



USAID

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

May 1, 2008

To All Prospective Applicants

Subject: Amendment No. 1
RFA No.: USAID-Washington M-OAA-DCHA-DOFDA-08-151
Title: Elections and Political Processes

This Amendment No. 1 to the subject RFA is issued to:

1. Make changes in Sections I and IV, and
2. Disseminate questions and answers received concerning the subject RFA.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Claudia M. Enríquez at cenriquez@usaid.gov or (202) 712-5355.

Sincerely,



Joseph Lentini
Agreement Officer

- 1) Section I.E.2. Monitoring and Evaluation plan is deleted and replaced with the following. Note that paragraphs one and three have been modified:

“2. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

For each technical leadership activity under the global core program, the recipient will develop a cost-effective, results-oriented monitoring and evaluation plan that will provide USAID/W with information to improve performance and effectiveness as well as to inform planning and management decisions. The performance monitoring plan will be approved by the USAID/Washington CTO. The recipient will be responsible for monitoring the program benchmarks, and final activity results. *The recipient will be responsible for measuring higher (impact or outcome) level results to the extent possible.*

The recipient will be responsible for establishing and maintaining a performance monitoring plan with appropriate indicators linked to each intermediate result, a process to collect data on program performance in a timely and cost-effective manner, and a system for analyzing and using this data to consistently improve program performance. Specific life-of-program targets will be agreed upon with USAID/W and missions. Milestones and benchmarks toward achieving these results will be set out. Performance monitoring will measure progress in program implementation against these benchmarks. The recipient will also be responsible for establishing a baseline which will be used for measuring program progress.

At the beginning of each agreement year, the recipient will submit an annual monitoring and evaluation plan in conjunction with the annual work plan. The monitoring and evaluation plan will include specific benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress for all Leader and Associate activities that are ongoing, and specify how data will be collected and analyzed for each of the benchmarks and indicators. *Measurement will focus on output data, and whenever possible, outcome data. Analysis will demonstrate broader impact and results of program activities.* Analysis will demonstrate broader impact and results of program activities. As part of each annual monitoring and evaluation plan, data will be provided for each benchmark and indicator proposed including baseline data and any data collected to date. The monitoring and evaluation plan will also highlight how data collected will show the impact and effectiveness of program approaches and methodologies employed, and contribute toward enhancing understanding of best practices and in the sector.

Common Indicators: USAID is required to report on new indicators in the Foreign Assistance Framework (please see the Attachment G) The Recipient will be strongly encouraged to collect data on those indicators that are relevant for elections and political processes activities on an annual basis.”

- 2) Section IV.A.4.b) is revised to change Word and Excel information. Therefore, delete the last two sentences at the end of page 27 and replace them with the following:

“In addition to hard copies, technical and cost/business applications must be submitted on 3-1/2" diskettes or CDs in Microsoft Word 2003. Graphics/tables/spreadsheets must be formatted in MS Word 2003 or Excel 2003.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q.1. To reduce the size of the requested electronic files on the requested CDs, can applicants submit scanned copies of the various documents required for the cost proposal as PDF documents, as opposed to submitting them as MS Word or Excel files? In addition, the RFA requests copies of electronic files in MS Word or Excel 2000, which users of more recent software editions can only save to using the “rich-text-format” (RTF) option. Please confirm that more recent versions, such as Word or Excel 2003, would be an acceptable alternative to the RTF format.

A.1. We currently use Microsoft Office Suite 2003; electronic files may be submitted in Word or Excel 2003. Section IV in the RFA has been amended accordingly.

Q.2. Please confirm that submission of the application via Grants.gov is indeed optional, and that the only required submission materials are the requested hard copies of the application and accompanying CDs?

A.2. Application submission via Grants.gov is optional; the only required submission is through hard copies. As indicated in Section IV.A.4. “Hard copy of applications shall be submitted in two parts: (a) technical and (b) cost or business application. Technical applications shall be submitted in an original and two copies. Cost applications in an original and one copy.”

Q.3. Page 11 of the RFA states that the Leader Award will include DCHA/DG Core Program Activities at the estimated level of \$8,000,000 and Department of State and Other Non-Presence Activities at the estimated level of \$5,000,000, which would imply that the total estimated amount of the leader is \$13,000,000. However, page 34 states that the budget for the RFA should total \$8,000,000. Since the \$5,000,000 for DOS funds is not included among the line items presented on page 35 as part of the instructions, should an applicant include it as part of its cost application? If so, for presentation purposes, should it be a separate line item upon which indirect costs would be calculated, bringing the total budget to \$13,000,000? Please clarify.

A.3. Budget submissions shall include only the Global DCHA/DG Core program activities not to exceed \$8,000,000. The estimated \$5 million for State Department and non-presence countries will be a budget plug figure in the resulting award, as indicated in Section I, page 14 of the RFA. The \$5 million for DOS funds is notional.

Q.4. The reporting requirements in the RFA, particularly the level of detail described for the quarterly reports, seem in excess of that stipulated in 22CFR226.51. In addition, the language seems to imply that quarterly reports and the PMP for the Leader Award will include information and data on Associate Award activities, when, as separate assistance agreements, the Associate Awards will have their own reporting and PMP requirements. Please clarify that double reporting is not required. To ensure the Leader CTO is apprised of Associate Award activities, LWAs often require the submission of Associate Award reports to the Leader CTO in addition to the local CTO for that program; please confirm that this is USAID’s intention.

