.”

- The HESSA is designed to create Pakistani and United States HEI-to-HEI linkages for knowledge transfer and technical assistance as a means to raise academic excellence and strengthen Pakistani HEIs and their systems, resulting in stronger HEI graduates and workforce capacity in Pakistan. Therefore, it is critical to the success of the project that the implementer has a thorough and intimate knowledge of higher education in the United States and robust first-hand experience in creating educational links.

- To be eligible for award of a Cooperative Agreement, in addition to other conditions of this NOFO, organizations must have a politically neutral humanitarian mandate, a commitment to non-discrimination and inclusion with respect to beneficiaries and adherence to equal opportunity employment practices. Non-discrimination includes equal treatment without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation.

**2.** Applicants must have established financial management, monitoring and evaluation processes, internal control systems, and policies and procedures that comply with established U.S. Government standards, laws, and regulations. The successful applicant(s) will be subject to a responsibility determination assessment (Pre-award Survey, if applicable) by the Agreement Officer (AO).

**3.** The Recipient must be a responsible entity. The AO may determine a pre-award survey is required to conduct an examination that will determine whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award.

**4.** The applicant is reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibits transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. It is the legal responsibility of the Recipient to ensure compliance with these

Executive Orders and laws. This provision must be included in all sub-awards issued under this Cooperative Agreement.

USAID welcomes applications from U.S. HEIs that have not previously received financial assistance from USAID.

**2. Cost Sharing**

USAID has established that Cost Share is required for the applicant to be eligible for this activity. A total 5% of in-kind or/and cash cost share contribution is appropriate in the HESSA.

If the Agreement Officer determines that competing programmatic factors of Technical applications are essentially equal, cost & cost sharing factors may become the determining factor in the source selection. Conversely, if the Agreement Officer determines that competing cost proposals are essentially equal, technical factors may become the determining factor in source selection.

**3. Other**

Further, if after carrying out discussions, USAID is unable to agree with apparently successful applicant proposed cost or cost share; the applicants can be eliminated from further consideration and USAID will initiate discussion with the next applicant on the final selection list.

**END OF SECTION C**

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## SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 1. Agency Point of Contact

Muhammad Ali Bilal
Administrative Agreement Officer
USAID/Pakistan
C/o American Embassy
Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5
Islamabad
Mbilal@usaid.gov

Aaqib Hameed
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Sumaira Naqvi
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C/o American Embassy
Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5
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Snaqvi@usaid.gov

### 2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted in writing to Mr. Aaqib Hameed with a copy to Ms. Sumaira Naqvi and Mr. Muhammad Ali Bilal at the email addresses above no later than the date and time provided on the cover letter. Any information given to a prospective Applicant concerning this NOFO will be provided to all other prospective Applicants as an amendment to this NOFO, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective Applicant.

### 3. General Content and Form of Application

Preparation of Applications:

Each applicant must furnish the information required by this NOFO. Applications must be submitted in two separate parts: the Technical Application and the Business (Cost) Application. This subsection addresses general content requirements applying to the full application. Please see subsections 5 and 6, below, for information on the content specific to the Technical and Business (Cost) applications. The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Business (Cost) Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues.

Both the Technical and Business (Cost) Applications must include a cover page containing the following information:

- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application;
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address);
- Program name
- Notice of Funding Opportunity number
- Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organizations are local organizations, per USAID's definition of 'local entity' under ADS 303).

Any erasures or other changes to the application must be initialed by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the Applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

Applicants may choose to submit a cover letter in addition to the cover pages, but it will serve only as a transmittal letter to the Agreement Officer. The cover letter will not be reviewed as part of the merit review criteria.

Applications must comply with the following:

- USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections. Please ensure that applications comply with the page limitations.
- Written in English
- Use standard 8 ½" x 11", single sided, single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, left justification and headers and/or footers on each page including consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and Applicant's name.
- 10 point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables however, must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman requirement.
- Submitted via Microsoft Word or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel and must be printer friendly.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application.
- The technical application must be a searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate.
- The Cost Schedule must include an Excel spreadsheet with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets. A PDF version of the Excel spreadsheet may be submitted in addition to the Excel version at the Applicant's discretion, however, the official cost application submission is the unlocked Excel version.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this NOFO. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

Any erasures or other changes to the application must be initiated by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

**4. Application Submission Procedures**

Applications in response to this NOFO must be submitted no later than the time and date mentioned on the cover letter of this NOFO. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered. Applicants must retain proof of timely delivery in the form of system generated documentation of delivery receipt date and time/confirmation from the receiving office/certified mail receipt.

Applications must be submitted by email to pkcontract@usaid.gov with a copy to Aahameed@usaid.gov , Snaqvi@usaid.gov and Mbilal@usaid.gov. Email submissions must include the NOFO number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g. "No. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[NOFO number], [organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2".

USAID's preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, e.g. that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. If this is not possible, please provide instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

**5. Technical Application Format**

The technical application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely. The Technical Application must not exceed Twenty (20) 8.5x11 sized pages excluding Cover Page, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Abbreviations Page and Annexes. The application must demonstrate the Applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and merit review criteria found in this NOFO.

(a) Cover Page (Does not count towards page limitation)

(b) Table of Contents (Does not count towards page limitation) Include major sections and page numbering to easily cross-reference and identify merit review criteria.

(c) Executive Summary (One page, does not count towards page limitation) The Executive Summary must provide a high-level overview of key elements of the Technical Application.

## 6. Technical Application:

The Technical Application must address the following four factors at a minimum.

I. **Technical Approach**
II. **Monitoring, evaluation and learning approach**
III. **Personnel and Management Approach**
IV. **Institutional Capability**

**(Please note that for the evaluation of technical factors, the importance of the technical factor "Technical Approach" is equal to the importance of all other technical factors when combined).**

### I. Technical Approach: Encompassing three sub-criterions.

Provide a specific, complete, and concise Technical approach that takes into account considerations identified in the NOFO. Technical Approach must propose appropriate, realistic and relevant activities to achieve the expected results.

**i. Provide understanding of HESSA's description of the program, goals, objectives and results.**

- Identify key high-level results.
- Provide evidence-based approaches that improve HEI systems.
- Provide technical and operational approaches to achieve those objectives, including extensive and close work with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) and it's yet-to-be-selected partner universities.
- Provide an adequate description of how the technical approach addresses all of the technical requirements specified in the program description.
- Provide a demonstrated capability to partner with the private sector to achieve HESSA's objectives.

**ii. Provide understanding of the higher education landscape and institutional capacity in Pakistan**

- Provide understanding of the current higher education landscape in Pakistan, and the institutional capacities, challenges, and needs of local HEIs. Provide demonstrated and thorough understanding of the HEC's vision and plans for HEI development in Pakistan. Provide demonstrated sound understanding of the current and future plans of the HEC.

**iii. Provide demonstrated feasibility, quality and sustainability of the proposed approach that has the ability to complete HESSA as described in the program description, with the anticipated results.**

## II. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Approach:

- Provide Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan. The plan must demonstrate that it is technically sound and presents an effective and robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ascertain effectiveness of the approaches. Consideration of the challenges in monitoring due to the COVID-19 pandemic also need to be addressed.
- The MEL Plan must articulate how applicants will monitor for unintended consequences as they implement their activities, and approaches to overcome risks.

MEL Plans must include illustrative indicators that measure outcomes and outputs across each activity area.

## III. Personnel and Management Approach:

Provide personnel and management approach with a proposed management structure that supports the technical approach and convincingly demonstrates an ability to achieve program objectives.

### i. Project Management and Mobilization Plan:

- Provide staffing and mobilization plan, which must also include the technical, administrative, and financial support personnel required to implement the program (sharing the roles and responsibilities for Key and non-Key Personnel). Applicants should include an organizational chart as an Annex.
- Demonstrate how the Management Plan will efficiently manage the activity described in the application and to collaborate with local entities to ensure sustainability of the planned interventions, including, but not limited to, effective cooperation and coordination with multiple organizations and higher education institutions, cooperation with government officials and operating within bureaucratic structures and processes.

### ii. Key Personnel:

#### A. Chief of Party (Based in Islamabad)

The Chief of Party shall be responsible for the overall leadership, management, and implementation of the program and report to the home office, as well as directly coordinate and report to the designated USAID Agreements Officer's Representative (AOR). The Chief of Party shall supervise project implementation, serve as the principal interlocutor with USAID and the Government of Pakistan (GOP), and ensure the project meets its stated goals, compliance standards, and reporting requirements.

The Chief of Party will meet the following minimum set of qualifications:

- a master's degree or higher (a minimum of eighteen years of education) in Public Policy, Higher Education, Administration, International Development, or other relevant field from an internationally recognized or accredited university;
- overall, a minimum of ten years of demonstrated professional experience in the successful implementation of higher education human and institutional capacity development programs;
- of which, a minimum of five years of international experience leading capacity development programs that involved collaborative design and implementation across multiple institutions;
- proven leadership in the administration of similar sized international donor technical assistance projects or higher education institutions with skills in strategic planning, management, supervision, and budgeting;
- familiarity with Pakistan and/or Asia preferred;
- proven ability to develop and communicate a common vision among diverse partners and the ability to lead multi-disciplinary teams; and
- evidence of strong communication skills, both interpersonal and written, to fulfill the diverse technical and managerial requirements of the award.

**B. Deputy Chief of Party (Based in Islamabad)**

The Deputy Chief of Party should complement the strengths and responsibilities of the Chief of Party. The Deputy Chief of Party will be responsible for day-to-day project management, including management of staff, activities and sub-awards and oversight of monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

The Deputy Chief of Party will meet the following minimum set of qualifications:

- a master's degree (a minimum of eighteen years of education) in administration, management or other relevant field from an internationally recognized or accredited university;
- a minimum of eight years of progressively more responsible experience managing higher education and human and institutional capacity development projects;
- a demonstrated commitment to addressing challenges of higher education reform in developing countries;
- a demonstrated ability to work collegially and productively with a variety of partners and stakeholders;
- significant technical assistance management experience;
- familiarity with Pakistan and/or Asia is preferred; and
- ability to participate in all representation and technical meetings in English.

