USAID
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Issue Date:	August 12, 2022
Questions Due:	August 29, 2022 at 5:00 PM SAT
Closing Date & Time Concept Papers:	September 26, 2022 at 10:00 AM SAT

Subject: Science, Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (STIP) Annual Program Statement, APS No.: 7200AA21APS00003

Opportunity Title: Continuity of Pre-Primary Education Post Covid Using Learning Through Play, Community Engagement and Edutainment in South Africa – South Africa Addendum APS

Notice of Funding Opportunity No.: 72067422APS00001

To: All Interested Respondents/Parties:

The United States Government, represented by United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/ Southern Africa Mission invites Concept Papers that are focused on Continuity of Pre-Primary Education post COVID-19 using Community Engagement and Edutainment in South Africa.

Subject to the availability of funds, an award will be made to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity and the selection criteria contained herein. USAID/SA anticipates supporting one new Fixed Amount Award of up to $1,5 million over the course of two years. USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the application(s) submitted.

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.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and may be amended. Potential applicants should regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the entire NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety and USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. 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.

Please send any questions by the due date to the point of contact identified in section V of this notice. 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

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Lealie M. Perry
Agreement Officer
Southern Africa Regional Mission

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES: CONTINUITY OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION POST COVID USING LEARNING THROUGH PLAY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUTAINMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, APS NO. 72067422APS00001

UNDER EXISTING

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, and PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT APS No. 7200AA21APS00003

PLEASE NOTE: This is an addendum to an existing announcement. All interested organizations should carefully review both this addendum AND the full announcement, which can be found here: please click here for link to STIP APS Announcement. Important information contained in the full worldwide announcement is not repeated in this specific addendum.

This program is authorized in accordance with Part 1 of the Foreign Assistance act of 1961, as amended.

Through this Addendum to the Science, Technology, Innovation and Partnership (STIP) Annual Program Statement (APS) No. 7200AA21APS00003 (the STIP APS Full Announcement), USAID is making a special call for the submission of Concept Notes focused on Continuity of Pre-Primary Education post COVID-19 using Community Engagement and Edutainment in South Africa.

This activity aims to support the expansion and dissemination of relevant educational video content and other educational content and materials to pre-primary learners in South Africa. While there is much focus on the use of new and innovative technologies for strengthening educational systems and reaching learners, a historic constant has been the well-documented and compelling cases of the use of video or television segments to support developing country educational objectives. Whether as complements to broader education projects or as standalone interventions, educational videos that are well-constructed, evidence-based, and of appropriate pedagogy can uniquely capture the imagination of learners, drive social and behavior change, and provide important tools for professional development of teachers. While the use of these tools for in-classroom instruction is also effective, the expansion of educational television, and other forms of mass media instruction (collectively referred to as "edutainment" platforms), are particularly compelling in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has had enormous detrimental impacts on educational attainment worldwide. Moving forward, development of new edutainment approaches and expansion of existing ones must be part of a comprehensive disaster preparedness strategy.

The use of co-creation will determine the objective(s), however, possible ideas could be to:

1) Develop and test low-cost video dissemination and projection devices to deliver high-quality educational video content, particularly in lower-resource settings;
2) Support families within the context of their own homes with materials and in-person activities to promote children's learning and use of self-regulation techniques;
3) Develop mobile play material (toy) libraries and screen COVID-related edutainment for children and their families who are in the most need;
4) Engage a local institution of higher education to track student, family, and community outcomes; and
5) Instill Learning Through Play methodologies in parents, caregivers, and early childhood educators, in partnership with the LEGO Foundation.

USAID **may** allocate **up to $1.5 million** over the course of two years to fund a portfolio of partnerships. Ideally, the portfolio will enable USAID to ensure that each of the above objectives is advanced. However, priority will be placed on supporting the most promising approaches, even if the resulting portfolio only advances one or two of the objectives described above.

