Issuance Date: April 30, 2015
Closing Date: June 11, 2015

SUBJECT: Request for Applications # RFA-OAA-15-000011 for LAC/RSD Regional Workforce Development Program

Dear Sir/Madam:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), represented by the Bureau of Latin America and the Caribbean (USAID/LAC), Office of Regional Sustainable Development (RSD) is seeking applications from qualified organizations for a Cooperative Agreement for a five-year regional workforce development program. USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Award will be made to the responsible applicant whose application offers the best value to the U.S. Government.

The authority for this activity is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. The Recipients will be responsible for ensuring achievement of the activity objectives. Please refer to the Program Description for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

Pursuant to 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 700, it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments. However, all reasonable, allocable and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the Cooperative Agreement activity and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (2 CFR 200, OMB Circular A-122 for non-profit organizations, OMB Circular A-21 for universities, and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for-profit organizations,) may be paid under the Cooperative Agreement.

Applicants under consideration for an award that have never received funding from USAID will be subject to a pre-award audit to determine fiscal responsibility and ensure adequacy of financial controls.

For the purposes of this activity, this RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter and the following:

Section I – Program Description
Section II – Federal Award Information
Section III – Eligibility Information
Section IV – Application and Submission Information
Section V – Application Review Information
Section VI – Federal Award and Administration Information
Section VII – Federal Awarding Agency Contacts
Section VIII – Other Information

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. In addition, final award of any resultant Cooperative Agreement cannot be made until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While it is anticipated that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for award. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant; should circumstances prevent award of a Cooperative Agreement, all preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

If your organization decides to submit an application, it must be received by June 11, 2015. If it is not, the application will not be considered for award. Please scan those pages requiring signatures. **All questions must be sent by e-mail directed to** Sharon M. Baker at shbaker@usaid.gov **no later than 10:00 a.m. Eastern, May 11, 2015.** An amendment will be issued with the Q&A on Grants.gov.

All applications must be submitted in electronic format directly to **Mr. Abdulaziz Yousuf at ayousuf@usaid.gov,** on June 11, 2015. Applicants should retain electronic copies of their application package for their records. Please copy Ms. Georgia Fuller, Supervisory Agreement Officer, gfuller@usaid.gov on all correspondence.

Sincerely,

Georgia G. Fuller

Georgia G. Fuller
Supervisory Agreement Officer
M/OAA/RM/LEMO

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SECTION I – PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

I.1 ACRONYMS

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CLASP	Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program
CASS	Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships
CIED	Center for Intercultural Education and Development, Georgetown University
IT	Information Technology
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
RFA	Request for Application
RSD	Office of Regional Sustainable Development
SEED	Scholarships for Education and Economic Development
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government

I.2 DEFINITIONS

Targeted Countries:	Refers to the countries identified for implementation in this program.
Workforce Training:	Used here to refer to two and three-year technical degree programs in fields relevant to the labor market. These institutions are often at the cross roads between higher education and technical training, in that, they are often tertiary education institutions that focus on certificate degrees (not bachelors' degrees) in specific technical training sectors.
Equitable Access:	In this RFA when referencing equitable access, this is meant to include not only enrollment but also survival, completion, and outcomes (e.g., academic performance, employment).

I.3 PURPOSE

The purpose of LAC/RSD's new regional workforce development program is to strengthen the capacity of two- and three-year technical training institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to provide market-relevant quality training to youth from disadvantaged populations for employment. The ultimate goal of the project is that more young people, especially those from disadvantaged populations, obtain new or better employment. New employment is generally referred to as jobs—be it formal, informal, or self-employment—that are held by young people who previously were unemployed or not active in the labor market. "Better employment" is defined as job opportunities in which young people are earning more wages or income, have access to more stable employment, access to safe work environments, are exerting upgraded and market-relevant skills and competencies, and/or have greater opportunity for career advancement.

I.4 BACKGROUND

I.4.1 LAC Context

There is an alarming gap between the skills that the Latin American workforce offers and the skills that companies in the region demand. In fact, 37 percent of Latin American companies believe that finding a labor force with adequate skills is a significant obstacle to growth, and Latin America outranks other regions in the world in these skill shortages (Figure 1). Most often, companies cite lack of technical skills, available candidates, experience and soft skills as the largest barriers to filling job vacancies (Figure 2). Part of the problem is that technical training and higher education systems in the region do not seem to have the ability to respond quickly and effectively to labor market demand. Traditionally, higher education and professional-technical training systems have followed a rigid model, and have not sufficiently incorporated the integration of soft skills, more practical hands on training or innovative program offerings that respond to changing labor market demand. In addition, there is often a bias in Latin America against technical degrees, which are often seen as less prestigious than a four-year university degree.

A workforce with relevant skills is critical for countries trying to compete in a global economy, and a quality education and up-to-date skills are increasingly required as the pathways to membership in the growing middle class. During recent decades, the higher education and technical training system in LAC has expanded significantly. UNESCO statistics indicate that in 1975 there were 330 higher education institutions across Latin America, while today there are more than 2,000.[1] With this growth, there has been a diversification of institutions within the higher education sector, including universities, university-level technical training certificates, vocational training institutions and private sector training and employment services. It is important to note, however, that despite the tremendous growth in education coverage, tertiary education enrollment and diversification of institutions over the last 30 years, these efforts have not translated into equal opportunity for disadvantaged groups. Low income and rural youth are still less likely to complete secondary school and to go on to more advanced studies than their more affluent peers. Most of those low income and marginalized individuals who do finish their secondary education still struggle to transition into tertiary education. Even at subsidized public universities and vocational schools, the costs of an education are prohibitive for many lower-income students. As a result, large segments of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean have little hope of attending university or taking advantage of workforce development opportunities.

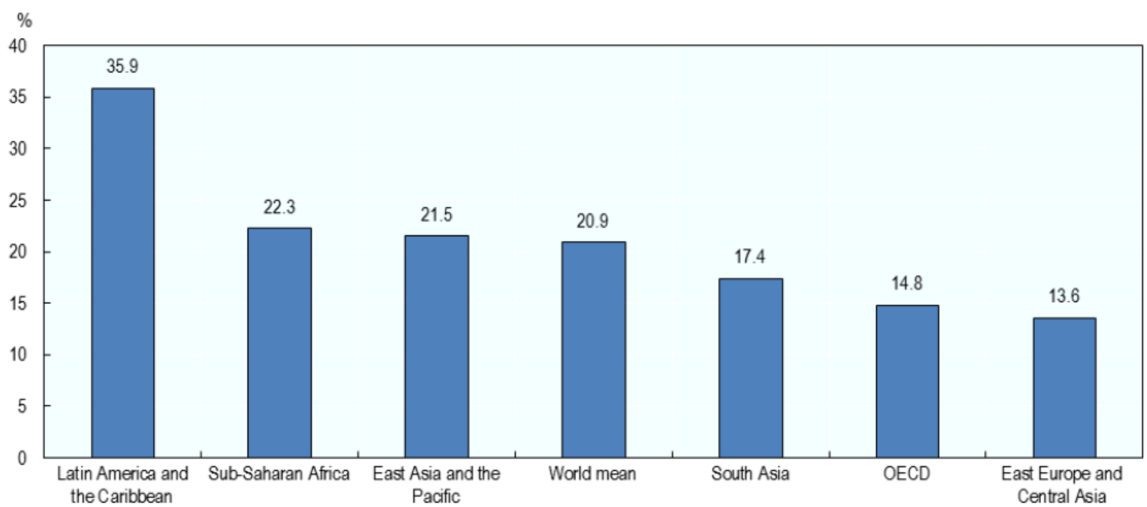
Consequently, this Request for Application (RFA) is intended to address two significant issues:

[1] N. Fernandez Lamarra, 2008. UNESCO, Institute of Statistics, 2007. GUNI, 2008. IESALC F Lopez Segrera, 2007.

1. **Lack of capacity to offer market-relevant skills:** Two- and three-year technical training institutions are not providing skills training that match the needs of private sector employers. Thus, even those populations that do have access to a tertiary education may lack the skill set—both technical as well as workforce readiness, or "soft," skills—that they need to be employed. Moreover, many training institutions fail to provide or link to important job intermediation services that lead to employment, such as job information and job matching, career counseling, internships and service learning opportunities, mentoring, entrepreneurship support, and other follow-on services.

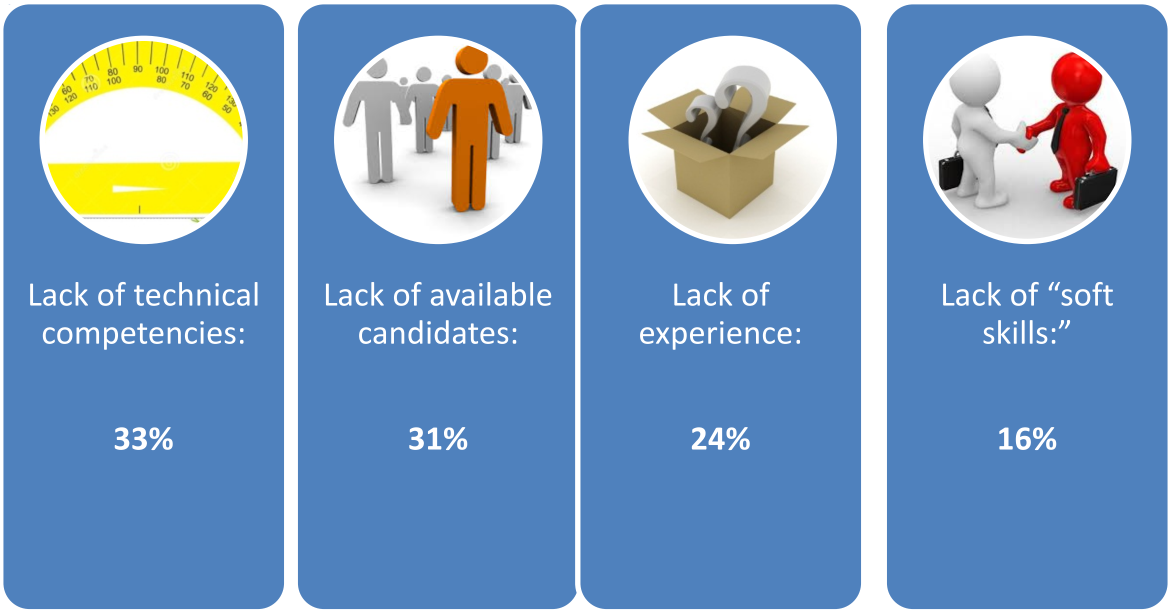
2. **Education is inaccessible for disadvantaged:** Tertiary institutions in LAC are often accessible only to select populations, including the wealthy and urban populations. Because many LAC populations do not fit within these parameters, post-secondary education is often out of reach. As a result, disadvantaged groups, such as the rural poor, indigenous peoples, disabled individuals, youth living in areas of high crime or violence, and other marginalized populations are left without recourse or means to develop the skills required by employers and obtain work.