Note: Preference is given if at least one of the aforementioned positions are held by someone knowledgeable about Pakistan and its cultural norms, and is fluent in Urdu.

**C. M&E Specialist (Based in Islamabad)**

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist shall be responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of a performance management plan for the project, including performance monitoring criteria.

The Specialist will have the following minimum set of qualifications:

- a master's degree (a minimum of eighteen years of education) from an internationally recognized or accredited university in Statistics or any relevant Social Sciences discipline;
- overall, a minimum of seven years of M&E experience with USAID, government agencies, and/or other organizations/donor systems;
- of which, a minimum of three years of experience working in developing country settings, preferably on higher education programs;
- strong M&E skills, research, data analysis and management, and report writing skills required;
- excellent oral and written communication skills, including synthesis and presentation of quantitative and qualitative data; and
- English language fluency is required; knowledge of Urdu or other Pakistani local language is preferred.

**D. Communications Specialist (Based in Islamabad)**

The Communications Specialist shall be responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of a communication and outreach plan for the project, including events management and development and dissemination of project briefs, case studies, and success stories.

The Specialist will have the following minimum set of qualifications:

- a master's degree (a minimum of eighteen years of education) from an internationally recognized or accredited university in communications, journalism, media, or any other relevant Social Sciences discipline;
- overall, a minimum of seven years of communications and outreach experience with USAID, government agencies, and/or other organizations/donor systems;
- of which, a minimum of three years of experience working in developing country settings, preferably on higher education programs;
- strong communications, research, data analysis and management, and report writing skills required;
- demonstrated experience working or coordinating with print and electronic media on a range of development outreach activities;
- excellent oral and written communication skills, including synthesis and presentation of quantitative and qualitative data; and
- English language fluency and proficiency is required, with excellent command of the language in reading and writing; knowledge of Urdu and other local Pakistani languages preferred.

### E. Project Manager (Based at the home office)

The Project Manager will be based at the home office and will be responsible for day-to-day project management, including coordination of resources, project staff, activities and sub-awards, and oversight of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting from the home office. The position will serve as the key interlocutor between USAID, the COP, and the home office of the applicant organization.

The Project Manager will meet the following minimum set of qualifications:

- a master's degree (a minimum of eighteen years of education) in a relevant field from an internationally recognized or accredited university;
- a minimum of of five years of progressively more responsible experience managing higher education and human and institutional capacity development projects;
- demonstrated experience in coordinating/managing higher education capacity building projects in developing countries;
- a demonstrated ability to work collegially and productively with a variety of partners and stakeholders; and
- significant technical assistance management experience; familiarity with capacity building projects is preferred.

### F. Other Staff:

The award recipient has the discretion to determine the appropriate number and composition of additional personnel, including personnel from local organizations, short-term technical staff, and others needed to meet the project requirements described in the technical proposal. If the recipient proposes technical leads for particular areas, USAID/Pakistan encourages that applicants consider a combination of locally (i.e. non-overseas) and internationally hired technical leads for positions. All personnel must demonstrate exceptional written and oral communication skills in English and have an excellent command of the technical area. Familiarity with the political, social, economic, and cultural context of working in Pakistan is also highly preferred. Overall, preference will be given to applicant organizations demonstrating a commitment to hiring diversity and inclusivity that includes race, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and national origin.

**The non-key personnel positions are expected to be:**

- Finance Manager
- Procurements and Logistics Officer
- Office Coordinator/Administrative Officer
- Technical Advisors/Consultants (based on technical area and need)
- Other project staff, as needed

**IV. Institutional Capability:**

The applicant must describe its existing capacity or its ability to obtain necessary capacity to implement the components to meet the objectives of the program description. The applicant must demonstrate administrative and financial ability to implement the technical approach. The applicant must also demonstrate institutional resources (technical expertise, institutional networks and links, human resources, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project. Applicant must address potential for academic, training or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USAID support. Institutional data must be provided to show the institution's ability to support the proposed project.

### 7. Business (Cost) Application Format

The Business (Cost) Application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. While no page limit exists for the full cost application, Applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible while still providing the necessary details. The business (cost) application must illustrate the entire period of performance, using the budget format shown in the SF-424A.

Prior to award, Applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the Applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.205. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections (which are further elaborated below this listing with the letters for each requirement):

I. **Cover Page** (See Section D.3 above for requirements)
II. **SF 424 Form(s)**

The Applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically at www.grants.gov or using the following links:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instructions for SF-424** | http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html |
| **Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)** | https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html |
| **Instructions for SF-424A** | http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html |
| **Budget Information (SF-424A)** | https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html |
| **Instructions for SF-424B** | http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html |
| **Assurances (SF-424B)** | https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html |

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

## III. Required Certifications and Assurances

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy with their application:

1. "Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" document found at http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf
2. Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
3. 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).

## IV. Budget and Budget Narrative

The Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file (MS Office 2010 or later versions) with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year, including itemization of the federal and non-federal (cost share) amount. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The Applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID's determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable. Applicants are advised to use the exchange rate of USD 1= PKR 160 for budget purposes.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

- Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the Applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. See Section H, Annex 1 for Budget Template
- Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's program and are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.
- Detailed Budgets for each 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.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

1. Salaries and Allowances – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. The Applicant's budget must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors for each position.

Allowances, when proposed, must be broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and consistent with what is paid for similar work in other activities of the applicant. Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation. If the Applicant's written policies do not address a specific element of compensation that is being proposed, the Budget Narrative must describe the rationale used and supporting market research.

2. Fringe Benefits – (if applicable) If the Applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the Applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an Applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the Applicant must propose a rate and explain how the Applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.
3. Travel and Transportation – Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant's normal travel policies. When appropriate please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.
4. Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.
5. Subawards – Specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the Applicant's budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.

6. Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the program proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.
7. Indirect Costs – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200.414. The application must identify which approach

they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only
Eligibility: Any applicant
Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. If your NICRA was issued by an Agency other than USAID, provide the contact information for the approving Agency. Additionally, at the Agency's discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See USAID's Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)
Eligibility: Any applicant that has never received a NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200.414(f) for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged As A Fixed Amount
Eligibility: Non U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO

Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:

- Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
- Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year
- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across all programs and activities of using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

8. Security Costs
   The budget must include security costs. The Applicant will provide USAID/Pakistan a security plan and budget for security costs as part of its application. The Security Plan and budget shall delineate and justify for reasonableness all costs and provide a coherent, overall integrated security plan that demonstrates that the Applicant has undertaken a thoughtful review of their security needs and includes, analysis of the various elements of a security plan. Applicants should consider any costs foreseen for security, as identified in the section below: "Sample Format for Initial Security Plan", to include security equipment, security-related communication equipment, training, and guards required for program implementation. These costs should be included under "Other Direct Costs." Security Costs shall be clearly identified in the cost application in a separate budget line item and must be included as part of the overall Applicant's cost application.

   Security Format
   The Applicant shall submit a Security Plan and budget as a part of their application. The Security Plan shall be based on a credible threat analysis and risk assessment. The plan shall provide a coherent, integrated security plan, which demonstrates that the applicant has undertaken a thoughtful review of their security needs and includes analysis of the various elements of a security system showing how threats will be mitigated. The security budget shall delineate and justify for reasonableness of all costs. The security budget shall be complete and include comprehensive budget notes. The Security Plan and budget shall also include a point of contact to answer questions or provide clarifications regarding security throughout the life of the program. The applicant is encouraged to acquire professional advice from an expert of its choosing to assist in establishing an overall security plan/system. The security plan accompanied by the budget will be reviewed together with the technical and cost applications, and will need to demonstrate that the security needs to successfully implement the program description as presented in the applicant's technical approach have been addressed/considered. See Section H, Annex 2 for Sample Security Plan Template.

## V. Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the Applicant must specify and justify that cost. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

## VI. Approval of Subawards

The Applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the Applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- DUNS Number
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM)
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331(b)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

## VII. Dun and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifiers (DUNS number) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the Applicant and all proposed sub-recipients;
2. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient (www.sam.gov).
3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, Applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform
SAM registration: http://www.sam.gov

Applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on www.sam.gov, navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

## VIII. History of Performance

The Applicant must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed five awards, as follows:

- Name of the Awarding Organization;
- Award Number;
- Activity Title;
- A brief description of the activity;
- Period of Performance;
- Award Amount;
- Reports and findings from any audits performed in the last five years; and
- Name of at least two (2) updated professional contacts who most directly observed the work at the organization for which the service was performed with complete current contact information including telephone number, and e-mail address for each proposed individual.

If the Applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, it may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. The applicant should not provide general information on its performance. USAID reserves the right to obtain relevant information concerning an Applicant's history of performance from any sources and may consider such information in its review of the Applicant's risk. The Agency may request additional information and conduct a pre-award survey if it determines that it is necessary to inform the risk assessment.

## IX. Branding Strategy & Marking Plan

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to provide a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer and incorporated into any resulting award

**Branding Strategy – Assistance (June 2012)**

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Branding Strategy," describing how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, and how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and host country citizens.

b. The request for a Branding Strategy, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Branding Strategy must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) All estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth.

(2) The intended name of the program, project, or activity.

