Issue Date: March 22, 2019
Questions Due: April 5, 2019 at 5:00 PM EDT
Closing Date & Time Concept Papers: May 1, 2019 at 5 PM EDT

Subject: Science, Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships in Higher Education (STIP) Program Annual Program Statement APS No.: 7200AA18APS00003

Opportunity Title: Higher Education Partnerships (HEP) – Dominican Republic Addendum No.: 7200AA19APS00008

To: All Interested Respondents/Parties:

The Unites States Government, represented by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Office of Education invites Concept Papers that capitalizes on the expertise, ingenuity, and passion of the global higher education community to accelerate institutional capacity development through partnerships and innovation between higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States and partner countries that have a USAID presence[1].

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/E3/ED anticipates supporting one new Cooperative Agreement of up to $5 million over the course of three to five 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.

[1] For a list of partner countries where USAID works, please visit https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work.

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,

Sharon M. Baker
Supervisory Agreement Officer
M/OAA/E3/EMD

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES

Higher Education Partnerships - Dominican Republic
Addendum No.: 7200AA19APS00008

UNDER EXISTING

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, and PARTNERSHIP
ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT
APS No.: 7200AA18APS00003

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: 7200AA18APS00003. 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 FY 2018-FY 2019 Science, Technology, Innovation, and Partnership (STIP) Annual Program Statement (APS) No. 7200AA18APS00003, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment, Office of Education (E3/ED) seeks to capitalize on the expertise, ingenuity, and passion of the global higher education community to accelerate institutional capacity development through partnerships and innovation between higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States (U.S.) and partner countries that have a USAID presence[2].

For purposes of the STIP APS, higher education institutions are defined as follows: "A tertiary education institution is an organization that provides educational opportunities that build on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialized fields. Tertiary education includes what is commonly understood as academic education but also includes advanced vocational or professional education. This may include public or private universities, colleges, academically affiliated research institutes, training institutes, including teacher training institutes."

Unless otherwise stated herein, all terms and conditions of the STIP APS FY 2018 apply (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=301213).

[2] For a list of partner countries where USAID works, please visit https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work.

I. Background

E3's Office of Education (E3/ED) leverages its expertise, partnerships, and global perspective to guide and influence the Education Sector, advancing the Agency's development priorities. The office provides expertise and guidance to the field and USAID bureaus on the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of USAID policy, planning, and programs in the areas of basic education, youth workforce development, and higher education.

USAID works in more than 50 developing countries to ensure that children and youth have access to an equitable, quality education and the skills needed to be productive members of society. USAID invests in education because the positive effects of education are far-reaching - it serves as a driver for all other development and for the reduction of extreme poverty. USAID works in the higher education sector given its unique role in preparing the workforce, raising industry standards, building research and evidence, and increasing overall GDP to reduce extreme poverty. Through the development of relevant curricula, evidence-building research agendas, and increased community engagement, faculty and students contribute to strengthening all sectors of the economy - from agriculture to energy, from business services to technology, from health to engineering, among others. USAID partners with host country and U.S. higher education institutions to connect science, technology, and innovation to address the demands and challenges of the knowledge-based economy.

The USAID Education Policy, launched in November 2018, sets priorities and direction specifically for USAID's investments in education. The primary purpose of USAID education programming is to achieve sustained, measurable improvements in learning outcomes and skills development.

Our priorities are that:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

In this Addendum under the STIP APS, USAID/E3/ED aims to accelerate partner country higher education institutional capacity across sectors by supporting partnerships between U.S. HEIs, partner-country HEIs, and other relevant public or private sector partners. The three opportunities presented as Higher Education Partnerships under the STIP APS are in response to a Congressional directive for new partnerships for human and institutional capacity building between the United States and developing country higher education institutions. The aim of this addendum is to support local solutions that will create meaningful change as a country moves forward in its journey to self-reliance. Furthermore, U.S. investments in

developing-country higher education institutions provide an opportunity to advance U.S. approaches in higher education and to foster American values such as academic freedom, an emphasis on general education and community service, and strong linkages between academia and industry.

Under this addendum, USAID invites concept notes for USAID/Dominican Republic opportunity, details of which can be found in Attachment A.

This is one of three opportunities available for higher education partnerships under the STIP APS. Please see grants.gov for additional opportunities.

