



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PAKISTAN

Deadline for Submission of Applications:

Closing Date:

April 16, 2021

Closing Time:

16:30 Pakistan Standard Time

Amendment Date:

March 22, 2021

Amendment Number:

000001

Notice of Funding Opportunity:

72039121RFA00001

Title:

**Higher Education System Strengthening Activity
(HESSA)**

The purpose of this amendment is to provide answers to the questions submitted by the potential applicants . Following attachment is part of this amendment 000001.

- Annex 6- USAID's Responses to the Questions

Please note that no change is made to the deadline for the submission of applications or any other terms and conditions of the NOFO 72039121RFA00001.

Thank you for submitting the questions and your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

**Robert
Parnell**

Digitally signed by Robert
Parnell
Date: 2021.03.24
11:44:36 +05'00'

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



Annex 6- USAID Responses to the Questions
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72039121RFA00001
Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA)
Questions and Answers

S.#	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
1.	Page 13 lists five key personnels, four of them (Chief and Deputy of Party, as well as, M&E and Communication Specialists) would be based in Pakistan and the Project Manager (based at the home office, not sure whether in Pakistan or the USA??). The way I envision this HESSA project effort based on my past experiences, it would be led by one of the US Universities like UNR. So one of us from UNR will serve as the Project (Program) Director supported by several Co-Program Directors and other key personnel from the HEIs and other government agencies in Pakistan who can help implement this capacity building project in Pakistan. I will appreciate it if you can please provide some clarity to the above issue.	The key position of the Project Manager will be based at the home office of the prime applicant/grantee (i.e. a U.S. HEI or association/consortium of U.S. HEIs) based in the United States.
2.	Here's a quick question about the eligibility criteria for grantees: Pakistani Non-Profit Organizations are eligible for this funding opportunity? Is it mandatory to partner with the US-organization?	No, only U.S. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are eligible to apply as prime applicants. For further details on the eligibility criteria please see Section C of the NOFO.
3.	Is this funding opportunity open to all interested US universities or is it limited to certain universities who have been selected in earlier stages of this call?	This funding opportunity is open to <u>all interested</u> U.S. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or associations/consortia of U.S. HEIs. No pre-selection process for specific partners has taken place.
4.	Section A The RFP stated that “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.” Does that mean that USAID will identify the local partner universities for this project and bidding US university should not have a local partner in place when applying to this funding opportunity?	The “yet-to-be-selected” Pakistani partner universities will be selected by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) and USAID. The applicant, if selected, may be asked to support the selection of these universities.
5.	Section B, Part 3 (p.13)	Yes, the Project Manager will be based at the home office of the prime applicant/recipient in the U.S.

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	You mentioned in the Key Personnel section that the project manager is based at the home office. Do you mean in the U.S. HEI?	
6.	Section C, Part 2 (p. 16) It was mentioned that “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.” Can you please further elaborate what do you mean by this	During the source selection process technical application will be reviewed to determine a successful applicant. In case two technical applications are equally rated, only then will the decision be based on the Cost and Cost Sharing factors.
7.	Section B, Part 3, (p. 13) Would you please explain what do you mean by these two point? “c. Agency and Recipient Collaboration or Joint Participation” “d. Agency Authority to Immediately Halt a Construction Activity (Note: No construction activity under the HESSA)”	These points describe the level of USAID involvement during the implementation of the HESSA activity. USAID will collaborate with the successful Applicant for the implementation of HESSA activity. Also when required, USAID and the successful Applicant will jointly participate during the implementation phase of the activity. No construction activity is envisioned during the implementation of HESSA.
8.	Section C, Part 1, (p. 15) You indicated that “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.” Can a US university alone bid for this project or it should partner with other US institutions?	Yes, a single university or HEI alone can apply for this Notice of Funding Opportunity. No, the applicant U.S. HEI or association/consortium of HEIs do not need to have any partnerships with Pakistani HEIs when applying for this funding opportunity. The Pakistani HEIs will be selected at a later date.

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	Should a US university have a partnership in place with a PK university or more PK universities when applying to this grant?	
9.	SPECIAL AGREEMENT PROVISIONS, Section II-a, (p.49) The RFP stated that “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.” Does the recipient of this award responsible for the AOR and his family travel arrangements (round trip tickets, housing, transportation, health insurance, M&IE, etc.) to Pakistan? If so, how many times per year this travel arrangements may happen? Also, does these travel arrangements apply to any other staff from the USAID?	No, the successful applicant/recipient of this award will not be responsible for the travel arrangements of AOR his family or any other staff member of USAID. Agreement Officer Representative (AOR) and the Agreement Officer (AO) have the authority to approve the travel plan of the successful applicant/recipient. It is the responsibility of the successful applicant/recipient to obtain this approval from the AOR.
10.	As a project focused on higher education, it is essential that the implementer’s consortia include an institution of higher education. However, the cost-share requirements imposed by USAID for this award are not feasible for U.S. land-grant institutions of higher education. Therefore, we kindly request that USAID remove the cost-share requirements. Please advise if this might be possible.	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.
11.	When will we know about the exact number and names of Pakistan’s HEIs to be targeted under this assistance—before the deadline of the proposal submission or after the award?	An exact number, names and location of the Pakistani HEIs will be determined by HEC and USAID after this award is made. A rough estimate of the number of Pakistani HEIs that will be directly assisted under this award is 15-25.
12.	Are the results of a pre-assessment or feasibility study of possible partner HEIs in Pakistan been completed? If yes, are the results publicly available to understand why the graduates are not finding jobs?	No such study or feasibility assessment is conducted specifically for this award. However, there are reports, evaluations and assessments conducted by HEC, USAID, and the World Bank and others that are publicly available to understand this issue.

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13.	Without knowing the types of HEIs that will be engaged it is difficult to define a focused task plan. Can you share the approximate level of the institutions that will be engaged? Will they be the top ranked HEIs, geographically distributed, selected based on needs or discipline or other?	An exact number, names, and the location of the Pakistani HEIs will be determined by HEC and USAID after this award is made. A rough estimate of the number of Pakistani HEIs that will be directly assisted under this award is 15-25.
14.	Will the thrust of technical assistance be only the HEIs of top quality, or other HEIs having potential to graduate to upper tier quality schools could also be considered?	The majority of the technical assistance will be provided to HEIs with the potential to graduate to upper tier quality schools in Pakistan.
15.	We expect the need for numerous services and partnerships with Pakistani entities to support the project team. Can Pakistani institutions (universities, NGOs, etc.) and individual consultants be engaged with subawards?	Yes, they can be engaged as sub- awardees at the operational level. However, the thrust of the technical assistance must be from the U.S. HEIs given the nature of the technical assistance demanded by the activity.
16.	Are there specific industries that HEC has identified as critical for initial engagement for improved industry-academia collaboration?	Yes, there are several reports on this topic publicly available through the HEC. For example, the HEC's website includes the following: https://hec.gov.pk/english/universities/projects/TESP/Documents/TESA%20Report%20-%20Research%20Performance.pdf
17.	In Annex 1 of NOFO - Sample Budget Template, Narrative Sheet, Column Additional Info, Is the any information under the qualifications section we need to be aware of? I tried to click where it says HERE but it asked for permission to access. Provide permission to access the qualifications?	NOFO Page 21-24 provides the detailed qualifications of the Key Personnel. While submitting the Cost Applications / Budget, in the Narrative Sheet, in Column titled "Additional Info", Applicants may provide a link of the document that provides qualifications of the Applicants' proposed Key Personnel.