(i) USAID requires the applicant to use the “USAID Identity,” comprised of the USAID logo and brand mark, with the tagline “from the American people” as found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding, unless Section VI of the NOFO states that the USAID Administrator has approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(ii) USAID prefers local language translations of the phrase “made possible by (or with) the generous support of the American People” next to the USAID Identity when acknowledging contributions.

(iii) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(iv) If branding in the above manner is inappropriate or not possible, the applicant must explain how USAID's involvement will be showcased during publicity for the program or project.

(v) USAID prefers to fund projects that do not have a separate logo or identity that competes with the USAID Identity. If there is a plan to develop a separate logo to consistently identify this program, the applicant must attach a copy of the proposed logos. Section VI of the NOFO will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(3) The intended primary and secondary audiences for this project or program, including direct beneficiaries and any special target segments.

(4) Planned communication or program materials used to explain or market the program to beneficiaries.

(i) Describe the main program message.

(ii) Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.
(iii) Provide any plans to announce and promote publicly this program or project to host country citizens, such as media releases, press conferences, public events, and so forth. Applicant must incorporate the USAID Identity and the message, “USAID is from the American People.”
(iv) Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.

(5) Information on any direct involvement from the host-country government or ministry, including any planned acknowledgement of the host-country government.

(6) Any other groups whose logo or identity the applicant will use on program materials and related materials. Indicate if they are a donor or why they will be visibly acknowledged, and if they will receive the same prominence as USAID.

f. The Agreement Officer will review the Branding Strategy to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Branding Strategy will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement.

(END OF PRE-AWARD TERM)

**Marking Plan – Assistance (June 2012)**

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a “Marking Plan,” detailing the public communications, commodities, and program materials, and other items that will visibly bear the “USAID Identity,” which comprises of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline “from the American people.” The USAID Identity is the official marking for the Agency, and is found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding. Section VI of the NOFO will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

b. The request for a Marking Plan, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Marking Plan within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Marking Plan must include all of the following:

(1) A description of the public communications, commodities, and program materials that the applicant plans to produce and which will bear the USAID Identity as part of the award, including:

(i) Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature;
(ii) Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audiovisual productions, public service announcements, Web sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID;
(iii) Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs; and
(iv) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.
(v) Events financed by USAID, such as training courses, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, fairs, workshops, press conferences and other public activities. If the USAID Identity cannot be displayed, the recipient is encouraged to otherwise acknowledge USAID and the support of the American people.

(2) A table on the program deliverables with the following details:

(i) The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;
(ii) The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;
(iii) When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;
(iv) What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID Identity, and
(v) The rationale for not marking program deliverables.

(3) Any requests for an exemption from USAID marking requirements, and an explanation of why the exemption would apply. The applicant may request an exemption if USAID marking requirements would:

(i)Compromise the intrinsic independence or neutrality of a program or materials where independence or neutrality is an inherent aspect of the program and materials. The applicant must identify the USAID Development Objective, Interim Result, or program goal furthered by an appearance of neutrality, or state why an aspect of the award is presumptively neutral. Identify by category or deliverable item, examples of material for which an exemption is sought.
(ii) Diminish the credibility of audits, reports, analyses, studies, or policy recommendations whose data or findings must be seen as independent. The

applicant must explain why each particular deliverable must be seen as credible.
(iii) Undercut host-country government "ownership" of constitutions, laws, regulations, policies, studies, assessments, reports, publications, surveys or audits, public service announcements, or other communications. The applicant must explain why each particular item or product is better positioned as host-country government item or product.
(iv) Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.
(v) Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.
(vi) Offend local cultural or social norms, or be considered inappropriate. The applicant must identify the relevant norm, and explain why marking would violate that norm or otherwise be inappropriate.
(vii) Conflict with international law. The applicant must identify the applicable international law violated by the marking.

f. The Agreement Officer will consider the Marking Plan's adequacy and reasonableness and will approve or disapprove any exemption requests. The Marking Plan will be reviewed to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Marking Plan, including any approved exemptions, will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement, and will apply for the term of the award unless provided otherwise.

(END OF PRE-AWARD TERM)

## X. Funding Restrictions

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction will not be authorized under this award.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer. Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B.4 of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

## XI. CONFLICT OF INTEREST PRE-AWARD TERM (August 2018)

a. Personal Conflict of Interest

1. An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an 8 Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.

2. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

b. Organizational Conflict of Interest

The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

(END OF PRE-AWARD TERM)

**END OF SECTION D**

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## SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

### 1. MERIT REVIEW CRITERION

USAID intends to award the Cooperative Agreement to the responsible applicant whose application provides the greatest overall benefit in response to the requirement while considering programmatic factors, over all cost and cost share elements.

USAID will use an adjectival rating method for reviewing applications. Technical factors, cost and cost share will be evaluated as described below.

- For the overall evaluation purposes, all technical factors other than cost or price, when combined, will be significantly more important than cost or price in accordance.
- For the evaluation of technical factors, the importance of the technical factor "Technical Approach" is equal to the importance of all other technical factors when combined.
- If the Agreement Officer determines that competing programmatic factors of Technical Applications are essentially equal, cost & cost sharing factors may become the determining factor in the source selection. Conversely, if the Agreement Officer determines that competing cost proposals are essentially equal, technical factors may become the determining factor in source selection.
- Further, if after carrying out discussions, USAID is unable to agree with apparently successful applicant proposed cost or cost share; the applicants can be eliminated from further consideration and USAID will initiate discussion with the next applicant on the final selection list.

**a)** Criterion Identification – The review of applications will be limited to the following four main factors : Technical Approach, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan, Personnel and Management Approach, and Institutional Capability.

The evaluation of applications will be completed using the following merit review criterion:

| CRITERION | CRITERION NAME |
|---|---|
| **Criterion 1** | **Technical Approach** |
| **Sub Criterion 1.1** | Demonstrated understanding of the HESSA's description of the program, goals, objectives and results |
| **Sub Criterion 1.2** | Demonstrated understanding of the higher education landscape and institutional capacities in Pakistan |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sub Criterion 1.3** | Feasibility, quality and sustainability of the proposed approach and ability to complete HESSA as described in the program description, with the anticipated results. |
| **Criterion 2** | **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Approach** |
| **Criterion 3** | **Personnel and Management Approach** |
| **Sub Criterion 3.1** | Project management and mobilization (quick start) |
| **Sub Criterion 3.2** | Key Personnel |
| **Criterion 4** | **Institutional Capability** |

b. Applicant Instructions & Review Criteria

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CRITERION 1 | CRITERION NAME: | **Technical Approach** |

Evaluation Criteria:

Evaluation of the technical approach criteria will focus on the extent to which it is well conceived, technically sound and takes into account the considerations identified in the NOFO. The technical application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely. Evaluation will further be focused on the extent to which the proposed activities are appropriate, realistic, and directly relevant to the achievement of results. The technical approach will be evaluated in terms of overall quality.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| SUB CRITERION 1.1 | CRITERION NAME: | Demonstrated understanding of HESSA's description of the program, goals, objectives and results. |

Evaluation Sub-Criterion:
Applications will be reviewed according to the clarity of the demonstrated understanding of HESSA's objectives and results. Key aspects of this criterion include:

- Demonstrated clear articulation of key high-level results.
- Demonstrated clear articulation of evidence-based approaches that improve HEI systems.
- The feasibility of the technical and operational approaches to achieve those objectives, including extensive and close work with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) and it's yet-to-be-selected partner HEIs.

- The adequacy of the description of how the technical approach addresses all of the technical requirements specified in the program description.
- Demonstrated capability to partner with the private sector to achieve HESSA's objectives.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| SUB CRITERION 1.2 | CRITERION NAME: | Demonstrated understanding of the higher education landscape and institutional capacity in Pakistan |

Evaluation Sub-Criterion:

The ability of the applicant to reflect a robust understanding of the current higher education landscape in Pakistan, and the institutional capacities, challenges, and needs of local HEIs. Applicant demonstration of a thorough understanding of the HEC's vision and plans for HEI development in Pakistan. Applicant demonstration of a sound understanding of the current and future plans of the HEC.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| SUB CRITERION 1.3 | CRITERION NAME: | Feasibility, quality and sustainability of the proposed approach and ability to complete HESSA as described in the program description, with the anticipated results. |

Evaluation Sub-Criterion:

The applicant's demonstration of how effectively they have presented an evidence-based approach to achieve the results of HESSA.

Quality, feasibility, and sustainability of the proposed technical approach and the potential to impact at an individual, institutional, and HEI systems level in the areas described in the program description; and the extent to which the proposed technical solution(s) to achieving objectives/outcomes are technically sound, well-defined, and achievable..

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CRITERION 2 | CRITERION NAME: | **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Approach** |

Evaluation Criteria:

- Evaluation of the MEL Plan will focus on the extent to which it is technically sound and presents an effective and robust monitoring and evaluation framework to ascertain effectiveness of the approaches. Consideration of the challenges in monitoring due to the COVID-19 pandemic also need to be addressed. The MEL Plan will be evaluated in terms of overall quality.

- Evaluation of the MEL plan will also be based on its articulation of how applicants will monitor for unintended consequences as they implement their activities, and approaches to overcome risks.

Applicants will be assessed according to appropriateness and effectiveness of the program objectives and expected outcomes, and a preliminary list of realistic indicators, benchmarks and targets to measure achievement and success towards stated objectives. Successful MEL Plans will include illustrative indicators that measure outcomes and outputs across each activity area.

| | | |
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| **CRITERION 3** | **CRITERION NAME:** | **Personnel and Management Approach** |

Evaluation Criteria:

The personnel and management approach will be assessed based on the extent to which the proposed management structure supports the technical approach and convincingly demonstrates an ability to achieve program objectives. The personnel and management approach will be evaluated in terms of overall quality and efficiency.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **SUB CRITERION 3.1** | **CRITERION NAME:** | Project Management and mobilization plan |

Evaluation Sub-Criterion:

- Applicants will be assessed according to the effectiveness of the proposed staffing plan, which should also include the technical, administrative, and financial support personnel required to implement the program (sharing the roles and responsibilities for Key and non-Key Personnel). Applicants should include an organizational chart as an Annex.