Unless otherwise stated herein, all terms and conditions of the 2021-2022 STIP APS apply (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=331756).

I. Background

The COVID-19 global pandemic has brought dramatic changes and uncertainty for young children and their families. Suddenly, sources of safety and comfort that young children rely upon – consistency and routine, often provided through school and planned activities – have been dramatically altered. The new realities of school closures and social distancing have compounded effects for parents and caregivers of young children as well; effects that we are just learning of as the situation evolves. In response to COVID-19 and school closures, we are requesting assistance to design, test, and evaluate a program that use existing literacy, educational, and play materials to provide important COVID-19 messaging and learning materials for pre-primary children, families and school systems who are located in hard to reach and vulnerable areas of Southern Africa.

Early Childhood Development in South Africa. Early Childhood Development (ECD) is one of the largest priorities of the South African Government. Under the 2015 National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, all children ages 0-6 have a right to quality pre-primary education programming (Republic of South Africa 2016). Early years education in South Africa is divided into two categories: Grade R (reception year), available to 5 year olds before the start of Grade 1, and Pre-Grade R programs which are available to children ages 0-4 (UNESCO 2006). These Grade R and Pre-Grade R programs are available in South Africa through the schools, as well as through private ECD centers. USAID appreciates the critical role that early childhood plays in developing the student as

a lifelong learner and supports the work of the Republic of South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE) in their ECD planning efforts. Through the Together for Early Childhood Evidence Consortium, USAID has aided DBE in outlining key data and measurement priority areas for ECE (ECD Measure 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges for the implementation of quality ECD programming in South Africa. As of August 2020, only approximately 13% of children ages 0-6 were attending ECD programs and the overall field was only operating at a quarter of its previous (pre-pandemic) capacity. In a 2020 study, 55% percent of the parent respondents reported that their children were not enrolled in ECD programs due to closures and in the majority of households where the children were unable to return to programs, childcare and education has fallen on the household (Wills, 2020). As some schools have provided online resources or teaching during the pandemic, students from wealthier and more urban families have accessed these resources more regularly. Students from poorer families and more rural areas have not benefited equally from these services. This concerning increase in inequitable access to education highlights the strong need for novel and/or improved supplemental ECD programming that can be accessed from remote locations and can not only bridge the gap during this period but also continue to build resources and learning for young children.

Edutainment. The use of mass media to entertain and teach is particularly compelling in light of the current and potential spread of pandemic diseases that will and can adversely impact the normal operation of educational instruction in traditional school-settings. In Tanzania and Ethiopia, USAID offices are already supporting well-regarded, award-winning educational video content providers. In Ethiopia, Whiz Kids Workshop produces three children's television shows: Tsehai Loves Learning, Involve Me – Watch Me, and Little Investigators to promote early childhood education, literacy, health education, and gender equality in that country. Based in Tanzania, but with broadcasts throughout Africa, Ubongo is a non-profit social enterprise which likewise provides educational content on a variety of topics to learners through tv, radio, and mobile phones.

In South Africa, Takalani Sesame has produced a set of resources called "Caring for Each Other" that directly address the COVID-19 pandemic. Storybooks, videos, independent activities, and adult-led activities promote social-emotional learning online and on the television network SABC2. In the past, Takalani Sesame has partnered with other organizations to widen the reach of their content beyond families who have access to internet and televisions. As part of this outreach, they have conducted workshops with caregivers and teachers and have distributed kits with toys and other play materials.

Parent & Community Engagement. Community and parent engagement has been widely recognized as a necessary component of effective education programs around the world. According to a report by UNESCO and the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, "a core driver of quality school improvement initiatives is the generation of meaningful connection between teachers, parents, students, and community members" (2017). Engaging communities in education programs has been shown to foster local

ownership and embrace of education for children, increase the quality of education, enhance support between parents and teachers, maximize learning opportunities, leverage local resources, and strengthen community relations (Education Quality Improvement Program [EQUIP] I and USAID 2011). USAID recognizes the importance of community engagement in education, stating that "programs that take a comprehensive approach by engaging families, community members, and key stakeholders, including policymakers, through social and behavior change communication or family and community engagement, see more successful outcomes" (USAID 2018).