Figure 1: Percentage of Firms That Identify Inadequately Educated Labor Force as a Primary Limitation



Source: Enterprise Surveys 2012, World Bank

Figure 2: Principal Difficulties for Filling Job Vacancies in Latin America



Source: Manpower Group, 2013

I.4.2 Previous USAID-Funded Regional Higher Education Programs in LAC

USAID has funded a regional higher education scholarships program in LAC for nearly 30 years, and over this time period has provided more than 9,000 scholarships to socially and economically-disadvantaged high school graduates and professionals from the region. These USAID-funded scholarships provided technical training and professional development opportunities at U.S. community colleges and universities for individuals from underserved areas and populations with limited access to higher education, such as the rural poor, indigenous groups, ethnic minorities, women, and people with disabilities. Two-year scholarships provided technical training for disadvantaged secondary school graduates. Twelve- and six-month scholarships provided training to rural-based mid-level professionals, primarily teachers.

The LAC regional higher education scholarship program began in 1985 as the Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP) program. A follow-on program, the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS) program, was started in 1989. Awarded in 2008, the Scholarships for Education and Economic Development (SEED) program were the competed follow-on to CASS. SEED ends December 2015. Since 2003, the countries included the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico.

Implemented by Georgetown University's Center for Intercultural Education and Development, SEED and its predecessor programs sought to:

- Build human capital in key sectors to support regional economic and social development efforts
- Create a cadre of change agents and future leaders
- Provide participants with skills and knowledge to actively and responsibly participate in a democratic society
- Strengthen local capacity in the participating countries in a wide range of technical fields relevant to social and economic development

Fields of study were determined on the basis of assessments of labor force needs in the participating countries and consultation with the USAID's LAC Bureau and the USAID mission in each participating country. Some examples of the fields of study for youth certificate programs include: Environmental Technologies, Quality Control, Agribusiness for Export, Entrepreneurism and Leadership for At-Risk Youth, Computer Business Applications for Deaf Youth, and Small and Medium Business Management. Professional fields of study have included, for example, Strengthening Rural Primary Indigenous Education for Mexico, Strengthening Education for Middle School At-Risk Youth, Building Primary Education Reading Skills for Central America and the Caribbean, and Transmissible Disease Vector Control.

Scholarship program participants came to the United States in cohorts of 18-20 scholars, balanced for gender and country, for a specific certificate program, which helped participants build networks between LAC countries. In addition to the technical studies, the scholarship programs integrated a host family experience during the first year, English language studies, leadership activities, community service, and internships. Pre-departure orientations, post-return events, and significant support and wraparound services supported the success of the students, many of whom had limited exposure to non-local cultures or inadequate secondary preparation or faced other challenges such as disability or experience of domestic violence. CASS/SEED alumni associations in each country provide program alumni with opportunities for job networking, participation in community projects, and socializing with others who shared similar experiences. Alumni have been a rich resource for the program, assisting with recruitment and selection, orientation, and post-program support.

Three evaluations of CASS and SEED were conducted over the period of implementation. Findings from the 1994 and 2002 performance evaluations of CASS were used to strengthen program design and implementation. A quasi-experimental impact evaluation was conducted in 2013, tracing SEED alumni and non-recipient finalists to assess long-term impact (See Annexes 1, 2 and 3 for the evaluations). Important strengths of the CASS and SEED scholarship programs included:

- Strong retention, completion, and return rates: program alumni regularly return to their home countries as well-trained change agents who exert influence on numerous others in their personal, professional and community networks.
- Recruitment and selection process was very successful at targeting marginalized populations and reaching the desired target beneficiaries.
- Programs offered benefits and individual returns for participants and their professional sectors. Changes were often immediate and observable (such as the introduction of new production techniques in local businesses or implementation of improved pedagogical methodology).
- Programs provided relevant training in the United States that allowed scholars to find productive employment upon return.
- Programs successfully increased access to employment and leadership opportunities for women and indigenous recipients. Significantly more recipients were later employed in leadership roles.

I.4.3 Rationale for New LAC Regional Higher Education Program

At this time, USAID seeks to expand the reach and impact of its regional programming and its impact on addressing workforce development and security priorities in the region. U.S.-based technical training such as was offered through CASS and SEED is costly, averaging approximately $46,000 per two-year program, in contrast to $10,000[2] for similar, locally-provided training programs. A training model designed around bringing individuals to the United States for study made sense when there were relatively few LAC higher education institutions available locally. At this time, however, given the

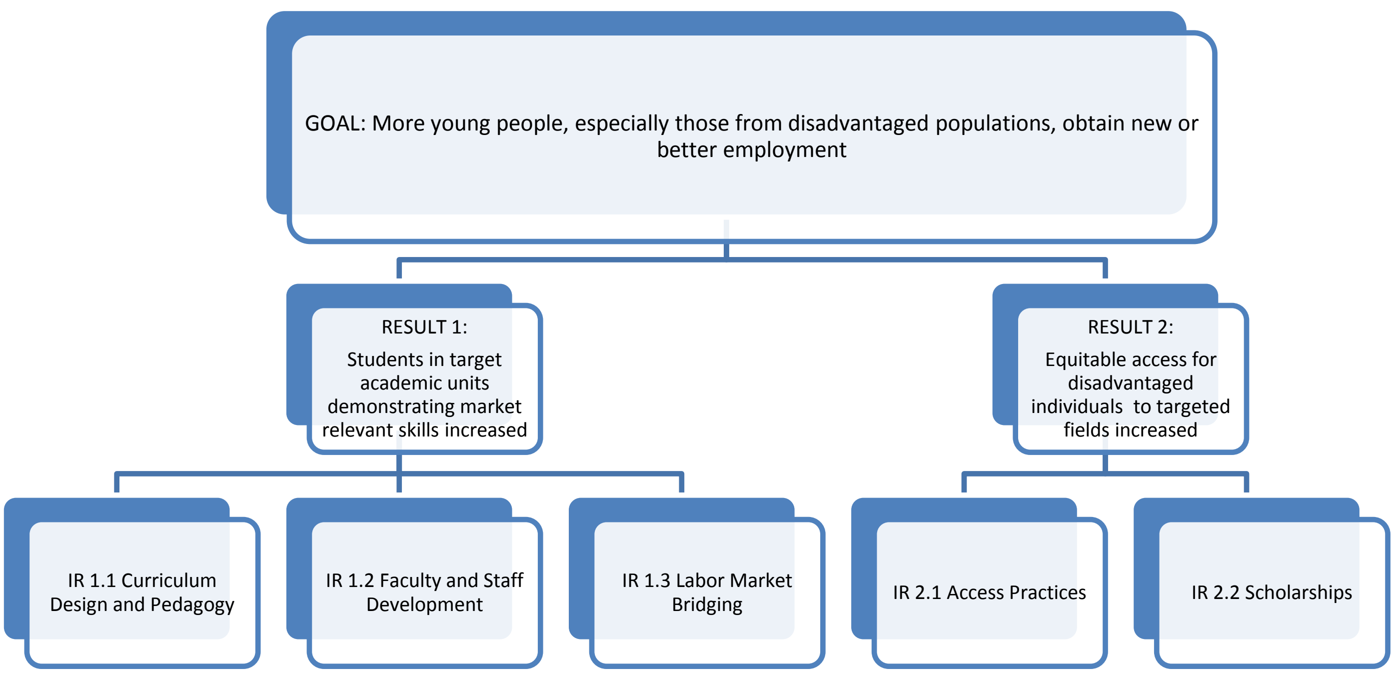
[2] USAID/LAC, "The New Generation of USAID Higher Education Programs: An Assessment of Possible In-Country Partner Institutions," July 2014. Annex 4.

growth and diversification of higher education institutions in LAC over the past 30 years, it makes sense for USAID to shift the focus of its higher education program to building the capacity of workforce development institutions in the region. Assessments of local capacity in LAC to implement quality workforce development programs with many of the components of the CASS/SEED training confirmed that appropriate institutions exist in the countries of most interest to USAID. By focusing on building in-country capacity to deliver quality workforce development at the tertiary level, USAID will be able to reach significantly more youth, both directly through its program and indirectly by supporting sustainable institutional change.

I.4.4 Link to USAID Education Strategy

This program corresponds with **Goal 2** of the USAID Global Education Strategy: **Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to produce a workforce with relevant skills to support country development by 2015.** The program will focus on improving the ability of two and three-year technical training institutions to produce a workforce with relevant skills to match labor market needs and support country development goals. Special consideration will be given to disadvantaged groups.

I.5 LOGICAL FRAMEWORK



The goal, results, and required indicators[3] of the LAC regional workforce development program in the logical framework above are as follows:

[3] Note: These indicators shall be disaggregated by gender.

Goal: More young people, especially those from disadvantaged populations, obtain new or better employment.

- Required Indicator: Number of persons receiving new employment or better employment (including better self-employment) as a result of participation in USG-funded workforce development program
- Required Indicator: Percentage of graduates from USG-supported tertiary education programs reporting themselves as employed

Result 1: Students in target academic units demonstrating market relevant skills increased

- Required Indicator: Number of persons with improved workforce readiness skills as a result of USG-funded workforce development programs

Result 2: Equitable access for disadvantaged individuals to targeted fields increased

- Required Indicator: Percentage of individuals from underserved and/or disadvantaged groups enrolled in target fields in select institutions
- Required Indicator: Percentage of individuals from underserved and/or disadvantaged groups graduating in target fields in select institutions

The goal of the program will be accomplished by strengthening the capacity of LAC technical training institutions to deliver high-quality, relevant two- to three-year certificate or degree programs and by improving access and support for populations traditionally excluded from tertiary education. Strengthening the capacity of LAC technical training institutions will require linkages and alliances with U.S. academic institutions, other LAC institutions, employers, and the private sector on improving the relevance and quality of the curricula, strengthening faculty skills, and improving labor market bridging. Rather than building the capacity of entire institutions, the program will focus on academic departments that provide training in sectors aligned with market demand and USAID development goals, as well as focusing on staff or offices (either internal to the educational institution or external through partnerships) that can offer career support and job mediation services. The program will also partner with employers, as appropriate, to provide important on-the-job opportunities and skills upgrading, such as internships, cooperative learning and other pre-employment programs. Attention will be paid to addressing the needs of young women and young men and improving gender equity.