- Applicants will be assessed according to the feasibility and effectiveness of the plans to efficiently manage the activity described in the application and to collaborate with local entities to ensure sustainability of the planned interventions, including, but not limited to, effective cooperation and coordination with multiple organizations and higher education institutions, cooperation with government officials and operating within bureaucratic structures and processes.

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|---|---|---|
| **SUB CRITERION 3.2** | **CRITERION NAME:** | Key personnel |

Evaluation Criterion:

Key personnel positions qualifications are detailed in the description provided in Section D. The applicants will be assessed according to the strength of the technical background and qualifications of each proposed key personnel, including:

- Academic and/or relevant technical background and qualifications (including English language ability), and
- Demonstrated successful experience in providing higher education technical assistance to developing countries. All work experience should be presented in reverse chronological order and areas relevant to this activity should be specified.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **CRITERION 4** | **CRITERION NAME:** | **Institutional Capability** |

Evaluation Criterion

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will achieve or exceed its stated objectives and goal. Demonstrated administrative and financial ability to implement the technical approach. Other elements include the demonstration of institution’s commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (technical expertise, institutional networks and links, human resources, administrative capabilities, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic, training or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USAID support. Institutional data included to show the institution’s ability to support the proposed project

**b) Business Review**

The Agency will evaluate the cost application of the applicant(s) under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

Proposed cost share, if provided, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

The AO will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.205). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organizational, experience, accounting and operational controls, financial resources, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Depending on the result of the risk assessment, the AO will decide to execute the award, not execute the award, or award with “specific conditions” (2 CFR 200.207).

**END OF SECTION E**

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## SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 1. Federal Award Notices

Award of the agreement contemplated by this NOFO cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award.

### 2. Administrative & National Policy Requirements

The resulting award from this NOFO will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For US organizations: ADS 303, 2 CFR 700, 2 CFR 200, and Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations.

For Non US organizations: Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations.

See Annex-2, for a list of the Standard Provisions that will be applicable to any awards resulting from this NOFO.

### 3. Reporting Requirements

- **Financial Reporting:**
    - The recipient must submit the Federal Financial Form (SF-425) on a quarterly basis via electronic format to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (http://www.dpm.psc. ). The recipient must submit a copy of the FFR at the same time to the Agreement Officer and the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).
    - On a quarterly basis, the AOR may require additional information related to financial accruals and pipeline of funds. This information will help to ensure that the activity has an adequate pipeline to conduct its programs. These reports/forms will be submitted when requested within 30 calendar days from the end of each quarter. In addition to this, Awardee will submit accruals reports to the AOR 15
- **Performance Reporting**
    - **Annual Work Plans:** The work plans for all USAID/Pakistan activities are aligned with the USG Fiscal Year Calendar (October 1 to September 30). The Recipient will submit its first work plan to the AOR for approval within 30 days of Award. The first work plan will cover the period from the start date of the Award until the end of the first USG Fiscal Year of the Activity – therefore the

first work plan may cover less than twelve months depending on the date of Award. The AOR will provide comments within 20 working days to the Recipient and the Recipient will have 15 working days to respond and make all requested changes, after which the AOR will provide final approval within 15 working days.
All subsequent work plans will be submitted to the AOR no later than 1 September and will cover an entire Fiscal Year, i.e. October 1 to September 30. The AOR will provide comments within 20 working days to the Recipient and the Recipient will have 15 working days to respond and make all requested changes, after which the AOR will provide final approval within 15 working days. All work plans must be developed in cooperation with the AOR, other relevant USAID/Pakistan activities, donor programs, beneficiary communities, and all other relevant stakeholders as designated by the AOR.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan**: The Recipient will submit to the AOR a life of project MEL Plan covering the full implementation period within 30 days of the Award (with the submission of the first work plan) that include Performance Indicators for the first year and for the Life of the Project (LOP). For all subsequent years of operation, the Recipient will modify the MELP to align with the annual work plan, if required by the AOR. The AOR will then provide comments within 20 working days to the Recipient and the Recipient will have 15 working days to respond and make all requested changes, after which the AOR will provide final approval within 15 working days.

- **Quarterly Progress Report:** Quarterly reports will summarize the following: program highlights, achievements, and major activities; budget information; problems encountered, proposed remedial actions and impact achieved against the objectives. The Recipient shall submit an electronic copy of a performance report to the AOR. The performance reports are required to be submitted quarterly (30 calendar days after the quarter). Please refer to 2 CFR 200.328 (b) (1). Along with the quarterly progress report, the Awardee will provide one success story (*Telling Our Story*) from its program. Success stories should be no more than one page. In addition, reporting will also be done through the mission's online performance monitoring system.

- **Annual reports:** The annual report shall be submitted within 90 calendar days after the reporting period at the end of the first full USAID fiscal year and annually thereafter for each authorized year of performance. The Annual Performance Report shall follow the same format as the quarterly report, but with additional focus on cumulative accomplishments, progress and problems toward achievement of results, performance measures, indicators and benchmarks tied to the Annual Work Plan and the MEL Plan targets, for the quarter and the entire previous fiscal year, which runs from October 1-September 30.

- **Outreach and Communication Strategy:** A communication and outreach strategy shall be developed on an annual basis and incorporated as a section of the Annual Work Plan. The strategies will include the overall communication message of the program, as set forth in the Branding and Marking Plan. The annual strategies must also focus on opportunities for USG visibility through the components of the project in terms of branding and marking but also with regard to events and other direct engagements. The project offers opportunities for signing ceremonies, graduation ceremonies and engagement with the NGOs and their target audiences throughout the course of the project. The strategy must ensure the use of traditional and social media.

- **Final Activity Report:** The Final Report must cover the full period of the Award and contain an executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved; an overall description of the activities and accomplishments; a summary of problems/obstacles encountered during implementation; an assessment of the performance in accomplishing the Activity's objectives; significance of these activities; findings; comments, recommendations and other pertinent information. The Recipient shall submit the original and one copy to the Agreement Officer (if requested), the AOR, and to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). Submission instructions to DEC can be found at: http://dec.usaid.gov.

- **Short-Term Consultant Reports, Technical Briefs/Reports, Special and External Reports:** If applicable, upon completion of the services of each short-term consultant, the recipient shall submit a report to the AOR summarizing the activities, accomplishments and recommendations of the consultant. This can be either in written or verbal form as determined by the AOR. In addition, the recipient shall provide copies of all technical reports including analyses, policy recommendations, comparative studies, etc. to the AOR as these are developed.

- **Closeout Plan:** Ninety (90) days prior to the end of the Agreement, the Recipient shall submit a closeout plan to the AOR and the Acquisition and Assistance Office. The closeout plan shall include: brief program summary; brief program timeline; financial status report; final Financial Status Report timeline; latest NICRA or indirect cost rates; anticipated balance of federal funds after expiration of the instrument; final inventory of residual non- expendable property, which was acquired or furnished under the instrument; program and activity end date; recipient responsibilities during phase out; Sub Awardees and/or partnership phase out; status of all program audit reports per the instrument's provisions; final audit report timeline; final report timeline; personnel phase-out timeline; personnel phase-out plan; and job descriptions for personnel anticipated to serve during the closeout phase.

- **Development Experience Clearinghouse Requirements:** The Recipient shall be required to submit any technical reports produced under this program, in English, to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) according to the instructions found at https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/submit.aspx.

- **Foreign Tax Reports:** Standard report will be issued for each Fiscal Year and delivered prior to April 16th of each yearOn a quarterly basis, the AOR may require additional information related to financial accruals and pipeline of funds. This information will help to ensure that the activity has adequate pipeline to conduct its programs. These reports/forms will be submitted when requested within 30 calendar days from the end of each quarter. In addition to this, Awardee will submit accruals reports to the AOR 15.

## 4. Other Requirements

1. Branding & Marking:

The apparently successful applicant will be required to submit a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer. A Branding Implementation Strategy and Marking Plan must be in accordance with USAID Branding and Marking Plan as required per ADS 320 at the following link: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/320.pdf. See 2 CFR or, for non-U.S. organizations, see the provision entitled "Marking and Public Communications Under USAID-Funded Assistance".

The Recipient must comply with the requirements of the USAID "Graphic Standards Manual" available at www.usaid.gov/branding, or any successor branding policy.

Environmental Compliance:

A. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117, requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's ADS 204, which require that any potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities be identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. In case of a conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern. The Recipient's environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this NOFO.

No activity funded under this Cooperative Agreement will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Hereinafter, such documents are described as "approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.")

B. An Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) for this activity is currently in draft; however, has not yet been signed by the Bureau Environmental officer at USAID/Washington. The IEE covers activities expected to be implemented under this Cooperative Agreement. USAID expects that a Negative Determination with Conditions (NDC) will apply to one or more of the proposed activities. This indicates that if these activities are implemented subject to the specified conditions, they are expected to have no significant adverse effect on the environment. The applicant shall be responsible for implementing all IEE conditions pertaining to activities to be funded under this solicitation.

C. As part of its initial Work Plan, and all Annual Work Plans thereafter, the recipient, in collaboration with the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and Mission Environmental Officer or Bureau Environmental Officer, as appropriate, shall review all ongoing and planned activities under this Cooperative Agreement to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.

If the recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments.

Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.

D. For activities with NDC including procurement of medical equipment, supplies, furniture and/or office equipment, the following actions are required:

The implementer is required to ensure that equipment, commodities (see also ADS 312) and materials are procured from certified retailers; environmental safety and quality certificates conforming with national and/or international standards are available; equipment and materials are used in an environmentally sound and safe manner, properly disposed of when applicable at the end of their useful life in a manner consistent with best management practices according to USG, European Union or equivalent standards acceptable to USAID.