II. Funding Opportunity

Higher education institutions (HEIs) serve as intellectual hubs, providing knowledge, support, and innovative solutions to local communities and governments. Unfortunately, even well-established partner-country higher education institutions often lack the essential resources, capabilities, or partnerships needed to achieve this. A major challenge in developing and sustaining higher education institutions that are able to contribute to the journey to self-reliance, a key priority for USAID, is effectively identifying and addressing key barriers to success. For example, some institutions may have academic curricula that are poorly aligned to local needs, while others may lack the effective relationships with their communities, governments, or local implementers that allow for uptake of research outputs. Many partner county HEIs are well-poised to compete on a global stage if critical barriers are adequately addressed. This funding opportunity aims to overcome these and other key barriers by fostering strategic and catalytic collaborations between U.S. and partner universities to build their institutional capacity through partnerships and innovation. Traditional partnerships between partner-country faculty/researchers and U.S. faculty/researchers are effective at building individual professional and technical competence, but are less successful in addressing institutional barriers preventing partner country HEIs from becoming globally recognized sources of scientific knowledge and innovation. Here, USAID/E3/ED is seeking to support innovative and catalytic partnerships between whole departments, universities, or consortia of academic institutions in partner countries and in the United States. These institutional partnerships should go beyond traditional "capacity building" such as training, construction, or equipment purchases and faculty/student exchange models, to accelerate sustainable human and institutional capacity within partner country higher education institutions.

Ideal partner country higher education institutions will have an existing foundational capacity for partnership and innovation and will use this opportunity to make exponential gains toward becoming a global leader in scientific research, innovation, and/or education. Example activities/ objectives include, but are not limited to: activities designed to elicit higher education systems or country policy changes that would allow partner country higher education institutions to function more effectively; developing and implementing strategies for improving effective translation of local research and local university derived innovations to action; working to identify, leverage, and manage new or existing financial and other resources to accelerate potential; establishing innovative curricula and training programs to meet local needs; developing a more competent workforce; facilitating effective partnerships with local implementers, governments, and private

sector players; establishing regional centers of excellence, innovation hubs, digital/data centers, etc.

In publishing this Addendum, **USAID/E3/ED is soliciting collaborative Concept Notes from at least one partner country HEI and at least one U.S. HEI proposing ways to bolster human and institutional capacity for partnerships and innovation.** HEI partners must also engage with at least one other local actor (i.e., NGOs, Government Ministries, private businesses, etc.) to support outcomes and bolster impact. By capitalizing on the expertise and ingenuity of the U.S. and global higher education communities, the Office of Education aims to promote sustainable global partnerships, elevate partner country higher education institutional capacity, and advance the role of higher education institutions in global development. The long-term goal of this addendum is to propel partner country HEIs toward becoming global leaders in scientific education and research, and to increase their presence as a source of innovation and knowledge for local government officials, policy makers, and other development players.

III. Eligibility

Eligibility for this Addendum is restricted to partnerships between one or more HEI in the United States, one or more HEI from the Dominican Republic, and at least one non-HEI partner. Only the HEI institutions, either from the United States or the partner country, are eligible to be the Prime awardee. Consortia applications that include non-HEI organizations are allowed and encouraged.

Consistent with guidance from USAID/E3/ED, a higher education institution is defined as an organization that provides educational opportunities that build on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialized fields; this may include public or private universities, colleges, research institutes, training institutes, etc.; either institution may serve as the Prime awardee. For the purpose of this Addendum, suitable partner country HEI partners are those with a clear path to substantially and sustainably improving their institutional capacity for the topic(s) identified within the described opportunity within the three to five years of this award.

USAID seeks to increase the capacity of part or all of the partner country HEI(s), while leveraging an all-of-institutional approach from the U.S.-based HEI(s), meaning multiple units/departments/colleges should be engaged. **HEIs are restricted to being the lead on one concept note per opportunity**.

If more than one application is received with the same lead partner country or U.S. HEI, or that has the same proposed project director, USAID will seek written clarification from the relevant office(s) of sponsored programs regarding which Concept Note should be considered for review. If clarification is not resolved within two business days, all applications will be deemed ineligible. Alternatively, a signed letter from an authorizing official within the university's office of sponsored programing can be submitted with the Concept Note by the submission date to clarify and verify that the applicant has the sole official support from the university. The verified concept note will be accepted for evaluation and all other concept notes submitted by that HEI

will be deemed ineligible for non-compliance with the conditions of this Addendum. They will be notified accordingly via email.

Please note HEIs can serve as sub-awardees or supporting partners on multiple applications.