Community engagement has been found to be a major indicator of the success of play-based learning programs on pre-primary cognitive development and school-readiness. Lively Minds, an organization that creates educational programs for rural communities in Ghana and Uganda, partnered with researchers in Ghana to evaluate the impact of its community-led play-based learning program on pre-primary Ghanaian students (J-PAL 2018). Lively Minds' program not only focuses on the teachers' role in students' learning, but the parents' role as well by providing training courses to a group of mothers in the community on the importance of play in education and how to facilitate learning through games (J-PAL 2018). The play-based learning program led to improvements in the pre-primary students' cognitive and socio-emotional development, and positive impacts were reported by the mothers as well who indicated that, "their self-esteem and mental health improved, they were more likely to know their children's teachers and visit schools, and their knowledge and practice of hand-washing improved"(J-PAL 2018).

The LEGO Foundation and Sesame Workshop's *Play Every Day* program emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in pre-primary edutainment. The program is "designed to shift parent and caregiver perceptions about the educational value of play and to encourage play that contributes to children's early development and learning outcomes" (The LEGO Foundation 2019). A 2019 impact evaluation revealed that the program emboldened and inspired caregivers in South Africa to incorporate play and educational television into their children's learning (The LEGO Foundation 2019). Caregivers received workshops on how to facilitate learning through toys and playful methodologies because they are viewed by The LEGO Foundation and Sesame Workshop as "children's first teachers and playmates," and thus vital to children's successful learning through play (The LEGO Foundation 2019). This concept of utilizing the parent-child relationship to foster learning through play has motivated The LEGO Foundation to announce a 5-year initiative to promote pre-primary development through play-based learning and edutainment in South Africa (The LEGO Foundation 2019).

Play-based learning is often cited as a crucial component of a modern approach to education, one that allows children to exercise their imagination to creatively overcome problems and understand the world around them. USAID recognizes the importance of play-based learning in the development of the learner, stating that "play-based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy, and school readiness" (USAID 2018). Modalities for offering flexible ECD programming for parents, caregivers, and learners include center-based

programs, play groups, home-based programs. These programs can be complemented and supported by training of caregivers and those working in ECD centers and playgroups; mobile ECD programs, and toy libraries. In order for play-based learning to be successful, it requires that children have access to resources and materials necessary to develop cognitive skills and explore the world around them. When these materials are linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate, they can enhance children's development. In some cases, toy libraries loan toys to families to use at home; other times, the libraries plan and facilitate play sessions. Toy libraries have the potential to provide increased access to play materials for children whose families cannot find or afford the materials on their own. In South Africa, Cotlands and Tree ECD run toy libraries to increase the number of play-based learning opportunities children have.

II. Solicitation

In publishing this Addendum to the Science, Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (STIP) Annual Program Statement (APS), USAID/South Africa is soliciting Concept Notes from eligible partners to propose ways to promote continuity of pre-primary education in South Africa. As a requirement of the STIP APS, Prime applicants must engage with one or more Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as well as one or more third party actors (i.e. NGOs, Government institutions, private businesses, etc.) to support outcomes and bolster impact.

Subject to the availability of funding, USAID/South Africa anticipates supporting up to one (1) new award under this Addendum, over the course of two (2) years. USAID reserves the right to award more awards OR none OR to change the amount of funding for any or all awards issued. All terms and conditions of the 2021-2022STIP APS apply. (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=331756)

Engagement with the LEGO Foundation: USAID plans to invite LEGO Foundation colleagues as part of USAID's memorandum of understanding to be a part of the co-creation process to see where and how LEGO Foundation can provide in-kind resources and/or training. Applicants of selected concept notes must be able/willing to work collaboratively with the LEGO Foundation, if ultimately awarded to implement this effort.