Environmental Due Diligence Form (EDF) in the form of Environmental Review and Assessment Checklist is required to identify environmental effects, develop Environmental Manual and Mitigation and Monitoring Plans when applicable, confirm/ neglect and mitigate a potentially significant adverse effect approved by the Mission Environment Officer (MEO).

Since the approved Regulation 216 documentation is (1) an IEE that contains one or more Negative Determinations with conditions, the recipient shall:

- Unless the approved Regulation 216 documentation contains a complete environmental mitigation and monitoring plan (EMMP) or a project mitigation and monitoring (M&M) plan, the recipient shall prepare an EMMP or M&M Plan describing how the recipient will, in specific terms, implement all IEE and/or EA conditions that apply to proposed project activities within the scope of the award. The EMMP or M&M Plan shall include monitoring the implementation of the conditions and their effectiveness approved by the MEO.

- Integrate a completed EMMP or M&M Plan into the initial work plan.

- Integrate an EMMP or M&M Plan into subsequent Annual Work Plans, making any necessary adjustments to activity implementation in order to minimize adverse impacts to the environment.

E. A provision for sub-grants is included under this award; therefore, the recipient will be required to use an Environmental Review Form (ERF) or Environmental Review (ER) checklist using impact assessment tools to screen grant proposals to ensure the funded proposals will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify monitoring and reporting. Use of the ERF or ER checklist is called for when the nature of the grant proposals to be funded is not well enough known to make an informed decision about their potential environmental impacts, yet due to the type and extent of activities to be funded, any adverse impacts are expected to be easily mitigated. Implementation of sub-grant activities cannot go forward until the ERF or ER checklist is completed and approved by USAID. Recipient is responsible for ensuring that mitigation measures specified by the ERF or ER checklist process are implemented.

The recipient will be responsible for periodic reporting to the USAID AOR as specified in the Schedule/Program Description of this solicitation.

**SPECIAL AGREEMENT PROVISIONS:**

I. EXECUTIVE ORDER ON TERRORISM FINANCING (FEB 2002)

The Recipient is reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibits transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. It is the responsibility of the contractor/recipient to ensure compliance with these Executive Orders and laws. This provision must be included in all subcontracts/sub awards issued under this contract/agreement.

II. SECURITY REPORTING REQUIREMENT:

a) Security Conditions

The Recipient must be aware of security conditions in Pakistan, and by entering into an agreement, assumes full responsibility for the safety of its employees. Prior to commencing work, the Recipient shall ensure that it has adequate procedures in place to advise its employees of situations or changed conditions that could adversely affect their security. In order to keep abreast of security conditions in Pakistan, the Recipient shall seek information from all available sources, including the USAID Pakistan EXO/Safety & Security Office (SSO), for all areas in which its employees work or travel. The Recipient acknowledges that security conditions are subject to change at any moment, that USAID cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information that it may provide to the Recipient and that USAID assumes no responsibility for the reliability of such information. The Recipient has sole responsibility for anticipating, scheduling, budgeting, receiving country clearance and securing required AOR and Agreement Officer approvals for all travel for its employees and/or his/her dependents traveling to post if accompanied by dependents is allowed by the Recipient’s personnel internal policies. The Recipient shall also be responsible for immediately notifying USAID Pakistan and the U.S. Embassy American Citizen Services section in the event a U.S. citizen employee does not return from travel as expected or does not report to work. In the event that USAID requests the Recipient to do so, the Recipient's Chief of Party (COP) shall assume responsibility for contacting all of its employees. The Recipient shall provide to the USAID Pakistan EXO/SSO the name, current address, and current home and/or cellular telephone number of the COP and of an alternate designated employee. The Recipient shall be responsible for ensuring that the information on file in the USAID Pakistan EXO/SSO is up-to-date so that in an emergency, the COP or alternate representative can be reached immediately and he/she can rapidly contact all other affected employees.

The Recipient will be requested to notify the AOR and EXO/SSO about any changes of the individual listed in the security plan as in charge of security.

Once the Agreement is awarded, the Recipient shall be required to submit a list of all personnel involved in the implementation of the project, including sub awardees’ personnel. The required list shall be submitted to the AOR and EXO/SSO no later than 30 days after the effective date of the Agreement and must be updated every quarter after the start date of the agreement and/or if a change of personnel happens.

b) Security Plan

The Recipient shall develop a security plan to safeguard all project operations and to comply with all United States Government regulations and Pakistani law. The plan is to be implemented and maintained also by all subcontractors (and/or sub-grantees). The security plan will be reviewed by the Agreement Officer in consultation with USAID/Pakistan's EXO/SSO.

The plan shall include:

- Procedures for reporting and addressing security threats
- Procedures for reporting any deaths related to the project
- Procedures for reporting and addressing any persons missing or kidnapping incidents
- Name and contact information of security contact person for the head office and regional office(s)
- An internal "cascade" list for communicating with staff, which shall be updated/, maintained by the Recipient. The Recipient shall provide the name, address and telephone numbers of the COP and their designee to USAID as principle contacts in case of security situations/emergencies. The Recipient shall be responsible for passing information to their staff.

c) Life Support and Security Services

The Recipient shall be responsible for maintaining the security of its personnel, materials and equipment. All employees of the Recipient must meet the requirements of their work-site, which may include, but not limited to background checks, security/restricted area clearances, drug-free workplace, safety training and/or any other company safety and security requirements.

d) Security Threat Reporting

As part of the overall security requirements, the Recipient shall report any security threats and/or incidents verbally / by telephone, immediately to the following USAID/Pakistan representatives:

- Security & Safety Specialist and any other USAID/Pakistan EXO designated official(s)
- Executive Officer (EXO)
- AOR

Subsequently, a written report shall be submitted in accordance with approved procedures. The Recipient shall develop a list of specific steps to track any potential/identified threats, which will be part of its overall security system. All subcontractors will be required by the Recipient to report any threats/incidents to the Recipient, who will immediately after, notify the above listed USAID/Pakistan representatives.

USAID requires appropriate Security reports be submitted to the Islamabad Safety & Security Specialist, Executive Office, AOR and other USAID/Pakistan officials as directed by USAID

Executive Office. The type and frequency of these reports may vary with the project scope, location, and criticality. The Recipient shall report an Initial Threat Assessments and subsequent changes as often as the situation requires (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly etc.). The Recipient is also required to notify USAID of any security related incident in a timely manner according to the following guidelines:

There are various types of Incident Reporting: Serious Incident Report (SIR); Incident Report (IR); Situation Report (SITREP); and any other security related report that may be required by USAID.
Serious Incident Report (SIR)

- An incident that involves the death, injury, kidnapping of partner personnel and/or damage to partner's property.
- An incident that has critically damaged the funded program, such as fire, catastrophic flood, etc.
- Initial SIR must be reported verbally immediately, and within 4 hours of the incident occurrence/discovered
- A Complete SIR must be filed in writing within 24 hours of the incident
- Updated SIR will continue to be filed in a timely basis (daily, weekly) as long as the situation exists. The timeline will be adjusted as required by USAID.
- Final Report SIR will summarize the incident, the subsequent happenings and the final resolution.

Incident Report (IR)

- An incident involving accidents, potential harm, suspicious persons or acts, threats or harassing actions against personnel or the program.
- IR should be filed as soon as possible (within 24 hours) after the incident is evaluated, and a complete report not later than 72 hours after the incident.

Situation Report (SITREP)

- A report that a significant, but not critical action or activity, has taken place that has impacted, or may impact, on the wellbeing of the personnel or the success of the program.
- This report may describe trends, second hand information that may have bearing on the project, or impact on future operations.

Telephonic communication is the preferred method to provide the initial information of an incident. A written report by e-mail must follow as soon as possible within above described guidelines and it shall be as detailed as possible. The report shall follow the format approved in the original Security Plan but at a minimum it shall contain the name of the company, name of the victim(s), date, time, a description of what happened, where the incident occurred, and any other relevant details surrounding the incident. If this is an ongoing incident, progress reports should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines provided in order to keep USAID-Islamabad Security personnel apprised of the situation.

## III. PAKINFO REPORTING REQUIREMENT

USAID/Pakistan utilizes a management information system (MIS), currently called PakInfo, to track activities for all mission-funded projects at the national, provincial, district, and village levels. The purpose of this database is to map the location of project implementation sites to the nearest village or geospatial coordinates, monitor the use of funds at the district and tehsil level and the performance of projects to meet timely information requirements for USAID/Pakistan and several interested parties. These interested parties are USAID/Washington, Congress, implementing partners, the Government of Pakistan (GOP), other donors, and stakeholders. This reporting process supports the bilateral agreement between the U.S. Government and GOP by sharing information on USAID/Pakistan’s Mission-funded activities. The Recipient shall provide a quarterly update of information (including, but not limited to, performance results, geospatial coordinates, and photographs) on the activities under the acquisition or assistance agreement by entering this information into the USAID/Pakistan's MIS. The Recipient shall enter information via an Internet website or a Microsoft (MS) Access Database; USAID will provide the URL address or Access Database, and a user ID/password. A comprehensive user manual will be provided by USAID/Pakistan. Upon receipt of the manual, the Recipient will enter and manage the data accordingly.

## IV. AMMONIUM NITRATE AND CALCIUM AMMONIUM NITRATE RESTRICTION (September 2011) (Class Deviation OAA-DEV-11-03c, expiration date September 8, 2016)

(a) Ammonium Nitrate (AN) and Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN) are marketed and used as fertilizers for agricultural applications, and as explosives for construction/demolition applications. None of the funds made available under this contract/agreement shall be used, directly or indirectly, to produce, acquire, use, transport, store, sell, or otherwise deal with AN for agricultural applications or CAN for agricultural or construction/demolition applications. This clause/provision supersedes the terms and conditions of any other clause/provision, including any deemed approval, in this contract/agreement applicable to restricted goods and services. This clause/provision shall not be altered or its applicability waived.