A.4. We will not require double reporting of associate award activities. Quarterly reports for the LWA will only include information on activities under the leader. Associate awards will include specific reporting requirements.

Q.5. The level of substantial involvement listed with respect to subawards seems inconsistent with 22CFR226.25(8) and excessive, particularly USAID's involvement in the preparation of solicitation materials and participation on review panels. Can the level of involvement be negotiated in the event of an award? Also, the ADS chapters are USAID's internal guidance and are not regulations applicable to recipients so the references to ADS 303 are confusing, particularly on pages 22 and 23.

A.5. We will keep the substantial involvement language for subawards as it appears in the RFA; it will not be subject to negotiation in the selection process. ADS 303.3.11.c(2) allows us to "reserve further approval rights regarding subawards or contracts" provided they are spelled out under Substantial Involvement. The ADS chapters are USAID's internal guidance; ADS 303.5.11 is being referenced in pages 22 and 23 within the context of substantial involvement only. However, Standard Provisions are a part of ADS 303 and will apply to subrecipients, per Mandatory Standard Provision 1.

Q.6. The last sentence of the first paragraph on page 16 of the RFA, which states "The recipient will not be responsible for measuring higher (impact or outcome) level results," would appear to contradict the third paragraph, which states "Measurement will focus on both output and outcome data. Analysis will demonstrate broader impact and results of program activities." Please clarify whether the recipient will be responsible for measuring and reporting on outcome and/or impact level results.

A.6. The M&E paragraph has been amended and both sentences have been revised.

Q.7. Please clarify the meaning of "sample" as discussed on pages 29 and 32 of the RFA in relation to the monitoring and evaluation plan. Is USAID requesting an example of an M&E plan or PMP for an illustrative project under the LWA in addition to the five-page plan on monitoring and evaluation of activities under the LWA? If so, can the former be attached as a separate annex?

A.7. The RFA does not make reference to a PMP, only to an M&E plan. As indicated page 32 in the RFA, the sample M&E plan must be submitted as an appendix and will not count toward the page limit.

Q.8. In the description of the five-page management section on page 31, the RFA refers to the preparation of a "draft management plan." Is this intended to be separate from the five-page management section required by the RFA?

A.8. No, it is the same 5-page plan required by the RFA. This is considered the draft management plan.

Q.9. In Annex B, the RFA provides a link to the "Mandatory Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients" and the "Required As Applicable Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients," but it does not specify which of the latter would apply to this program. Based on a review of the RFA, it would seem that only the following would apply: #1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16 and 22. Please confirm that only those that are applicable to the program will be included in the award.

A.9. Correct, only the required as applicable standard provisions will be included in the resulting award. The applicable provisions will be selected at the time of award; the Recipient will have an opportunity to review the LWA prior to its execution.

Q.10. In Annex E of the RFA, USAID has included the “Contractors Performance Report – Short Form” for prospective applicants to complete and submit with their applications. As the resulting award will be a cooperative agreement, is there a specific format for Recipients that can be substituted, or may applicants utilize their own standard forms to provide the information? Similarly, language about past performance on page 32; page 33, item 7, parts d and e; and page 51 refers to performance criteria USAID specifically uses to evaluate performance under contracts, not grants and cooperative agreements, and thus would not seem applicable to evaluating performance under this application. Please clarify the criteria to be used for evaluating past performance for a Recipient under an assistance award.

A.10. The RFA requires applicants to submit past performance references for themselves and any team member(s) anticipated to perform at least 20% of the program activities using the form provided in Annex E of the RFA, Performance Report – Short Form. The proposal instructions for the past performance section reference this form as the “Contractors Performance Report-Short Form”, but it is correctly titled elsewhere. Nevertheless, both the information requested in that form and the manner in which we evaluate past performance for applicants is similar to the evaluation conducted for many of our contracts. To ensure uniformity of information for conducting the reference checks, all applicants must use the form included as Annex E to the RFA. Page 51 & 52 of the RFA (see below) provide the information for the past performance evaluation.

“4. Past Performance (10 points)

As required by Section IV of this RFA, each applicant is required to provide past performance references for itself and any proposed major subrecipients (team member(s) anticipated to perform at least 20% of the program activities). The past performance evaluation will focus on the applicant’s record of conforming to contract /agreement requirements and to standards of good workmanship, record of forecasting and controlling costs, adherence to contract /agreement schedules, including administrative aspects of performance, history of reasonable and cooperative behavior and commitment to customer satisfaction, the business-like concern for the interest of the customer, and the competency of personnel who worked on the contract/agreement.

[Note: The Technical Evaluation Committee may give more weight to past performance information that is considered more relevant and/or more current. In cases where an applicant lacks relevant past performance history or in which information on past performance is not available, the applicant will not be evaluated favorably or unfavorably on past performance. The neutral rating provided to these applicants is at the Agreement Officer's discretion based on the past performance ratings for all other applicants. Prior to assigning a "neutral" past performance rating, the Agreement Officer may take into account a broad range of information related to an applicant’s past performance.]

USAID reserves the right to obtain past performance information from other sources including those not named in this application.”

-- END OF AMENDMENT --