Improving access and support for traditionally-excluded populations will be focused on providing a limited number of scholarships for study in the chosen fields at targeted institutions. Additionally, the program will strengthen LAC technical training institutions' admissions practices, education delivery options, and support services that help disadvantaged populations complete an education.

I.6 CROSS-CUTTING IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

This program must embrace the following cross-cutting considerations.

I.6.1 Targeted Countries

USAID anticipates working in Honduras and at least two other countries in the Caribbean and Central America. The other countries may include: Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. The program may begin in a subset of countries and expand in out years. It will be up to the recipient to determine the feasible number of countries within the program budget, including cost share and resource leveraging. Henceforth, "targeted countries" refers to the countries identified for implementation in this program. Countries may be identified and justified at application, based on criteria such as complementarity with Mission and CDCS priorities. Alternatively, a process for selection of countries should be defined.

I.6.2 Identification of Market Demand for Skills

Before implementation can begin, the Recipient must conduct an assessment of labor market needs in each targeted country to determine the sectors, job profiles and skills (both technical and soft skills) most critical for meeting labor market demand, including sectors that are consistent with USAID objectives. This could range from drawing on existing labor market analyses or other relevant research to conducting a stand-alone labor market assessment. The analysis should be updated as needed throughout the program to ensure that the technical programs align with labor market demand. Recipient also should engage USAID Mission personnel and USAID Washington on identifying priorities. Ultimately, this assessment process will lead to the selection of fields, or academic departments, that the program will focus on.

I.6.3 Selection of Local Institutions

The program will focus on local institutions that offer two- and three-year technical certificate/degree programs in the selected fields that are relevant to the labor market demand of the country. USAID expects that the Recipient will conduct an assessment process to identify the possible target institution or institutions in each target country. USAID conducted an abbreviated assessment in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Jamaica, as a proof of concept study for this program design. The assessment report has been provided in Annex 4 and is meant to serve as background for this RFA. It is not meant to designate target countries or institutions and must not replace the Recipient's assessment. The process of selection of institutions needs to incorporate consultation with the local USAID Mission. Recipient should also consider engaging SEED and CASS alumni, who would offer the perspective of local knowledge of institutions, the employment landscape, and the experience of quality relevant technical education. Recipient should consider using a competitive process for selecting benefiting institutions.

I.6.4 Target Beneficiaries

The target beneficiaries for this program are secondary school graduates or those with an equivalent technical/accelerated learning degree, ages 17-30, from low income families, who show promise to serve as future leaders in their communities, workplaces, and country. Resources should be focused on improving services for disadvantaged young people whose access to relevant tertiary education is limited. Attention should be paid to providing opportunities for the rural and urban poor, youth living in communities with high crime or violence, indigenous people, as well as those marginalized due to ethnicity, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation or identity (lesbian, gay, and transgender youth). Attention also must be paid to addressing gender inequities. Where feasible, the program should complement USAID and other programs serving the same populations. USAID will work with the implementer to identify target areas and populations. About 50 percent of beneficiaries should be women and at least 50 percent should be from rural areas and secondary cities. It is expected that these disadvantaged populations may need support before their academic studies begin. Given this, Recipient should consider including catch-up or enrichment summer courses or other strategies to ensure that targeted individuals are prepared to succeed in their course of study.

I.6.5 Gender Expectations

Variation exists across LAC countries and subpopulations in terms of the gender gaps in secondary completion, tertiary access, as well as access to different sectors of the labor market. For example, in the Caribbean countries, young women are more likely to complete secondary and tertiary education than are young men. In Central America, indigenous women have much lower rates of secondary schooling and more limited access to tertiary education than do young men, although both groups are disadvantaged compared to non-indigenous populations. Recipient is required to analyze the relevant gender gaps in education and take these into account when determining targeted beneficiaries as well as the types of interventions needed to reduce gender gaps and broaden the opportunities available. For example, distance from the training institution may be a greater barrier for a woman with small children than for her male counterpart, even if he also is a parent. Recipient also is required to include analysis to ensure the program does not cause harm or worsen the situation for either gender.

I.6.6 Development of Cross-Cutting Skills

Labor market analyses in LAC show a significant gap between job requirements and workforce abilities. This includes the core, hard skills required for specific jobs, basic computer skills, and soft-skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, time management, team work, leadership, and cross-cultural skills. English skills are also important to some sectors and employers. This program should seek to strengthen hard skill training together with soft-skill development and basic computer skills throughout the program results. It should also cultivate an attitude of service and a sense of responsibility to country and community in participants.

I.6.7 Innovation and Technology

It is expected that Recipient will leverage innovative ideas or new or adapted technologies in capacity building efforts and to improve student and alumni remote access to resources and services. Information technology (IT) solutions must be well thought-out, sustainable, and feasible to launch and maintain in the LAC context. Recognizing that IT solutions conceived under development projects are rarely sustainable and do not always achieve the intended impact, any IT solutions should be leveraged in a pragmatic manner to reduce cost of service delivery, to achieve scale and improve monitoring and evaluation capabilities.

I.6.8 Linkages with Academic Institutions

Linkages with academic institutions in chosen fields will be important to both results, but especially to Result 1 which focuses on increasing the quality and relevance of selected academic units. U.S. community colleges are particularly well-placed to provide support given their experience, knowledge, and skills in providing relevant, efficient workforce development training in the United States. Some LAC institutions also have relevant experience, knowledge and skills and should be considered as partners in strengthening capacity and creating important south-south linkages. Under Result 1, Recipient should look beyond the traditional institution-to-institution partnership model commonly used in capacity building programs and consider other models. These may include (but are not limited to) formal or informal consortia of expert individuals in a given field, academic or professional associations, or relevant networks established around the targeted curricular, faculty development or other outcomes. Recipient is encouraged to be creative and think outside of the box.

Under Result 2, in addition to local scholarships, there will be a limited number of scholarships to complete 1-2 semesters of study in the United States. Given this, Recipient will also need to identify appropriate community colleges and/or other host institutions in the United States to deliver the study abroad component. To the extent possible, these institutions should be competitively identified and selected.

I.6.9 Private Sector Alliances

USAID requires alliances to engage private sector employers as full partners in the program and leverage the limited U.S. government resources available. Private sector allies will be key to ensuring and maintaining the quality and relevance of the workforce development services offered by local institutions.

Employers and other private sector partners may assist in defining skills needs, offer technical expertise, or contribute to a sector-specific scholarship fund. They may also play a role in supporting curriculum development, internships, practicums, mentoring, and the transition to workforce.

In addition to these inputs, USAID envisions the creation of an Employment Incentive Grant Fund or another mechanism that will catalyze the private sector to invest in skills development training and job intermediation services and/or to create new opportunities that result in increased employment and job creation for target youth. This incentive fund offers an opportunity to develop new mechanisms that encourage sustained private sector investment in skills development and stimulate job creation especially for vulnerable youth. It is expected that such a grant fund will forge alliances with the private sector who will provide at least a 1:1 match (cash and in-kind) to USAID resources. Ultimately funds shall be used to contribute to the overarching project objectives and must demonstrate sustainability over the long term, i.e., not be used to cover recurring operational costs. For example, incentive funds may be utilized by a group of employers to develop a new training and internship program for underprivileged youth in a particular sector; it could incentivize a human resource firm to establish a job information platform for at-risk youth; it may encourage a technology firm to work with a training and education provider to create online educational opportunities and/or other online job intermediation services; it may stimulate a company to establish a microfranchise initiative that employs at-risk youth, etc. This fund allows the project to have the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, to stimulate innovation and creativity, and to bridge linkages between employers and workforce development service providers.

I.6.10 Other Actors

Recipient should also seek out other actors that can enhance the outcomes of the results of the program. For example, local and national governments and donor agencies or programs, such as the Peace Corps, may have an interest in allying to support public sector or country workforce development needs.

I.6.12 Sustainability

Sustainability of market-relevant training in targeted academic units and improved access practices for the disadvantaged, including scholarships, is of the utmost importance. The impact of the program will affect an array of beneficiaries, from individual youth, to training institutions and private sector companies. The resulting impact of the program should be sustained and scaled beyond the end of the activity.

I.6.11 Engagement of SEED and CASS alumni

There are more than 9,000 alumni of the SEED and CASS programs, and they have a great deal to offer to this program both in technical and advisory capacities and must be engaged wherever appropriate. Some examples include: participating in the selection of training institutions, design of scholarship wrap-around services, recruitment and selection of scholarship recipients, mentorships, pre-, during, and post-scholarship support, engagement of the private sector, identification of appropriate private-sector partners, offering training expertise, assuming in-country staff positions, etc. Alumni groups or networks exist in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. USAID will help the Recipient connect with relevant alumni groups/networks.

I.7 PROGRAM RESULTS

USAID estimates that 65 to 70 percent of the total program resources provided by USAID will be directed to Result 1. No more than 35 percent of the total resources provided by USAID should be used to support Result 2. Please note that while Intermediate Result 2.2 “Scholarships” has significantly more detail than any other Intermediate Result, this is not meant to indicate that the greatest amount of effort should go to this Intermediate Result. Rather, it reflects the lessons of USAID's 30 years of experience with offering similar scholarship programming in LAC.

I.7.1 Result 1: Students in target academic units demonstrating market relevant skills increased

A strong education system will provide the next generation of workers in the selected LAC countries with skills that they can apply in sectors relevant to the labor market demand and their country's economic growth. Curriculum reform, faculty development, and improved labor market bridging are needed to strengthen the quality and relevance of workforce development programs. It is expected that Recipient will focus on strengthening student's market relevant skills in specific academic units or departments of study that correspond to fields that are critical to meet labor market needs (as identified through assessment process discussed in 1.6.2). To build the capacity of these units to deliver relevant skill training, the program may establish linkages and alliances with the local private sector, employers, U.S. institutions, LAC academic institutions or other actors. Over the long-term, alliances are critical to maintaining relevance, including through advising, mentoring, internships, providing resources, etc. Activities should seek to integrate with or complement relevant in-country and USAID-funded programs and to promote development of an effective and sustainable training and education system in the targeted fields.