(b) If USAID determines that the contractor/recipient or any subcontractor/sub-awardee has used any funds under this contract/agreement contrary to the restriction in paragraph (a) of this clause/provision, the Contracting Officer/Agreement Officer may require the contractor/recipient to refund the entire amount used for such purposes.

(c) The contractor/recipient shall insert this clause/provision in its entirety in all subcontracts/subawards, including (without limitation) Grants under Contracts (GUCs).

## V. OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL (OIG) HOTLINE

The USAID Office of the Inspector General’s (OIG) mission is to protect the integrity of USAID programs and awards. Additionally, the Office of Inspector General provides independent oversight that promotes the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of foreign assistance programs and operations under USAID OIG’s jurisdiction. The purpose of the OIG Hotline is to receive complaints of fraud, waste, or abuse in our client agencies' programs and operations, including mismanagement or violations of law, rules, or regulations by employees or program participants.

Fraud, waste and abuse are defined as:

Fraud is defined as the wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain. Fraud includes false representation of fact, making false statements, or by concealment of information.

Waste is defined as the thoughtless or careless expenditure, mismanagement, or abuse of resources to the detriment (or potential detriment) of the U.S. government. Waste also includes incurring unnecessary costs resulting from inefficient or ineffective practices, systems, or controls.

Abuse is defined as excessive or improper use of a thing, or to use something in a manner contrary to the natural or legal rules for its use. Abuse can occur in financial or non-financial settings.

Complainants can reach the USAID OIG Hotline in the following different methods to report fraud, waste and abuse including:

By completing an online form on our website https://oig.usaid.gov/report-fraud
By email: ig.hotline@usaid.gov
By telephone: 1-800-230-6539 (Toll-Free) or 202-712-1023
By mail:

U.S. Agency for International Development
Office of Inspector General
P.O. Box 657
Washington, DC 20044-065

VI. PARTNER VETTING

Prior to award, the highest rated applicants will be notified to fulfill vetting requirements.

(a) The recipient must comply with the vetting requirements for key individuals under this award.

(b) Definitions: As used in this provision, “key individual,” “key personnel,” and “vetting official” have the meaning contained in 22 CFR 701.1.

(c) The Recipient must submit within 15 days a USAID Partner Information Form, USAID Form 500-13, to the vetting official identified below when the Recipient replaces key individuals with individuals who have not been previously vetted for this award. Note: USAID will not approve any key personnel who are not eligible for approval after vetting. The designated vetting official is:

Vetting official: Chad Johnson

Address: USAID/Pakistan, U.S. Embassy Islamabad, Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5
Islamabad, Pakistan 44000

Email: pakaidvsu@usaid.gov (for inquiries only)

(d) (1) The vetting official will notify the Recipient that it—

(i) Is eligible based on the vetting results,
(ii) Is ineligible based on the vetting results, or
(iii) Must provide additional information, and resubmit the USAID Partner Information Form with the additional information within the number of days the vetting official specifies.

(2) The vetting official will include information that USAID determines releasable. USAID will determine what information may be released consistent with applicable law and Executive Orders, and with the concurrence of relevant agencies.

(e) The inability to be deemed eligible as described in this award term may be determined to be a material failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the award and may subject the recipient to suspension or termination as specified in the subpart “Remedies for Noncompliance” at 2 CFR part 200.

(f) Reconsideration:

(1) Within 7 calendar days after the date of the vetting official's notification, the recipient or prospective subrecipient or contractor that has not passed vetting may request in writing to the vetting official that the Agency reconsider the vetting determination. The request should include any written explanation, legal documentation and any other relevant written material for reconsideration.

(2) Within 7 calendar days after the vetting official receives the request for reconsideration, the Agency will determine whether the recipient's additional information merits a revised decision.

(3) The Agency's determination of whether reconsideration is warranted is final.

(g) A notification that the Recipient has passed vetting does not constitute any other approval under this award.

**Alternate I. When sub-recipients will be subject to vetting, add the following paragraphs to the basic award term:**

(h) When the prime recipient anticipates that it will require prior approval for a subaward in accordance with 2 CFR 200.308(c)(6) the subaward is subject to vetting. The prospective subrecipient must submit a USAID Partner Information Form, USAID Form

500-13, to the vetting official identified in paragraph (c) of this provision. The agreement officer must not approve a subaward to any organization that has not passed vetting when required.

(i) The recipient agrees to incorporate the substance of paragraphs (a) through (i) of this award term in all first tier subawards under this award.

(End of Provision)

VII. **POST AWARD CONDITION PRECEDENT TO START PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN PAKISTAN:**

A condition precedent to start project implementation will be that the apparent successful applicant must have, within 90 days of the award date,

(i) obtained registration(s) with any relevant agency of the Government of Pakistan (GOP),

(ii) obtained any necessary No-Objection Certificate(s) (NOCs) from the Ministry of Interior or other relevant GOP and/or Provincial Agency, and

(iii) entered into any necessary Memoranda of Understanding with the relevant governmental body. Should the organization be unsuccessful in satisfying the condition precedent within 90 days, the award may be terminated at the discretion of the Agreement Officer and issued to the next highest rated applicant.

The apparent successful applicant will be asked to submit a "Pre-Mobilization Plan and Budget" to include a statement of understanding of GOP and Provincial requirements to implement the project in Pakistan, and the minimum staff and resources needed for obtaining these requirements.

VIII. PROHIBITION ON PROVIDING FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTITIES THAT REQUIRE CERTAIN INTERNAL CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS – REPRESENTATION (APRIL 2015)

(a) In accordance with section 743 of Division E, Title VII, of the Consolidated and further Continuing Resolution Appropriations Act, 2015 (Pub. L. 113-235), Government agencies are not permitted to use funds appropriated (or otherwise made available) under that or any other Act for providing federal assistance to an entity that requires employees, sub awardees or contractors of such entity seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting such employees, sub awardees, or contractors from lawfully reporting such waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information.

(b) The prohibition in paragraph (a) of this provision does not contravene requirements applicable to Standard Form 312, Form 4414, or any other form issued by a Federal department or agency governing the non disclosure of classified information.

(c) By submission of its application, the prospective recipient represents that it does not require employees, sub awardees, or contractors of such entity seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting such employees, sub awardees, or contractors from lawfully reporting such waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information.

(END OF PROVISION)

IX. SPECIAL AWARD REQUIREMENT RELATING TO THE PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN TELECOMMUNICATION AND VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT (NOVEMBER 2020)

USAID has been granted a temporary waiver under Section 889(d)(2) that will allow the recipient to use award funds through September 30, 2022, to procure certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment as specified in 2 CFR 200.216. Based on this waiver, all costs incurred for covered telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment will be allowable through September 30, 2022, without regard to the cost principle at 2 CFR 200.471. Procurements made on or after October 1, 2022, will be unallowable in accordance with 2 CFR 200.471.

[END OF SPECIAL AWARD REQUIREMENT]

**END OF SECTION F**

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## SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this NOFO must request it in writing by the deadline for questions specified in the cover letter to allow a reply to reach all prospective applicants before the submission of their applications. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment of this NFO, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

Any questions or comments concerning this NOFO must be submitted in writing by email to Mr. Muhammad Ali Bilal at Mbilal@usaid.gov, Mr. Aaqib Hameed at Aahameed@usaid.gov and Ms. Sumaira Naqvi at Snaqvi@usaid.gov by the deadline for questions indicated at the top of this NOFO's cover letter.

**END OF SECTION G**

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## SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

Applications with Proprietary Data

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, 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 information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The 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 of this application."

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## ANNEX 1 - BUDGET TEMPLATE

Sample Budget Template Excel Sheet. Attached separately with this NOFO as ANNEX-1.

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## ANNEX 2 - SAMPLE SECURITY PLAN

Sample Security Plan. Attached separately with this NOFO as ANNEX-2.

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**ANNEX 3 - PROVISIONS**

**MANDATORY STANDARD PROVISIONS:**

M1. APPLICABILITY OF 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 700 (DECEMBER 2014)
M2. INELIGIBLE COUNTRIES (MAY 1986)
M3. NONDISCRIMINATION (JUNE 2012)
M4. AMENDMENT OF AWARD (JUNE 2012)
M5. NOTICES (JUNE 2012)
M6. SUBAWARDS AND CONTRACTS (DECEMBER 2014)
M7. OMB APPROVAL UNDER THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT
M8. USAID ELIGIBILITY RULES FOR GOODS AND SERVICES (MAY 2020)
M9. DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS (JUNE 2012)

M10. DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (JUNE 2012)
M11. EQUAL PARTICIPATION BY FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (JUNE 2016)
M12. PREVENTING TRANSACTIONS WITH, OR THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES OR SUPPORT TO, SANCTIONED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS (MAY 2020)
M13. MARKING AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS UNDER USAID-FUNDED ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2014)
M14. REGULATIONS GOVERNING EMPLOYEES (JUNE 2018)
M15. CONVERSION OF UNITED STATES DOLLARS TO LOCAL CURRENCY (NOVEMBER 1985)
M16. USE OF POUCH FACILITIES (AUGUST 1992)
M17. TRAVEL AND INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORTATION
M18. OCEAN SHIPMENT OF GOODS (JUNE 2012)
M19. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS (MAY 2006)
M20. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (April 2016)
M21. SUBMISSIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PUBLICATIONS (JUNE 2012)
M22. LIMITING CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES (AUGUST 2013)
M23. USAID IMPLEMENTING PARTNER NOTICES (IPN) PORTAL FOR ASSISTANCE (JULY 2014)
M24. PILOT PROGRAM FOR ENHANCEMENT OF GRANTEE EMPLOYEE WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS (SEPTEMBER 2014)
M25. SUBMISSION OF DATASETS TO THE DEVELOPMENT DATA LIBRARY (OCTOBER 2014)
M26. PROHIBITION ON REQUIRING CERTAIN INTERNAL CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS OR STATEMENTS (MAY 2017)
M27. CHILD SAFEGUARDING (June 2015)
M28. MANDATORY DISCLOSURES (July 2015)
M29. NONDISCRIMINATION AGAINST BENEFICIARIES (November 2016)
M30. CONFLICT OF INTEREST (August 2018)

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at: https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa and https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab). The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations. The award will also contain the following "required as applicable" Standard Provisions:

Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.