III. Eligibility

Eligibility for this addendum APS is restricted to local entities in South Africa. For the purposes of this section, local entity means an individual, a corporation, a nonprofit organization, or another body of persons that—

(1) is legally organized under the laws of;
(2) has as its principal place of business or operations in;
(3) is majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of; and

(4) managed by a governing body the majority of who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country receiving assistance from funds appropriated under title III of the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

IV. Evaluation Criteria

Proposed Concept Notes and Full Applications under this addendum will be evaluated based on the general criteria set forth in the STIP APS in the "Concept Note Evaluation Criteria and Considerations" section. In addition, USAID/South Africa expects to receive Concept Notes that:

Criterion 1: Alignment with the objectives articulated in this addendum to the STIP APS

- Extent to which the proposed activities are well-defined, achievable, and respond to the objectives articulated in this addendum.
- Extent to which the proposed activities are collaborative, practical, and facilitate learning and adaptation through the life of the program.
- Extent to which the proposed methodology/approach is contextually appropriate to South Africa.

Criterion 2: Level of partner engagement in accordance with the objectives of the addendum; specifically, expertise in pre-primary education.

- Extent to which the applicant and partners demonstrate expertise in pre-primary education strategies.
- Extent to which the applicant and partners demonstrate an understanding of the education challenges in South Africa, with the addition of potential learning setbacks to a larger population than expected due to COVID-19 and how to address these challenges.

Criterion 3: Potential for impact

- Extent to which the application demonstrates the organization's and/or proposed partners' capability to execute the objectives for the activity.
- Extent to which the application demonstrates the potential for sustained impact.
- Extent to which the application demonstrates an efficient, feasible, and effective approach for implementing the proposed interventions.

(Note: If USAID requests a Full Application, applicants may be given additional, specific evaluation criteria that speak to the subject matter of the concept.)

V. Application Instructions and Review Process

USAID/South Africa will be responsible for the review process of Concept Notes and Full Applications and management of any awards issued under this addendum. Applicants are required to follow the Concept Note instructions set forth in the STIP APS and submit Concept Notes using the Concept Note Template. Information provided in Section II.B of the Concept Note Template should address the objectives and criteria presented above.

The completed Concept Note Template (including the Concept Note and required Supporting Information) should be sent to USAID/Southern Africa Regional Mission.

Concepts Notes will be due **on or before September 26, 2022**. All Concept Notes will be reviewed after the Concept Note submission deadline. Applicants can expect to receive a response regarding their Concept Note on or around October 24, 2022.

After review by USAID/Southern Africa Regional Mission, authors of the most promising Concept Notes will be invited to engage in one or more in-person or virtual Co-Creation discussions and/or workshop(s) with USAID and other stakeholders (including the LEGO Foundation). The goal of the co-creation discussions and/or workshop(s) is to collaboratively refine needs, objectives, opportunities, challenges, solutions, etc. Additional information regarding the process, expectations, etc. will be provided to those selected.

If USAID/Southern Africa Regional Mission remains interested in moving forward with the Applicant's proposed projects or activities following the co-creation discussions and/or workshop(s), USAID may request a Full Application from the Applicant. Invitation to or participation in Co-Creation or other communication with USAID during the application process does not guarantee a request for a Full Application or funding.

After review by USAID/South Africa, applicants will receive instructions from the USAID/South Africa on whether to proceed with submitting a Full Application. Concept Notes must be submitted by September 26, 2022 in order to be considered.

VI. Questions and Further Assistance

Questions regarding the substance and objectives of this addendum should be directed to pretoriaapplications@usaid.gov with a copy to sdladla@usaid.gov and leperry@usaid.gov by not later than **August 29, 2022 at 5:00** South African Time.

Questions regarding the substance and terms of the 2021-2022STIP APS Full Announcement should be directed to stip.aps.support.team@usaid.gov.