I.7.1.a Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

Quality workforce development depends on the use of relevant curricula that are revised and updated to reflect current labor market demand, including the use of updated content and equipment, modern practices, instructional tools and methodologies. A key concern in LAC is that the curricula used for instruction are not sufficiently relevant to employment. They are too often developed in isolation from external stakeholders—especially the private sector—whose inputs could greatly enhance the value of training and education. Moreover, the method of instruction is often too heavily content-based, primarily reliant on the one-way delivery of information. Also, more needs to be done to build up the student's soft skills which are key to employment success and valued by employers, namely through project-based assignments that foster critical soft skills such as teamwork, efficacy, perseverance, curiosity, communications and others. Because knowledge is not static, this program needs to help institutions form lasting connections with the private sector and continually update information about labor market demand, so as to establish a culture of adjusting their workforce development programs in the face of a knowledge-driven economy, so that they continue to be responsive to student and employer needs.

Illustrative Activities:

- Strengthen capacity of institutions to conduct and/or access labor market demand assessments that inform which sectors, job profiles, and skills requirements are in greatest demand and have the greatest potential for job growth, particularly for the target youth population(s).
- Assess current curricula and pedagogical methods in targeted fields in selected institutions. Assessment would identify and understand the gaps between the curricula and labor market needs, including understanding the skills most in demand by employers and other relevant factors that may come into consideration in a given context.
- Based on gap analysis, identify potential resources—human, academic and policy—to partner with the select institutions and private sector counterparts on curriculum design and improvement. Improve curriculum and instructional design in response to industry and employer demand for skills
- Improve instructional design methods among select education and training providers to include project-based assignments, experiential learning, service learning, cooperative education, collaboration and teamwork, professor-student engagement, etc.
- Compliment hard skill technical training with "soft" skill training and other workforce readiness training that cuts across disciplines, such as computer courses, effective writing, etc.

I.7.1.b Faculty and staff development

The development of professors and instructors who are able to employ effective instructional design methodologies and practices is essential to quality, as is the development of staff and administrators who contribute to other student services beyond training per se. The skill sets of current faculty require upgrading to facilitate instruction of revised curricula. Faculty may require development in any of a broad range of areas from upgrading knowledge, to pedagogical techniques and course design to reaching students of different skill sets and backgrounds. This program will ensure that faculty at the selected institutions are developing or improving the skills and knowledge they need to deliver quality relevant instruction in the targeted fields that is responsive to the learning needs of their students. Additionally, staff involved in job intermediation services, linkages to the private sector, and other key functions, will be supported. To the extent possible, the program should consider how faculty and staff development opportunities can be institutionalized and sustained over the long-term.

Illustrative Activities:

- Build capacity of target education and training institutions assess and respond to continually changing labor market demand over the long term, e.g. through the development of staff responsible for external engagement and private sector alliances.
- Assess departmental and individual capacity to deliver training in targeted fields, including to targeted beneficiaries.
- Based on analysis of capacity needs, identify alliances in the academic, public or private sector that can assist with strengthening faculty skill development.
- Establish linkages with expert faculty or academic organizations in the U.S. and/or other LAC institutions to share knowledge.
- Faculty exchanges with local, regional or U.S.-based institutions.
- Technical training and/or contractual arrangements with industry experts to enhance training and education in areas relevant to priority sectors.
- Faculty mentoring program.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation systems within target institutions that measure and track relevant outcomes such as job placement rate, graduate employment, student improvements in market-relevant skills, employer satisfaction, etc.

I.7.1.c Labor Market Bridging

Services and activities that help students bridge the transition from school to work or from the informal to the formal labor sector are crucial to facilitating employment. Such services are particularly important for disadvantaged populations who are not exposed to the types of opportunities, experiences and networks available to wealthier counterparts. USAID expects the program to strengthen the capacity of local service providers to improve and expand the types of job intermediation other labor market bridging services offered to vulnerable youth that lead to employment. Such services may be offered directly and/or through referrals and may include, but not be limited to, the following: job information and job matching, internships and service learning opportunities, career counseling, mentoring, entrepreneurship support (particularly for self-employed youth), and other follow-on services. Private sector allies will play a significant role in achieving this result, including by engaging with local companies and businesses to develop curriculum, provide internships and cooperative learning opportunities, create mentorship programs, and provide linkages to upcoming jobs.

Illustrative Activities:

- Integrate experiential learning and/or internships into curriculum to ensure that students have practical skills that are applicable to jobs.
- Improve or establish career advising services, including resume writing classes, interview preparation, etc.
- Create mentorship programs that link students with professionals in their field of study.
- Establish job information and job matching services.
- Host trade fairs that link employers to job seekers.
- Establish a robust referral network that ensures support to young entrepreneurs and those seeking self-employment.

I.7.2 Result 2: Equitable access for disadvantaged individuals to targeted fields increased

For the purposes of this program, it is not enough for students to enroll in school. Improvements in enrollment must be accompanied by strengthened survival, completion, and outcomes. Throughout this RFA, "access" is used as shorthand for enrollment through completion of studies and employment. The program will work in two areas to address barriers to access. First, to support sustained improvements to access, it will work with the targeted institutions to build their capacity to admit and support low income and marginalized individuals to completion in those fields of study that are the focus of the program. Second, the program will provide scholarships to targeted beneficiaries who show promise to serve as future leaders in the chosen fields. The intent of the scholarships is to provide transformational opportunities to disadvantaged individuals and develop future leaders who will contribute to the development of their communities and of their countries. Two types of scholarships will be provided: Local scholarships will be provided to study targeted fields at the workforce development institutions improved under Result 1. Additionally, a subset of these local scholarship recipients will earn the opportunity to complete six-months to one-year of their program at a U.S.-based community college or university.

I.7.2.a Access Practices

LAC institutions need to build the capacity to reach out and retain students who have not traditionally had access to tertiary education. Some of the barriers to access that prevent marginalized populations from enrolling and completing a tertiary education include: lack of knowledge of possible programs and how to apply; admissions processes that assume practices benefitting urban, wealthier students; living far from educational services; inadequate secondary preparation; need to earn an income while studying; need to care for children or other family members; lack of availability of financial aid; etc. This program needs to work with the target institutions to develop and implement innovative approaches to identify and address the most significant barriers to equitable access for disadvantaged groups. Recipient should consider leveraging technology and other innovative means to reach more of the targeted beneficiaries.

Illustrative activities:

- Develop alternative forms of delivery of courses to better address the needs of students from the target population, such as flexible schedules for non-traditional students.
- Create blended learning and distance learning opportunities for rural students or consider the use of massive open online courses (MOOCs). Consider correct media for context and availability of technology.
- Design a relevant extension service model to offer cooperative learning, short-term/ongoing continuing education, and training opportunities to the employed labor force.
- Strengthen capacity to develop and implement more inclusive admissions practices.

- Develop outreach systems and activities, considering all available avenues, such as print and social media, and other regionally-specific outreach tools.
- Targeted recruitment of marginalized individuals, using networks accessible and familiar to them.
- Strengthen institutional ability to provide needed support services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, peer-to-peer, child care, career counseling, etc.).
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems within target institutions that measure progress toward increasing equitable access for disadvantaged groups.

I.7.2.b Scholarships

The scholarships under this component are more comprehensive than traditional scholarships that provide tuition and a stipend for housing/transport. In addition to providing access to high quality, market-relevant technical training, they should include support services and activities to strengthen leadership skills, develop critical thinking, and cultivate an attitude of service. English language training should be made available as an option as part of the scholarship and the program should provide certification of the level of proficiency reached for those who choose to study English. The reason for the English training is two-fold: (1) it is valued in the local job market; (2) for scholarship beneficiaries interested in applying for the opportunity to complete one or two semesters of their program in the U.S., a minimum level of English language proficiency will be required.

Scholarships will be provided to support disadvantaged young people to complete one of the degree or certificate programs strengthened under Result 1. Ten to twenty percent of the scholarship beneficiaries will earn the opportunity to complete one to two semesters of their studies at a U.S. host institution as part of the program. Six-month to one-year study abroad experiences appear to allow for meaningful impact on technical, cultural, and language skills. The chance to compete for this opportunity should be used to motivate scholars to apply themselves to their study. The U.S.-based programs of study should be designed to complement the in-country studies and contribute to the completion of the in-country degree or certificate. Recipient will need to ensure that credits from the study in the U.S. are recognized and transfer to local universities. The scholarship program should assure strong retention and completion rates and assist participants with transition to workforce. Additionally, USAID expects the U.S.-based training to assure nearly perfect return rates.

The best practices and lessons learned during USAID's nearly 30 years of experience in implementing the highly successful CASS and SEED programs must be incorporated to the design of the local and U.S.-based scholarship activities under this agreement. Some of the strengths of SEED and CASS included: the ability to reach the right beneficiaries through a targeted recruitment process; the support services that ensured good retention and completion; leadership development activities; the development of teamwork, cross-cultural skills, computer, time management, and other soft skills; and the integrated approach to fostering long-term community service. An area that needed strengthening was the post-program support to alumni. The following components have been identified as important to the success of the scholarship component. They are explained in more detail in Annex 5; also see the evaluation reports in Annexes 1, 2, and 3:

a) Recruitment and selection
b) Technical skills training
c) Internships
d) Leadership development
e) Community service
f) English-language training
g) Wraparound services
h) Cross-country interaction
i) U.S. study opportunity

j) Post-scholarship support
k) Alumni engagement

The SEED and CASS alumni will serve as a key resource for this result. Recipient should engage alumni in shaping the in-country implementation design and plans and should also assist CASS/SEED alumni with formalizing and strengthening the alumni association in the target countries and incorporate alumni of this program into the associations. USAID will help to facilitate contact with these associations.

Drawing on the linkages and alliances, Recipient will need to develop a plan to sustain the delivery of scholarships beyond USG support. This may include working with the private and public sector employers to set up endowments, working with local universities to provide reduced tuition or other support costs for needy students, leveraging in-kind participation, etc.