**REQUIRED AS APPLICABLE STANDARD PROVISIONS FOR U.S. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:**

RAA1. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PREDETERMINED (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA2. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PROVISIONAL (Nonprofit) (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA3. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE - PROVISIONAL (Profit) (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA4. INDIRECT COSTS – DE MINIMIS RATE (MAY 2020)
RAA5. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
RAA6. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
RAA7. PROTECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT (APRIL 1998)
RAA8. CARE OF LABORATORY ANIMALS (MARCH 2004)
RAA9. TITLE TO AND CARE OF PROPERTY (COOPERATING COUNTRY TITLE) (NOVEMBER 1985)
RAA10. COST SHARING (MATCHING) (FEBRUARY 2012)
RAA11. PROHIBITION OF ASSISTANCE TO DRUG TRAFFICKERS (JUNE 1999)
RAA12. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
RAA13. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA14. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
RAA15. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
RAA18. USAID DISABILITY POLICY - ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2004)
RAA19. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)
RAA23. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (July 2015)
RAA24. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (DECEMBER 2014)

RAA25. PATENT REPORTING PROCEDURES (DECEMBER 2014)RAA27. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA28. AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)

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## ANNEX 4 - BACKGROUND AND RELATED ANALYSIS

Higher Education Analysis:

Pakistan, the world's fifth most populous country, has a rapidly growing youth population. Investments in human capital development are crucial for private sector-led economic growth in Pakistan. Quality and supply of well-trained workforce is a key economic challenge in the country. Pakistani businesses routinely note difficulty sourcing skilled employees. The workforce quality and mismatch prevent Pakistan's economy from operating more efficiently. Access to good quality higher education remains a major issue for youth and the workforce. Higher education institutions and universities are not acting as the "engines of economic growth" in the country, as it is envisioned in the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Vision 2025.

In Pakistan, higher education refers to education above grade 12, which generally corresponds to the age bracket of 17 to 23 years. The higher education system in Pakistan is made up of two main sectors: the university/Degree Awarding Institutes (DAI) sector and the affiliated Colleges sector (affiliated colleges provide low cost alternatives to universities). The HEC is an autonomous body in the Government of Pakistan (GOP) responsible for allocating public funds from the federal government to universities and DAIs and accrediting their degree programs. Colleges are funded and regulated by provincial governments but follow the curriculum of the HEC funded universities/DAIs with which they are affiliated. While the HEC primarily funds public universities, it provides limited avenues for making funds available to private sector universities for research and infrastructure development.

The 2017 GOP census estimated that nearly 35 percent of the population is under the age of 15, and 60 percent of the population is under the age of 29 (commonly referenced as Pakistan's "youth bulge"). It is estimated that 11 percent of youth[7] (age 15-29) are unemployed, and an even larger percentage are underemployed,[8] and youth lack access to education, skills development, and effective job placement services. More than four million youth seek to enter the job market every year, and attrition forecasts suggest that 1.5-2.5 million jobs will need to be created annually in order to accommodate these young people.[9] With the youth population expected to grow through 2035, there is a risk that youth unemployment will continue to swell over the next twenty years.

Pakistan's higher education system faces a major disconnect between curriculum and the needs of industries. A national survey of public and private organizations in Pakistan[10] was conducted in 2016 to gauge employers' perception of the quality and capability of graduate employees that have been added in the workforce from various higher education institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan as well as international universities. The survey result shows the need for Pakistani HEIs to improve

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[7] According to the Government of Pakistan policy, Youth is defined as men and women of age 15 to 29.

[8] Male: 9.6%, Female:13% (blended average of 11% for youth aged 15-24), and it does not include young people employed in the informal sector and not actively seeking employment. Source: Social Data Indicators 2016; Per Pakistan Bureau of Statistics: Underemployed persons (i.e those who worked less than 35 hours during the reference week and were available/seeking for alternative or additional work).

[9] UNDP Editorial - Development Matters: December 2017.

[10] https://hec.gov.pk/english/universities/projects/TESP/Documents/Employers%20Perception%20Survey_May%202016.pdf

their teaching and assessment methods by shifting towards practical and hands-on methods. A majority of employers were not satisfied with the quality of some skills of graduates that they deemed important, such as critical thinking, analytical approach, self-initiative, and effective interpersonal communication.

The number of universities in Pakistan has almost quadrupled from 52 accredited institutions in 2001 to over 200 (40 are in KP alone) accredited institutions in 2020. Tertiary education enrollment has increased from less than 2.7 percent of the college age population in 2002 to 10.1 percent in 2019 (still one of the lowest in the region). Efficiency, effectiveness and financial sustainability of the public sector universities remain one of the key challenges in Pakistani higher education and GOP. Governance and administration of the public sector universities in Pakistan is a serious concern, with direct implications for everything done in the universities. Antiquated governance structures and practices impact academic excellence, teaching and learning, and monitoring and evaluation of programs. Lack of gender sensitive policies, private sector engagement strategies or action plans, industry linkages, and models for financial sustainability result in inefficiency, inequality, and dependency of universities on public funding.

HEC lacks the policy and regulatory framework for private sector engagement in public universities. The concept of campus-based enterprises, fundraising, and corporate style marketing, engaging diaspora and such out-of-box engagement ideas enabling institutional financial sustainability and self-reliance are foreign to many Vice Chancellors and leadership of public sector universities across the country. HEC established Offices of Research, Innovations, and Commercialization (ORICs) in all public sector universities almost ten years ago but capacity and performance of ORICs remains very low. For example, ORICs in KP are still dominated by inadequate and irrelevant research activities with few linkages between universities, industry, and the government to encourage commercialization of research and formulation of research-based policies for economic growth and scientific development of the country. Financial Aid Development Offices at many public universities have limited capacities or are nonexistent. Significant investments have been made by the HEC in faculty development through overseas and indigenous scholarships and training programs; further development is required to enable universities to initiate and manage such programs without donor or HEC financial assistance and to support these newly trained scholars in job searches, entrepreneurship, and businesses ownership.

Pakistan has faced serious budget and economic issues in the last two years. In 2018-2019, Pakistan's public higher education budget was reduced to 60% as compared to the previous year. Economic stagnation and low purchasing power of the Pakistani Rupee have contributed to the inability of students of low socioeconomic backgrounds to afford the minimal cost of a public higher education. While several programs, such as USAID's Merit and Needs-Based Scholarship Program (MNBSP) and the GOP's newly-introduced Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Program (which is modeled after the MNBSP), are available to students, there remains a need for universities to adopt more self-reliant models by strengthening the work of their financial aid offices and outreach to the private sector to support endowments and scholarships. University systems strengthening could support the rollout of the Ehsaas Program and other financial aid programs.

**HESSA Gender Analysis**
The purpose of a gender analysis is to examine the differences between the roles that women and men play in higher education, their rights, levels of power, needs, constraints and opportunities. This analysis is related to the USAID/Pakistan's Higher Education Systems Strengthening Activity (HESSA). Following the guidance of ADS 205, this gender analysis includes a review of the following domains and some[11] recommendations from the IR 3.2 PAD level analysis that are most relevant to HESSA.

1. Women Participation in Higher Education and Institutional Practices;
2. Cultural Norms and Beliefs;
3. Gender Roles, Responsibilities;
4. Patterns of Power and Decision-making in the Higher Education Sector.

HESSA is a technical assistance activity that aims promote effective and self-reliant higher education institutions in Pakistan, providing relevant and adequate workforce for employability.

Women's Economic Empowerment and Higher Education:
Pakistani women face inequality at the household, community, and societal levels, which limits their opportunities for education and economic empowerment. Within the household, they have less access to and control over resources and limited influence over household decisions as compared to men.[12] In addition to household constraints, women also face social constraints that limit their work opportunities outside the home, and the kind of work they can engage in--this constitutes work deemed traditionally appropriate for women, such as farming.[13] In the community, they have limited access to communal resources and are under-represented in public decision-making bodies.[14] This underrepresentation in decision-making means that women are unable to drive progressive changes to reduce gender inequality, on issues like property and inheritance, or equal pay.

Pakistani women's participation in higher education is also one of the lowest in the region as only 4% women (age 17-24) access higher education opportunities. Although Government of Pakistan is making efforts to improve gender participation in basic education that also impacts participation and eligibility for higher education; there has not been any concrete gender policies at the Higher Education Commission (HEC) or public sector universities that directly address the gender gaps that exist in the higher education system, be it students enrollment, financial aid, internships and job placements with industry, women dormitories and commute/transport related issue, hiring of female staff or professional development and research grant opportunities for female faculty and management staff to grow within the higher education system and set role models for others to follow.