IV. Additional Considerations

Prior to submitting a Concept Note, applicants should ensure that concept notes are in line with the associated USAID Mission Regional or Country Development Cooperation Strategy. Successful Concept Notes will also align closely with the broader priorities of USAID and the USAID Education Policy, and, if applicable, the USG Strategy for International Basic Education.

The Office of Education is especially interested in promoting new partnerships or projects, as well as existing partnerships that have not been funded by USAID previously. Concept notes that promote gender inclusiveness, female empowerment, and support marginalized and vulnerable populations are also encouraged. Furthermore, USAID strongly encourages applications from Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI) in the United States, partnerships that include MSI participation, and HEIs who may not have previously worked with USAID.

V. Concept Notes and Full Applications

E3/ED, along with the sponsoring USAID Mission/Operating Unit, will be responsible for the review of Concept Notes and Full Applications. Management of any awards issued under this addendum will be done by the Mission/Operating Unit. Information provided in Section II of the Concept Note Template should address the objectives and criteria presented herein.

Concept Note Submission

All Concept Notes must be prepared and submitted in English using the provided templates (see Attachments B and C) on www.grants.gov. Since the goal of this Addendum is to support innovative, demand-driven programs, USAID/E3/ED encourages, when possible, Concept Notes be authored and submitted by the host-country HEI partner. Concept Notes are due to USAID/E3/ED by **5 pm EDT on May 1, 2019**. Concept notes will be reviewed on a rolling basis up until the deadline. They should be sent to hepartnerships@usaid.gov. The email subject line should follow this naming scheme: "HEP - Dominican Republic - Name of entity submitting the concept note."

After a Concept Note is received, USAID/E3/ED reserves the right to request supplementary information or pose clarifying questions to any applicant. Requesting supplementary information or posing clarifying questions to one applicant does not obligate USAID/E3/ED to do so with all applicants nor does it guarantee invitation to submit a Full Application.

Concept Note Evaluation

Concept Notes will be evaluated by USAID for feasibility and alignment with the evaluation criteria detailed below in section VI. Contingent on the availability of funds, USAID/E3/ED currently plans to invite a subset of the most highly-qualified Concept Note applicants to engage

in a round of co-creation with USAID prior to submission of full applications. Selections will be made after all Concept Notes have been reviewed according to the criteria outlined below.

The aim of the co-creation phase is to further define project objectives, design activities, align timelines, finalize budgets, etc. Through discussions, both the applicant(s) and USAID may identify additional resources, partners, or strategies necessary to successfully implement the project. This process may involve potentially extensive discussions with E3/ED, USAID Mission staff, or other experts, within or outside of USAID. It is anticipated that co-creation will happen virtually, through video conference and phone call.

By applying to this Addendum, applicants give USAID the right to share Concept Notes with appropriate external partners for the purposes of evaluation or co-creation. All parties privy to the contents of submitted Concept Notes, whether within or outside of USAID, will be required to keep contents in confidence. Additional information about the co-creation process can be found in the Co-Creation, Collaboration, and Communication section of the umbrella STIP APS.

Based on historical experience, only a small subset of applicants will be invited to participate in co-creation. However if additional Concept Notes meet our minimum review threshold, they will be placed in an eligible pool of applicants for the life of the STIP APS for potential future engagement and discussion if/when additional funds or opportunities become available.

Note: Communication with USAID during the Concept Note/co-creation phase should NOT be interpreted as a commitment to funding or guaranteed request for a Full Application. Any expenses incurred by applicants during this time are solely the responsibility of the applicants.

If USAID remains interested in moving forward with the proposed projects or activities following the co-creation phase, USAID will request a Full Application from the applicants, inclusive of all modifications, expansions, discussions, etc. resulting from the co-creation phase.

Additional information about the co-creation process can be found in the Co-Creation, Collaboration, and Communication section of the STIP APS.

Full Application

USAID will only accept Full Applications from applicants invited to move forward in the application process. Full Applications will expand upon the concept note template and extensive details about projects and activities proposed in the Concept Note, incorporating any feedback or changes from USAID and other partners discussed during the co-creation phase. Additional information regarding the Full Application will be provided at the time of its request.
Note: USAID's request for a Full Application should not be interpreted as a commitment to funding.