Illustrative Activities:

- Formalize and strengthen existing CASS/SEED alumni associations and engage alumni in scholarship design and implementation.
- Recruit, screen, and select scholarship candidates from disadvantaged and marginalized populations in the participating countries.
- Provide comprehensive scholarships to study at local targeted academic departments, including components a-k as listed above.
- Provide a limited number of comprehensive scholarships for six- to twelve-month study programs at U.S. community colleges or universities, including components a-k as listed above.
- Establish scholarship funds or endowments with private and/or public sector support.
- Support development of linkages between participants from various countries and networks and links between program participants and alumni.
- Where possible, identify opportunities for students to immerse themselves in contexts where English is spoken, such as internships at USAID, the U.S. Embassy, Peace Corps, international PVOs and NGOs, and other settings in which English is spoken and can be practiced.

I.8 PROGRAM INDICATORS

In addition to the required indicators listed below for the program Goal, Result 1 and Result 2, other possible indicators for Result 1 and Result 2 are listed for consideration. Indicators should be taken wherever possible from USAID's Education and Workforce Development standard indicators. The applicant is also encouraged to develop useful custom indicators. Wherever relevant, indicators must be disaggregated by gender and participant country. As applicable, indicators also should be disaggregated by institution and field of study.

Goal: More young people, especially those from disadvantaged populations, obtain new or better employment.

- Required Indicator: Number of persons receiving new employment or better employment (including better self-employment) as a result of participation in USG-funded workforce development program [F Standard Indicator 4.6.3-2 – workforce development]
- Required Indicator: Percentage of graduates from USG-supported tertiary education programs reporting themselves as employed [F Standard Indicator 3.2.2-37 – higher education]

Result 1: Students in target academic units demonstrating market relevant skills increased

- Required Indicator: Number of persons with improved workforce readiness skills as a result of USG-funded workforce development programs [Custom]

Result 2: Equitable access for disadvantaged individuals to targeted fields increased

- Required Indicator: Number of individuals from underserved and/or disadvantaged groups enrolled in target fields in select institutions [Custom]
- Required Indicator: Number of individuals from underserved and/or disadvantaged groups graduating in target fields in select institutions [Custom]

<u>Other possible indicators:</u>

Result 1: Students in target academic units demonstrating market relevant skills increased

- Job placement rate of tertiary and workforce development institutions targeted by USG [custom]
- U.S. dollar value of cost share of workforce development initiatives by government and/or private sources of revenues [custom]
- Number of partnerships formed in support of workforce development or employment as a result of USAID assistance [custom]
- Number of USG-supported tertiary programs with curricula revised with private and/or public sector employers' input or on the basis of market research [F standard indicator 3.2.2-36 -higher education]
- Percent of USG-funded tertiary education and workforce development programs that include experiential and/or applied learning opportunities. [F standard indicator 3.2.2-33 -higher education]
- Number of U.S.-supported tertiary educational programs that develop or implement industry-recognized skills certification [F standard indicator 3.2.2-39 -higher education]
- Number of host-county institutions with increased management or institutional capacity as a result of USG investments involving higher education institutions [custom]
- Number of USG-supported organizational improvements that support institutional capacity of host-country institutions [custom]
- Number of tertiary institution faculty or teaching staff whose qualifications are strengthened through USG-supported tertiary education programs [F standard indicator 3.2.2-42 -higher education]

Result 2: Equitable access increased for disadvantaged individuals to targeted fields

- Number of USG-supported tertiary education programs that adopt policies and/or procedures to strengthen transparency of admissions and/or to increase access of underserved and disadvantaged groups [F standard indicator 3.2.2-38- higher education]
- Number of host country individuals trained as a result of USG investments involving higher education institutions [custom]
- Number of host country individuals completing technical certificates or degrees as a result of USG investments (total, field of study) [custom]
- Number of host country individuals receiving USG-funded scholarships to attend higher education institutions (total, in-country only, U.S.-based study) [custom]
- Number of host country individuals completing USG-funded exchange programs conducted through higher education programs [custom]

I.9 AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

This award is authorized in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. For non-U.S. organizations, the Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients will apply. 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 700 will apply to subawards to U.S. institutions of higher education, hospitals and other non-profit organizations, and to U.S. commercial organizations.

SECTION II – FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. ESTIMATE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE AND NUMBER OF AWARDS CONTEMPLATED

USAID's LAC/RSD office will award one cooperative agreement. The estimated total amount of the program is $35 million over a five-year period.

2. START DATE AND PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

Activities pursuant to this RFA will be for a five-year period. The estimated start date is on or about September 2015.

3. TYPE OF AWARD AND SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

USAID plans to award one cooperative agreement pursuant to this RFA. In accordance with ADS 303.3.11, it is understood and agreed that USAID will be substantially involved during the performance of this cooperative agreement as follows:

- Approval of recipient implementation plans, including the strategic plan and annual implementation/work plans;
- Approval of specified key personnel and changes in key personnel;
- Approval of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan; the M&E plan will be revised as appropriate on an ongoing basis in collaboration with USAID;
- Agency and recipient collaboration and joint participation on program implementation, including but not limited to:
    - participation on steering, executive, and/or advisory committees that provide overall guidance and monitor implementation, and collaborative involvement in selection of members;
    - direction and/or redirection of activities specified in the program description due to priorities and guidance as well as interrelationships with other programs; the recipient will coordinate closely with USAID to ensure that all USAID-supported education activities in the host countries are working toward common objectives.
- Prior review and approval of all sub-awards under this Agreement, without which the sub-award shall not be executed. A sub-award will not be considered approved until the organization has been identified and the detailed budget has been accepted by USAID.

The Government may make an award on the basis of initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application must contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The Government reserves the right (but is not under obligation to do so), however, to enter into discussions with the apparently successful applicant in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the program description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

Neither financial data submitted with an application nor representations concerning facilities or financing, will form a part of the resulting agreement(s).

The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed award may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed cooperative agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

SECTION III – ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. APPLICANTS

USAID encourages applications from potential new partners. Potential partners include, but are not necessarily limited to: private voluntary organizations, foundations, colleges and universities, civic groups, faith-based and community institutions, private businesses and associations, regional organizations, philanthropic organizations, and advocacy groups.

USAID will not accept applications from individuals.

2. COST SHARE

The target cost share for this RFA is 35 percent of the USAID-funded amount – the minimum acceptable cost share is 20 percent. USAID endorses cost-sharing as an important principle in USAID-recipient relationships. Applicants that do not meet the minimum cost share (20%) will be disqualified from review. In addition, the Agreement Officer and/or negotiator can consider cost share under 'cost-effectiveness' when evaluating the apparently successful applicant's cost proposal. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide detailed explanations of cost-share in the budget notes of their applications.

Cost share contributions must be supported by adequate documentation, be allowable under the applicable cost principles and meet the criteria set forth in 2 CFR 200.306. Examples of cost sharing contributions include volunteer services provided by professional and technical personnel, un-recovered indirect costs, private sector contributions, and reduction of tuition fees or other fees by training institutions for scholarship recipients. Funds that are paid by the Federal Government through another source may **not** be used by an organization in cost share calculations (see 2 CFR 200.306). Cost share contributions must be reported on a periodic basis on payment forms, and USAID has the right to reduce its share of funding if the cost share reported is less than the agreed upon percentage or amount contained in the award. Finally, if a difference remains after an award has expired; the recipient may be required to refund the difference to USAID.

3. APPLICATIONS

Organizations may submit only one application in response to this RFA.

4. PROHIBITION AGAINST PROFIT

Potential for-profit applicants should note that, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.400(g), profit, which is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs, is not an allowable cost for recipients of USAID assistance awards, and cannot be part of the project budget. Prohibitions against profit include the following:

a. Regulatory Prohibition Against Profit. In accordance with 22 CFR 226.81, "Prohibition Against Profit," profit, which is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs, is not allowed for recipients of USAID assistance awards. The language in the regulation specifically excludes profit under USAID assistance agreements for commercial organizations. While 22 CFR 226 is specific to U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), its principles are more broadly applicable and the USAID standard provisions for non-U.S. NGOs include the prohibition against profit for recipients and subrecipients.

b. Application of the Prohibition to Subawards. The prohibition against profit in 22 CFR 226 applies to subawards. 22 CFR 226.5 states that, unless specifically excluded, all requirements applying to recipients also apply to subrecipients if they meet the definition of "recipients". As the definition of "recipient" in 22 CFR 226 includes commercial organizations, it is clear that for-profit firms are also subject to this prohibition when performing under a subaward of USAID assistance.

c. Procurements are Excluded from the Prohibition. The prohibition against profit does not apply to procurement contracts (acquisition) made under the assistance instrument when the recipient procures goods and services in accordance with 22 CFR 226.40 to 48. The recipient may pay a fair and reasonable profit to contractors providing it with goods or services.

SECTION IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. USAID POINTS OF CONTACT

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2. CONTENT AND FORMAT OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

For the purposes of this RFA, the term applicant is used to refer to the prime. The application received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Applications that are incomplete or not directly responsive to the terms, conditions, specifications, and clauses of this RFA may be categorized as non-responsive and eliminated from further consideration.

The application must be submitted electronically in two separate volumes as follows:

- Volume 1: Technical Application **(30 page limit)**
- Volume 2: Cost / Business Application (no page limit)

The application must be prepared according to the structural format set forth below.

Applications must be prepared in English. Applications in any other language must be treated as non-responsive and eliminated from further consideration.

The application must be specific, complete and concise. The application must demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program.

The applicant must retain for its records a full copy of its application to include all accompanying enclosures. Erasures or other changes must be initialed by the person signing the application.

All applicants must submit the application using the SF-424 series, which includes the following:

- SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-construction Programs
- SF-424B, Assurances – Non-construction Programs

The program described in Section I above includes non-construction elements. Therefore, these mandatory forms for non-construction programs must be completed. Costs to non-construction activities must be included on the SF-424A.

3. DUNS & SAM

All applicants must:

- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application - and 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.
- Provide a valid Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number

USAID may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award.

4. SUBMISSION DATE

Applications must be submitted no later than the date indicated on the cover page of this RFA to the email address indicated in the cover letter accompanying this paper. Late applications will only be considered for award if the Agreement Officer determines it is in the Government's interest.

5. INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED WITH INITIAL APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The following information is **NOT** required to be submitted with applicants' initial application submission under this RFA, but **will be required by the apparently successful applicant** prior to actual award. The apparently successful applicant should only submit the following documentation when specifically requested and required by USAID:

- **Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of Recipient:** Applicants may view the current Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Recipient in ADS 303: http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mav (Parts I-IV). These include the following:
  - Assurance of Compliance with Laws and Regulations Governing Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs (This assurance applies to Non-U.S. organizations, if any part of the program will be undertaken in the United States);
  - Certification Regarding Lobbying (22 CFR 227);
  - Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers for Covered Countries and Individuals (ADS 206, Prohibition of Assistance to Drug Traffickers);
  - Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing;
  - Certification of Recipient;
  - A signed copy of Key Individual Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking, (ADS 206.3.10) when applicable;
  - A signed copy of Participant Certification Narcotics Offenses and Drug Trafficking (ADS 206.3.10) when applicable;
  - Other Statements of Recipients.
    - Authorized Individuals
    - Taxpayer Identification Number
    - Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number
    - Letter of Credit (LOC) Number
    - Other statements as applicable
- **Branding Strategy and Marking Plan:** The Solicitation Standard Provisions for the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan are provided in Annex 2. Applicants may also view the provisions in ADS 303: http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mav (Part V). The apparently successful applicant should include any estimated USAID branding and marking costs in its final budget.

6. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Technical and cost applications must be submitted under separate cover. Unnecessarily elaborate brochures or other presentations beyond those sufficient to present a complete and effective application in response to this RFA are not desired and may be construed as a lack of cost consciousness. Elaborate art work, and expensive visual and other presentational aids are neither necessary nor desired.

Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant's risk.

The technical application will be the most important component for consideration in the evaluation and awarding process. It must demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. Therefore, it must be specific, complete, and concisely-presented. It must take into account the detailed “Instructions” provided in this section and the technical evaluation criteria specified in Section V. It must be arranged in the order of the technical evaluation criteria.

APPLICATION CONTENTS:

Volume 1: Technical Application

Format:

a) Technical Application
   1. Cover Page
   2. Table of Contents
   3. Executive Summary (no more than 2 pages)
   4. Technical Approach (no more than 12 pages)
   5. Key Personnel and Staffing Plan (no more than 13 pages)
   6. Management Structure and Organizational Capacity (no more than 3 pages)
   7. Annexes
      a. Annex A – Will consist of two Work Plans (15 pages)
         i. Draft Year One Work Plan;
         ii. and Life-of-Project Work Plan.
      b. Annex B, Illustrative Indicators with Targets (1 page)
      c. Annex C – Key Personnel Resumes (15-25 pages, depending on number of key personnel; no more than 5 pages per individual, including up to 3-page resume and 1-page letter of intent, and 1-page references)
      d. Annex D – Other Personnel Resumes (12 pages, depending on number of other personnel; no more than 4 pages per individual, including up to 2-page resume, 1-page letter of intent, and 1 page references)
      e. Annex E – Management Chart (1 page)

b) The technical application is limited to 30 pages. Not included in the 30-page limitation are the following:
   - Cover Page
   - Table of Contents
   - Annexes (however, note page limitations on individual annexes)

c) The technical application must be submitted as a single PDF document. It must be formatted for 8-1/2 by 11 inch paper, Times New Roman 12, and have one inch margins on the top, bottom and both sides. The font size for tables and figures can be 8 point or larger. Printable graphics can be imbedded inside text files. The size/family for graphics has the same limitations as text.

Contents:

The technical application may not exceed 30 pages in length and must be submitted in PDF**.** A page in the Technical Application that contains a table, chart, graph, etc., not otherwise excluded below, is subject to the page limitation. The technical application must contain only the requested information and must be organized and presented in the following order for ease of reviewing by the Technical Evaluation Committee.

1. Cover Page (1 page)

The cover page should be one (1) page indicating the following:

- Proposed program title
- RFA number
- Name of applicant
- Total proposed funding level and estimated cost share/match (if applicable)
- Applicant contact person, address, telephone and fax.

2. Table of Contents (must not exceed 2 pages):

The table of contents must not exceed two (2) pages. List all parts of the technical application with page numbers and attachments. An acronym list may be included, if needed.

3. Executive Summary (must not exceed 2 pages)

The executive summary must not exceed two (2) pages. The executive summary must summarize the key elements of the applicant's technical approach, implementation plan, management approach, organizational capacity, and any other factors presented in the technical application that merit upfront discussion. All information presented in the executive summary must be elaborated elsewhere within the application; no information presented herein should be absent from or contradicted elsewhere in the application.

4. Technical Approach (must not exceed 12 pages):

This section must describe how the Applicant intends to achieve each result of the program described in section I. Applicant must provide a clear, logical, detailed explanation of the plans to achieve each result and intermediate result described in section I.7, presented in the order of the results. Applicants should not merely repeat what is already described in the RFA, but must describe how they propose to achieve the goal and the results of the program, detailing the strategic approach and methodology planned. In doing so, applicant must address how the cross-cutting implementation requirements described in section I.6 will be integrated to achievement of each result. Applicant must also include illustrative activities for each result.

In describing their approach to achieving each result and intermediate result, applicants must explicitly and adequately address the following points:

- Target countries: Applicant must describe a process by which countries for implementation will be selected from the list of target countries, and explain which countries are of most interest and why. If proposing target countries for discussion with USAID, applicant should explain the rationale for their selection. Applicants planning to phase startup of work in different countries to begin in different years must explain the process for selection of the initial and out-year countries.

- Leveraging resources: Applicant must propose approaches that leverage existing structures and services— both public and private—to maximize resources. Applicants are encouraged to describe how their technical approach will incorporate themes such as private sector engagement, linkages with academic institutions, innovation and technology, and sustainability.
- Private sector alliances: Applicant must include plans to attract the participation and collaboration of the private sector at multiple levels of engagement, and express a clear strategy to build the capacity of local organizations working in the field of workforce development. Applicant should include plans for engaging the private sector with a specific set of interventions designed to forge closer relationships with educators and employers.
- Model for linkages with academic institutions: Applicant must describe the linkages model between target academic units or departments, U.S. partners, and/or other LAC academic partners. Include how partners will be identified, how linkages will be structured, and types of collaboration that will be used to build capacity. Applicants must incorporate lessons learned from other higher education/workforce development programs and higher education institutional development activities, and a strategy for drawing on this knowledge in the proposed approach.
- Reaching target populations: Applicants must demonstrate a clear understanding of the major challenges to equitable access and participation in tertiary education and the labor market for disadvantaged groups. Activities proposed must demonstrate how they will reduce barriers to equitable access to education, ensure employment in skilled jobs and empower traditionally disadvantaged individuals and the methodologies to target and reach intended beneficiaries. They must also demonstrate targeting methodologies for reaching intended beneficiaries.
- Sustainability and scale: A discussion on sustainability to address major resource constraints (human, financial, and technological) should clearly explain how results of the investments being made under this award will be perpetuated after the award has ended. Where possible, applicants may discuss how the activity will harness technology to increase impact and reach of education and training institutions to serve disadvantaged populations, demonstrating an understanding of the level of technology and innovation in education systems in Central America and the Caribbean as well as the use of information technology by the various stakeholders.

Additionally a draft year one implementation plan and a life-of-project implementation plan must be provided in Annex A, and illustrative indicators with targets shall be provided in Annex B.

5. Key Personnel and Staffing Plan (must not exceed 13 pages)

The key personnel and staffing plan section must address the following:

- Key Personnel: The applicant must propose a minimum of three and no more than five key personnel positions, including the chief of party/project director position with responsibility for direct communication with USAID. Applicant must provide:
  - A coherent, concise rationale for the staffing structure including how the delineated key personnel positions are appropriate for this effort.

  - Position descriptions, including, at a minimum, the proposed position title, a short summary of the required skills, experience, education, and other required qualifications, and the relationship to other key personnel positions and the Applicant's headquarters. The proposed position descriptions must reflect a clear understanding of the technical and management skills necessary to achieve the goal and results specified in the program description.
  - Proposed candidates for each position, including a brief biographical sketch for each candidate that demonstrates how the candidate meets or exceeds the position description requirements.
  - For each key personnel position proposed, the position description must not exceed one page and biographical sketch must not exceed one page. Position descriptions and biographical sketches and position descriptions will be included in the main body of the proposal (position description followed by biographical sketch).

- Staffing plan: Applicant must summarize the staffing plan, including other important personnel positions on the project that, while not key personnel, are integral to successful implementation. Applicant should describe how regional and country-level specialists, experts, and technical assistance providers will be involved in activities. To the extent possible, applicant should identify specific personnel for positions. A position description and biographical sketch, together, combined, must not exceed one page for each proposed professional staff.

- Key personnel resumes, letters of intention and references must be provided in Annex B and do not count toward the section page limit.

- Resumes for up to three other personnel must be provided in Annex C and do not count toward the section page limit.

6. Management Structure and Organizational Capacity (must not exceed 3 pages)

The management structure and organizational capacity and section must, at a minimum, address the following:

- Management Structure: Describe the management structure of the program, including functions, roles, and responsibilities; relationships to any proposed sub-awardees and relative levels of responsibility; and functions, roles and responsibilities of any advisory committees or similar bodies. Structure must include a clear point of contact for USAID. If an applicant proposes a consortium approach and/or sub-awards, applicant should describe the formal relationships between organizations and the differing capabilities required to meet the requirements set forth in section I of the RFA. It is important for the applicant to carefully describe how this large and complex regional program will be structured within and across countries.

- A management chart must be included and may be provided in annex D.

- Organizational Capacity: Describe the technical, managerial and organizational expertise (or ability to obtain it) of the applicant and proposed sub-awardee(s) to ensure successful implementation of the program, including (but not limited to) experience working in the relevant LAC countries, partnering to build capacity of tertiary workforce development institutions and deliver scholarships, and reaching the targeted beneficiary populations.