*Female Employment:* Agriculture contributes about 24 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs 45 percent of Pakistan's labor force. The majority of workers in this sector are

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[11] https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/205.pdf
[12] https://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/councilarticles/pdr/PDR274Jejeebhoy.pdf
[13] https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2016/05/pk-wee-status-report-lowres.pdf?la=en&vs=5731
[14] *https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6593055/*"

female, according to the Pakistan Labor Force Survey 2017-18.[15] Women in this sector plant and harvest, and perform other farm activities, including food storage. Yet, 60 percent of women in this sector are not paid for any of their work.[16] Activities that involve work outside of the farm, such as marketing and transport, and mechanized activities, like threshing and land preparation, are dominated by men. Industrial sectors of garments, pharmaceuticals, plastic, and food also have relatively high levels of women's employment; in the textile sector, on average, women constitute 3 percent of management, 12 percent of supervisory, 22 percent of skilled workers, and 20 percent of non-skilled workers.[17] Women also comprise 56.1 percent of employees in the informal small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector, which are among the lowest paid and most vulnerable jobs (workers at these firms have few rights or protections). Heath and Education related service sectors are considered traditionally more acceptable or socially respectable for women's employment.

Self-employment or entrepreneurship is an area in which women are increasingly being employed, and which the Pakistani government is promoting through awareness seminars / workshops, pitch events, seed money grants and networking sessions.[18] Nevertheless, according to 2012 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report, only 5 percent of the entrepreneurs in Pakistan are women.[19] Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can work to provide entrepreneurial training and seed grants to female graduates to start their business or connect them to avail the micro finance facilities, hence improving the pathways to better economic empowerment and self employment for female graduates.

Given the gender analysis, HESSA will include activities that will address the following key areas to enhance women's participation in higher education and opportunities for professional and career growth:

- provide technical assistance to HEC and universities to introduce university level gender sensitive policies and implementation frameworks to improve women's participation, both as students/learners and as faculty/management staff and leaders;
- provide avenues to address female specific issues related to job placements with job providers and pathways to career advancement within the university setup.
- Provide financial assistance, scholarships and student grants opportunities to talented female students.
- Enhance women's participation in the project management and implementation with partner universities.

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15 http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//Labour%20Force/publications/lfs2017_18/Annual%20Report%20of%20LFS%202017-18.pdf

16 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262419592_CONTRIBUTION_OF_PAKISTANI_WOMEN_IN_AGRICULTURE_PRODUCTIVITY_AND_CONSTRAINTS

17 Ehsan ul Haque. 2009. *Current Status and Prospects of Female Employment in the Apparel Industry in Pakistan*. UNDP-Pakistan http://genprom.org.pk/pdf/21172.pdf downloaded 02/27/2014

18 http://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_19/12-Population.pdf

19 https://gemconsortium.org/report/gem-2012-global-report

**HESSA Private Sector Analysis**

Pakistan ranked lowest in South Asia in health and primary education, higher education and training; goods market efficiency, labor market efficiency and financial markets development. Pakistan ranked 136 out of 190 economies in the World Bank's Doing Business 2019 report.[20]

Pakistan's private sector produces most of the economy's goods and services, is a major contributor to investment and, as a sector, is the largest employer in the economy. Pakistan's economy is driven by the services sector. Pakistan's higher education sector, particularly Pakistani public HEIs, have failed to meaningfully engage Pakistan's largest employer, the private sector. Public sector HEIs primarily rely on public funding and rarely respond to the growing demands for a relevant, high quality, and employable workforce needed by the local market.

The nationalization of industry and education in the early 1970s resulted in the deterioration of the private sector with minimal investment in the field of education. Pakistan records comparatively low public spending on education as a percentage of GDP compared to other South Asian countries. Thus, the government of Pakistan, to enhance intellectual capital and enrollments, established the Higher Education Commission (HEC) assigned to evaluate, improve and promote the higher education and research culture in both public and private sectors in Pakistan.

Since its establishment in 2002, the HEC has "undertaken a systematic process of implementation of the five-year agenda for reform outlined in the HEC Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF)[21]. Since the establishment of HEC, the government has spent a lot on tertiary education, but much is yet to be done in this sector. The number of private sector universities has surged from 25 (2001) to 83 in 2020[22]. Quality and relevance of teaching and research, particularly in the private sector are below than regional standards. The total enrolment in the universities, i.e., at post graduate stage, is 1.463 million. Out of this enrollment 1.192 million (81%) students are enrolled in public universities, whereas, 0.270 million (19%) students are studying in private universities.

Learning from USAID' CAS model, HEC[23] is building additional centers for advanced studies at other public universities and has set up technology parks in each of the provinces, to demonstrate the important role of applied research and industry links are creating in building a knowledge-based economy. HEC also aims to provide facilitation to pursue research grants from public and private sources. The Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) at selected universities can do a better job of industry-academic linkages. However, the ORICs are poorly managed with low capacity, and the performance of their work varies significantly across universities and dominated by inadequate and irrelevant research activities with few linkages between universities, industry and the government to encourage commercialization of research and formulation of research based policies for the economic uplift and scientific development of

20 https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf

21 https://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1055&context=ci_fsresearch

22 HEC website www.hec.gov.pk

23 HEC Vision 2025

the country. HEC plans to strengthen these centers to foster, through R&D grants for applied research projects with immediate impact on the economic development of the country and to increase the number of collaborative researches with the growing industries in the country.

Private HEIs are contributing to economic development by providing skilled human capital, but continuous monitoring for quality assurance is required[24]. Due to enormous opportunities for revenue maximization, the private education sector has attracted the businessmen. Private HE sector is heterogeneous in nature and varies greatly in its quality and repute ranging from universities such as LUMS and Agha Khan University to a small college operating in small rented buildings mostly owned by a sole proprietor or a family. Some have formed groups like Punjab Group of Colleges, Superior group, etc.

Unemployment among youth is a significant development challenge for Pakistan. The government introduced six schemes specifically targeting youth including access to interest-free loans; business loans at subsidized interest rates; access to skills development and training opportunities; access to free laptops; and fee reimbursement schemes. Academia industry linkages must be strong for applied research and employability of the graduates. Pakistan's higher education system faces a major disconnect between curriculum and the needs of industries.

A national survey of organizations in Pakistan was conducted in 2016 to gauge employers' perception of the quality and capability of graduate employees that have been added in the workforce from various HEIs in Pakistan as well as international universities. The survey result shows the need for Pakistani HEIs to improve their teaching and assessment methods by shifting towards practical and hands-on methods. Many employers were not satisfied with the quality of some skills of graduates that they deemed important, such as critical thinking, analytical approach, self-initiative, and effective interpersonal communication.

Higher Education is increasingly seen as an important contributor to economic growth and development of a knowledge based economy and increased diversification of higher education provision. Private sector as a beneficiary and as a provider is an important part of the higher education canvas – significant in the United States and many Asian countries. Pakistan's higher education sector is diverse with growing private sector participation. More than 37 higher education institutions/universities are registered with HEC and the number is increasing each year.

HEC currently does not have a private sector engagement policy framework for Pakistan's higher educational institutions. The HEC has shown interest in engaging the private sector and has held discussions with USAID emphasizing this. Absence of such a private sector policy framework and guidance creates a gap between the private sector and higher education institutions/universities to work collaboratively to achieve mutually beneficial goals. The lack of private sector policy resulted in virtually no cooperation between private sector and universities over the decades. To bridge this gap, the HESSA will support HEC in the assessment of the need and formulation of a university-private sector engagement policy and will facilitate the strengthening of private and public sector to self-sustain HEIs in the long run. It would increase private sector financial resources, participation, overcome operation restrictions, increase

[24] TESA Report - Private Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan

relevance in higher education programs and research, and secure new skills that may not exist. To implement such a policy framework HEC and HEI would need instructional governance to implement the policy effectively. Private sector engagement widely used around the world, with a range of objectives – efficiency, relevance in HEI.  The policy will cover a variety of activities – finance/philanthropy, delivery and management through university-industry linkages, university infrastructure financing initiatives, digitization, higher education support services, service delivery through private partnership.

Pakistan's economy is largely remittance based. In addition to supporting families and investments, the Pakistani diaspora community also actively and consistently supports the education sector. HESSA will seek to mobilize these resources to meet the stated development objectives.

Once the activity is awarded, the grantee and HEC will jointly carry out a PSE analysis in consultation with the key stakeholders. This will entail focusing on the following questions:  i) Can the private sector solve the above development problem by itself? ii) Could there be a market-based approach to addressing the higher education and workforce related challenges? iii) What are the roles and interests of the private sector in addressing this development challenge? iv) Are there factors constraining the private sector from involvement and investment into higher education? v) Is there a role for USAID to help alleviate or eliminate these constraints and improve higher education outcomes for low income groups?

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## ANNEX 5 - ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| AGREEMENT OFFICER | AO |
| AGREEMENT OFFICER’S REPRESENTATIVE | AOR |
| CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE | CFDA |
| CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATION | CFR |
| CHIEF OF PARTY | COP |
| DEGREE AWARDING INSTITUTIONS | DAIs |
| DEPUTY CHIEF OF PARTY | DCOP |
| GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN | GOP |
| HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION | HEC |
| HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES | HEIs |
| HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM STRENGTHENING ACTIVITY | HESSA |
| INTERMEDIATE RESULT | IR |
| INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY | IT |
| LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM | LMS |
| MONITORING AND EVALUATION | M & E |
| MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN | MEL PLAN |
| MERIT AND NEEDS BASED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM | MNBSP |
| NATIONAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION | NAHE |
| NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION | NGO |
| NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY | NOFO |
| OFFICES OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND COMMERCIALIZATION | ORICS |
| FIFTEEN (15) PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR UNIVERSITIES | P-15 |
| RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT | R&D |
| SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT | SAM |
| UNITED STATES | U.S. |
| UNITED STATES OF AMERICA | U.S.A |
| UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT | USAID |

**END OF SECTION H**

**(END OF NOFO)**

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