Award

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID/E3/ED anticipates supporting one new Cooperative Agreement of up to $5 million, for a period of performance of three to five years. USAID reserves the right to award more than this estimate and is not obligated to make any awards. This

opportunity is one of three higher education partnership opportunities available from E3/ED under the STIP APS. See grants.gov for the other partnership opportunities.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

In concurrence with the evaluation criteria outlined in the umbrella STIP APS (see Concept Note/Full Application Evaluation Criteria and Considerations section), Concept Notes and subsequent Full Applications to the Higher Education Partnerships Addendum will be assessed according to the following review criteria, with Criteria 3 and 4 and the subcriteria therein being weighted most heavily:

Criterion 1: Alignment with M/B/IO Strategic Objectives and Programming Priorities

- Extent to which the proposed partnerships, projects, or activities align with the USAID Education Policy principles and priorities.
- Extent to which the proposed partnerships, projects, or activities align with the corresponding USAID Mission's Country Development Cooperation Strategy and other collaborating Bureau or Independent Office missions and strategic objectives, where applicable.

Criterion 2: Partner Engagement

Sub-Criterion 2.1: Higher Education Institution Engagement and Collaboration

- Extent to which proposed HEI partnership(s), are appropriate and additive to the success of proposed projects or activities.
- Extent to which application describes a commitment to equitable collaboration and deep partnership between U.S. and partner country HEI partners at every stage of the activity.
- Extent to which proposed HEI partnership(s), are appropriate and additive to the institutional capacity development of the partner country HEI.

Sub-Criterion 2.2: Engagement of and Collaboration with Other Partners

- Extent to which application proposes appropriate and effective collaborations with local communities, including vulnerable and marginalized communities as defined by the USAID Education Policy, and/or other partners (i.e. outside of the U.S. and partner country HEIs). *Note: collaboration with at least one non-HEI partner is a requirement of the umbrella STIP APS.*
- Extent to which application demonstrates partner commitment to proposed collaboration(s).
- Extent to which application outlines a plan for ensuring regular and effective communication between U.S. HEI(s), partner country HEI(s), and any other proposed partners, including rationale behind distribution of funds between core institutions. *Only outline information required at the concept stage. For those concept notes that move forward to co-creation, this will be further discussed and expanded if a full application is invited.*

Note: Criteria 3 and 4 and related sub-criteria will be weighted more heavily than criteria 1 and 2.

Criterion 3: Potential for Impact

Sub-Criterion 3.1: Feasibility and Anticipated Outcome

- Extent to which the proposed objectives are well-defined and achievable.
- Likelihood that proposed partnerships, projects, or activities will result in substantially enhanced higher education institutional capacity within and beyond the lifetime of this award.

Sub-Criterion 3.2: Long-Term Impact and Sustainability

- Extent to which application demonstrates partner country HEI institutional commitment to the proposed activities and their intended outcomes, including willingness to support any anticipated financial, policy, or operational changes to promote sustainability.
- Extent to which proposed partnerships, projects, and/or activities are based on the articulated needs of the partner country HEI and/or the local community.
- Extent to which the anticipated results (and proposed partnerships, projects, or activities, where appropriate) are likely to be sustained beyond the life of this award.

Sub-Criterion 3.3: Sustainable use of innovative approaches and technology

- Extent to which proposed partnerships leverage resources needed to develop and implement innovative approaches and technologies within a higher education environment.

Criterion 4: Project Management

Sub-Criterion 4.1: Personnel

- Extent to which the proposed personnel (from U.S. and partner country HEIs) have the skills and resources necessary for successful implementation of the proposed activities. This includes appropriate language skills and sector-specific knowledge and experience for implementation in country.
- Extent to which proposed projects include a plan for engaging female students, faculty, researchers, and other marginalized groups at every stage of program design and implementation.

Sub-Criterion 4.2: Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation (CLA) and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)

- Extent to which application has outlined a Collaborating, Learning and Adapting approach, allowing for a flexible activity implementation reflected in annual workplans based on data, evidence, and other key learnings gathered throughout the activity.
- Extent to which application has outlined an appropriate monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan, inclusive of data collection strategy and illustrative indicators for all project objectives.

Note: This Addendum serves primarily to outline the goals and priorities of USAID/E3/ED in making an award under the STIP APS. More comprehensive information regarding the application and review processes (including Concept Note submission, Co-Creation, Full Application, and Evaluation stages) can be found in the umbrella STIP APS, located here. Applicants are advised to refer extensively to both documents in preparing Concept Notes.

V. Questions and Further Assistance

Questions regarding the substance and objectives of this Higher Education Partnerships - Dominican Republic Addendum should be directed to HEPartnerships@usaid.gov by no later than 5:00 pm EDT on March 29, 2019.

Questions regarding the substance and terms of the FY 2018 STIP APS umbrella should be directed to LABCDR_Feedback@usaid.gov and the subject line "Question - STIP APS Umbrella."