7. **Annexes (do not count toward 30 page limit; however, note page limitations for individual annexes)**

   a. **Annex A, Draft Implementation Plans (must not exceed 15 pages)**
   As annex A, applicant must submit:
      - A draft year 1 detailed work plan defining the expected activities and timeline for all major tasks; the plan should a narrative as well as a timeline or Gantt chart (10 pages); and
      - A general life-of-project work plan, including narrative and timeline/Gantt chart (5 pages).

   b. **Annex B, Illustrative Indicators with Targets (must not exceed 1 page)**
   As annex B, applicant must provide a table with the following information:
      - For each required indicator identified in section I.8 of the RFA, provide illustrative annual (year-by-year) and life-of-project targets.
      - Additionally, select one illustrative indicators per intermediate result and provide illustrative annual (year-by-year) and life-of-project targets. Applicant may identify appropriate indicators from the "other possible indicators" listed in section I.8 or may propose others that better communicate the expected accomplishments of the proposed activities.

   c. **Annex C, Key Personnel (must not exceed 15-25 pages, depending on number of key personnel; no more than 5 pages per individual, including up to 3-page resume, 1-page letter of intent, and 1-page references)**
   Applicant should submit, for each key proposed personnel position, in the same order the positions are discussed:
      - Resume/curriculum vitae (must not exceed 3 pages per individual). The resume must be presented in a standard format determined by the Applicant and must not exceed 3 pages in length. Experience of proposed personnel must be in chronological order starting with the most recent experience.
      - Letter of intention (must not exceed 1 page per individual). A written and signed letter of intention from the proposed key personnel should immediately follow the resume and state: (a) availability to serve in the stated position, in terms of the number of days after award; and (b) intention to serve for a specified duration.
      - References (1 page): Three references (including name, title, telephone number, and email) must be provided for each proposed key personnel, immediately following the individual's resume and letter of intention.

   d. **Annex D, Other Personnel (must not exceed 12 pages, depending on number of other personnel; no more than 4 pages per individual, including up to 2-page resume, 1-page letter of intent, and 1 page references)**
   Applicant must include resumes and letters of intention for up to three other personnel considered integral to the project. Resumes must be provided in the same order as discussed on the staffing plan.
      - Resume/curriculum vitae (must not exceed 2 pages per individual). The resume must be presented in a standard format determined by the Applicant and must not exceed 2 pages in length. Experience of proposed personnel must be in chronological order starting with the most recent experience.
      - Letter of intention (must not exceed 1 page per individual). A written and signed letter of intention from the proposed other personnel should immediately follow the

resume and state: (a) availability to serve in the stated position, in terms of the number of days after award; and (b) intention to serve for a specified duration.

- References (1 page): Three references (including name, title, telephone number, and email) must be provided for each proposed other personnel, immediately following the individual's resume and letter of intention.

e. Annex E, Management Chart (shall not exceed 1 page)
Applicant must provide a chart that details the management structure and lines of reporting and communication, including key personnel, sub-awardees and/or connections to local institutions, private sector, or other actors.

Volume 2: Cost Application

The Cost or Business Application is to be submitted under separate cover from the technical application. Certain documents are required to be submitted by an applicant in order for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. However, it is USAID policy not to burden applicants with undue reporting requirements if that information is readily available through other sources.

The following sections describe the documentation that applicants for Assistance awards must submit to USAID with their cost proposal. While there is no page limit for this portion, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary detail to address the following:

Please note: summary and annual budgets must be submitted in **MS Excel** software and budget narratives are submitted in MS Word or PDF. The cost application must also include whatever schedules are necessary to adequately support and explain proposed costs, including the breakdown of all costs according to each partner organization involved in the program.

1. The cost volume of the application must include a budget with an accompanying budget narrative which provides in detail the total proposed costs for implementation of the program described in this RFA. The budget must be submitted using the Face Sheet-Cost Volume of Application (OMB Standard Form 424) and the Budget Summary (OMB Standard Form 424A), which can be downloaded from the Grants.gov web site, http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html.

2. Budget Narrative - Include a budget with an accompanying narrative which provides in detail the total budget estimates for implementation of the program being proposed. The narrative must provide sufficient information to adequately support and explain all proposed costs, i.e., the actual cost basis for the line items in the detailed budget. This narrative must be a part of the SF-424A form. Cost narrative must include, but is not limited to, the following:

   - **Salary and Wages -** Direct salaries and wages must be proposed in accordance with the organization's personnel policies.

   - **Fringe Benefits -** If the organization has a fringe benefit rate that has been approved by an agency of the Government, such rate must be used and evidence of its approval must be provided. If the apparently successful applicant has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA) a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) may be used indefinitely. As described in 2 CFR 200.414(f), costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

   - **Travel and Transportation -** The application must indicate the estimated number of trips, domestic and international, and the estimated costs. Specify the origin and destination for each proposed trip, duration of travel, and number of individuals traveling. *Per diem* should be based on the applicant's normal travel policies; (applicants may however choose to refer to the Federal Standardized Travel Regulations for cost estimates).

- **Other Direct Costs (ODCs) -** This includes communications, report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, insurance (other than insurance included in the applicant's fringe benefits), equipment (procurement plan for commodities), branding/marking supplies, etc. The narrative must provide a breakdown and support for all other direct costs.
- **Seminars and Conferences -** The application must indicate the subject, venue, and duration of proposed conferences and seminars and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs.
- **Training Costs -** If there are any training costs to be charged to this Agreement, they must be clearly identified.
- **Indirect Costs -** Include the applicant's most recent **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement** (NICRA) from the cognizant Government Audit Agency stating the latest audited indirect cost rates, the base to which such rates are applied and the method of application. If the apparently successful applicant has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA) a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) may be used indefinitely. As described in 2 CFR 200.414(f), costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

As written above, the proposed budget must provide separate cost estimates for the management of the program (including program monitoring). Applicants must minimize their administrative and support costs for managing the project to maximize the funds available for project activities.

The cost/business portion of the application must describe procedures for financial reporting. Discuss the management information procedure you will employ to ensure accountability for the use of U.S. Government funds. Describe program budgeting, financial and related program reporting procedures.

Indicate if financial commitments were made among partners during the preparation of the application. Budgets must indicate the amounts committed to each member of the team. Letters of commitment from partners must be included (if available).

3. Completed and signed **"Certifications, Assurances, and other Statements of Applicant/Grantee."**

4. Evidence of Responsibility - USAID reserves the right to seek additional evidence of responsibility deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. The information submitted must substantiate that the Applicant:

   (i) Has adequate resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required to complete the program as described.
   b. Has the ability to comply with the assistance conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, nongovernmental and governmental.
   c. Has a satisfactory record of performance. Past relevant unsatisfactory performance is ordinarily sufficient to justify a finding of non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance.
   d. Has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics;
   e. Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations (e.g., EEO); and

f. Verification that the applicant and all subawardees are not excluded from the System for Award Management.

5. History of performance: The applicant must provide a list of all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs during the past three years. The reference information for these awards must include the performance location, award number (if available), a brief description of the work performed, and a point of contact list with current telephone numbers."

SECTION V – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. SELECTION CRITERIA

The criteria listed below are presented by major category, so that applicants will know which areas require emphasis in the preparation of the technical proposal. Applicants must note that these criteria serve as the standard against which all technical information will be evaluated, and serve to identify the significant matters that applicants must address. The technical and all other non-price/cost factors, when combined, are more important than cost/price.

a. Technical Approach (40 points)

- A clear and compelling overall vision for program, including a coherent, comprehensive, and realistic strategy to achieve the program goal and each result and intermediate result and support sustainability and scale. (15 points)
- Clear and realistic approach to selecting target countries and institutions and to capacity building of the target institutions that goes beyond a traditional supply-focused, institution-to-institution partnership model, builds on evidence of what works in providing market-relevant skills development and employment services to youth, and includes engagement of the private sector and other key stakeholders. (15 points)
- Clear and realistic plans for targeting and reaching intended beneficiaries and ensuring activities align with labor market demand and are sufficient to improve skills and increase employment opportunities. (10 points)

b. Draft Work Plans (10 points)

- Logical, realistic and adequate Year 1 implementation plan that clearly defines activities that lay a solid foundation for out years. (5 points)
- Logical, realistic and adequate Life-of-Project implementation plan that clearly and concisely shows how the program will achieve program goals and results (including intermediate results) and secure sustainability. (5 points)

c. Key Personnel and Staffing Plan (30 points)

- Key personnel and others proposed have the relevant qualification and experience, including management skills, education levels etc., for the positions for which they are proposed. (20 points)
- Staffing plan is appropriate to successful implementation of the program, including key personnel and other positions proposed. Incorporates local and regional experts and demonstrates effort to build capacity in the LAC region. (10 points)

d. Management Structure and Organizational Capacity (20 points)

- Management plan and organizational structure clearly demonstrate the ability to achieve the program results. (10 points)
- Applicant and its proposed sub-award(s) demonstrate the necessary technical, managerial and organizational expertise (or the ability to obtain it) to ensure successful implementation of the program, including but not limited to capacity for working in the relevant LAC countries,

partnering to strengthen tertiary workforce development organizations and deliver scholarships, and reaching the targeted beneficiaries. (10 points)

Following the evaluation of the Technical Application, the Cost Application of the Apparently Successful Applicant only will be evaluated for reasonableness, realism, allowability and allocability.

Other Factors To Be Considered

The Agreement Officer will perform a pre-award risk assessment in accordance with the principles established by USAID and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (see 2 CFR 200.205).

As per ADS 303.3.9 (dated 12/26/2014), a positive risk assessment means that the applicant possesses or has the ability to obtain the necessary management competence to plan and carry out the assistance program to be funded, and that the applicant will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided by USAID.

If USAID's review of the full application results in a recommendation for funding, then the organization and USAID will enter final discussions to ensure all pre-award requirements are met and significant grant terms are negotiated and agreed. The exact details will vary according to the circumstances pertaining to each application; however, the following are common areas that require discussion and agreement prior to award:

i) Payment terms;
ii) Procedures concerning administrative reporting and logistical requirements for the program including training components;
iii) Cost sharing terms, if applicable;
iv) Other award terms including audit, special provisions, and/or special award conditions.

Cost reasonableness will not be assigned a score but will be evaluated for cost reasonableness, allocability, and allowability. While cost may be a determining factor in the final award(s) decision, the technical merit of applications is substantially more important under this RFA. Consideration will be given to the applicant's understanding of the RFA requirements and consistency with the technical application.

2. COST SHARE

The target cost share for this RFA is 35 percent of the USAID-funded amount – the minimum acceptable cost share is 20 percent. As per ADS 303.3.10.3, cost share must be expressed as a dollar figure in the award budget rather than a percentage to assist in monitoring the amount.

As part of the analysis of the apparent successful Applicant’s proposed budget, the AO will review the applicant's proposed cost share contributions for cost realism and verify that the proposed contributions meet the standards set in 2 CFR 200.306 for U.S. Organizations or the Standard Provision “Cost Share” for Non-U.S. Organizations.

3. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Technical applications will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth above by a Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) comprised of USAID employees, and, if necessary, other U.S. Government representatives. The team of technical experts will review and score applications received in response to this RFA.

The cost application of the Apparently Successful Applicant only will be evaluated by the Agreement Officer on cost effectiveness and cost realism analysis. The Selection Committee Chair will validate the apparently successful Applicant's past performance reference information based on existing evaluations to the maximum extent possible in accordance with ADS 303.3.9. Award will be made to the responsible Applicant whose application offers the greatest value based on the criteria specified above. The final award decision is made, while considering the recommendations of the TEC, by the Agreement Officer.

The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either an Agreement signed by the Agreement Officer or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

The required format and content for the application are described in Section IV.

4. ANTICIPATED AWARD DATE

The anticipated award date is September 2015.

SECTION VI – FEDERAL AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. FEDERAL AWARD NOTICE

A notice of award signed by the Agreement Officer is the authorizing document for this RFA. The notice of award will be provided electronically to the applicant's point of contact listed in the application.

Notification will also be made electronically to unsuccessful applicants pursuant to ADS 303.3.7.1.b.

An award will be made only by the USAID Agreement Officer upon his/her signature to incur costs. He/she will only do so after making a positive responsibility determination that the applicant possesses, or has the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence in planning and carrying out assistance programs and that it will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided by USAID.

Prior to issuance of award, the apparently successful Applicant may be required to submit additional information on the organization and key individuals for vetting. For example, for those organizations that have not had previous grants or cooperative agreements with the U.S. Government, Articles of Incorporation or other documentation which substantiates the legal character of the entity will be requested. In such cases, issuance of an award is contingent on the timely receipt of the information requested and the successful completion of the vetting process.

The vetting process may include pre-award responsibility determination which will be conducted and will include an examination of the application's budget details to ensure it is a realistic financial expression of the proposed program and does not contain estimated costs which may be unreasonable or unable to be charged under the program. Staff salaries will be considered reasonable to the extent that they are comparable to that paid for similar work in the relevant labor market; salary history will not be used to determine the salary range for a particular job category.

2. REPORTING

Deliverable	Delivery Date
Post-Award Meeting	Within 20 days after award
Life of Agreement Strategic Plan	Due within 90 days after award
Initial Annual Work plan	Due within 90 days after award
Subsequent Annual Work plan	Due 30 days before the end of the fiscal year
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	Due within 90 days after award
Quarterly Progress Report	Due 30 days after the end of the reporting period
Annual Progress Report	Due 30 days after the end of the fiscal year; 4th quarter and annual reports can be combined
Accruals Report	Due 15 days before the end of the quarter
Draft Final Report	Due 30 days after end of award
Final Report	Due 90 days after end of award

USAID expects high quality reporting in English. Reports must be professionally executed, avoiding typos, grammatical errors, and language that may be deemed offensive to partners. Each of the reports must be submitted electronically and in hard copy [one (1) original]. Electronic versions of the reports must be submitted using Microsoft Word, Excel, or PowerPoint software.

As per Standard Mandatory Provisions for both U.S and Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations, the recipient will be required to:

- Provide submissions to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)
- Submit Datasets to the Development Data Library

Life of Agreement Strategic Plan: Within 90 days of award of the Cooperative Agreement, Recipient will be required to submit a Life of Agreement Strategic Plan for approval by the USAID AOR. The Plan must include a description of activities, timelines and budgets, and will identify any start up activities required, as well as critical paths and milestones for the entire period of the agreement. The Recipient must include all results and activities described in the Program Description, possible and proposed sub-awards, branding strategy and the management and programmatic tools proposed to implement and monitor the various components of the award, and measure leveraged resources. The approved Life of Agreement Strategic Plan will inform the development of the Annual Work Plans.

Initial Annual Work plan: Within 90 days of award of the Cooperative Agreement, Recipient will submit for USAID AOR approval its first Annual Work Plan covering the period from award date through the first year of the agreement.

Subsequent Annual Work plans: Recipient must submit annual work plans for the second, third and fourth-year of program implementation 30 days before the end of the fiscal year. These work plans will be reviewed and approved by USAID.

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: Within 90 days of award, Recipient will submit a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for USAID's approval. Program M&E Plans will contain the performance indicators that the Recipient proposes to use to objectively measure progress towards achieving the goal and each of the results described in the Program Description, with definition and unit of measure, as well as baselines and targets. The Recipient must consider data quality issues for all indicators reported to USAID. The Recipient must conduct Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) for all required indicators. The DQAs must be conducted as soon as the program is implemented and updated at least every three years. These DQAs must be attached to the M&E Plan once completed.

Quarterly Progress Reports: Quarterly progress reports must be submitted on a quarterly basis, using the standard USAID fiscal quarters (i.e. October-December, January-March, April-June, and July-September). Quarterly reports must be due 30 days after the reporting period.

Annual Progress Reports: Annual progress reports must be submitted on an annual basis, 30 days after the end of the fiscal year. If approved by the AOR, 4th quarter progress reports and the annual reports maybe combined to reduce the reporting burden at the end of the fiscal year.

Accruals Reports: Accruals reports must be submitted to the AOR 15 days before the end of the quarter. The estimated accrual report must include the following information, in a format to be provided by USAID: Total amount obligated; Total amount invoiced for; and Total amount expended but not yet invoiced.

Final Report: A draft Final Performance Report is due 30 calendar days after the expiration or termination of the award. The final and AOR-approved Final Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days of the expiration or termination of the award.

Quarterly performance reports and the final performance report must generally contain brief information on each of the following:

- A comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives established for the period. Whenever appropriate and the output of activities can be readily quantified, such quantitative data must be related to cost data for computation of unit costs.
- Reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate, and corrective actions that have been taken/are planned.
- Other pertinent information, including actual performance indicator data that is due during the reporting period and, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.
- Challenges, opportunities, unexpected outcomes, and learning.
- A Gantt chart or similar project management tool to order activity milestones, outputs, and outcomes in a time sequential manner showing dependency.

3. STANDARD PROVISIONS

The award includes the applicable standard provision and any approved deviations from the Standard Provisions (no deviations are currently contemplated to the standard provision for the cooperative agreement(s) contemplated by this RFA). For U.S. organizations, 2 CFR 700, 2 CFR 200, and ADS 303maa, Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental Organizations are applicable. For non-U.S. organizations, ADS 303mab, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations will apply.

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.
        a) USAID prefers to have the “USAID Identity,” comprised of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline “from the American people” as found on the USAID Web site at transition.usaid.gov/branding, included as part of the program or project name.
        b) 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. It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the

USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.
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.

c) 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.

(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.

a) Describe the main program message.

b) Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.

c) 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."

d) Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.

(5) Information on any direct involvement from 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 consider the Branding Strategy's adequacy in the award criteria. The Branding Strategy 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 Branding Strategy will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement.

(END OF PROVISION)

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://transition.usaid.gov/branding.

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:

a) Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature;

b) Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audio-visual productions, public service announcements, Web sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID;

c) Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs; and

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

e) 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:

a) The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;

b) The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;

c) When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;

d) What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID identity, and

e) 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:

a) 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 Strategic 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.

b) 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.

c) 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.

d) Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.

e) Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.

f) 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.

g) 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 in the award criteria, and will approve and 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 PROVISION)

Limiting Construction Activities (AUGUST 2013)

a) Construction is not eligible for reimbursement under this award unless specifically identified in paragraph d) below**.**

b) Construction means —construction, alteration, or repair (including dredging and excavation) of buildings, structures, or other real property and includes, without limitation, improvements, renovation, alteration and refurbishment. The term includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures.

c) Agreement Officers will not approve any subawards or procurements by recipients for construction activities that are not listed in paragraph d) below. USAID will reimburse allowable costs for only the construction activities listed in this provision not to exceed the amount specified in the construction line item of the award budget. The recipient must receive prior written approval from the AO to transfer funds allotted for construction activities to other cost categories, or vice versa.

d) Description: ***Construction is not eligible for reimbursement under this award.***

e) The recipient must include this provision in all subawards and procurements and make vendors providing services under this award and subrecipients aware of the restrictions of this provision.

[End of Provision]

USAID Implementing Partner Notices (IPN) Portal for Assistance (July 2014)

(a) Definitions

"USAID Implementing Partner Notices (IPN) Portal for Assistance ("IPN Portal)" means the single point where USAID posts proposed universal bilateral amendments for USAID awards, which can be accessed electronically by registered USAID recipients. The IPN Portal is located at **https://sites.google.com/site/usaidipnforassistance/**. Universal amendments are those which affect all assistance awards or a designated class of awards as specified in each amendment by the IPN Portal Administrator.

"IPN Portal Administrator" means the USAID official designated by the Director, M/OAA, who has overall responsibility for managing the USAID Implementing Partner Notices Portal for Assistance.

"Universal bilateral amendment" means those amendments with revisions or new requirements or provisions that affect all awards or a designated class of awards, as specified in the Agency notification of such revisions or new requirements.

(b) By submission of an application and execution of an award, the Applicant/Recipient acknowledges the requirement to:

(1) Register with the IPN Portal if awarded an assistance award resulting from this solicitation, and
(2) Receive universal bilateral amendments to this award and general notices via the IPN Portal.

(c) Procedure to register for notifications.

Go to **https://sites.google.com/site/usaidipnforassistance/** and click the "Register" button at the top of the page. Recipient representatives must use their official organization email address when subscribing, not personal email addresses.

(d) Processing of IPN Portal Amendments

The Recipient may access the IPN Portal at any time to review all IPN Portal amendments; however, the system will also notify the Recipient by email when the USAID IPN Portal Administrator posts a universal bilateral amendment for Recipient's review and signature. Proposed USAID IPN Portal amendments distributed via the IPN Portal are applicable to all awards, unless otherwise noted in the proposed amendment.

Within 15 calendar days from receipt of the notification email from the IPN Portal, the Recipient must do one of the following:

(1) (a) verify applicability of the proposed amendment for their award(s) per the instructions provided with each amendment; (b) download the amendment and incorporate the following information on the amendment form: award number, organization name, and organization mailing address as it appears in the basic award; (c) sign the hardcopy version; and (d) send the signed amendment (by email or hardcopy) to the AO for signature. The Recipient must not incorporate any other changes to the IPN Portal amendment. Bilateral amendments provided through the IPN Portal are not effective until the both the Recipient and the AO sign the amendment;
(2) Notify the AO in writing if the amendment requires negotiation of additional changes to terms and conditions of the award; or
(3) Notify the AO that the Recipient declines to sign the amendment.

Within 30 calendar days of receipt of a signed amendment from the Recipient, the AO must provide the fully executed amendment to the Recipient or initiate discussions with the Recipient.

[End of Provision]

4. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

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 Automated Directives System (ADS) Parts 201.5.10g and 204 (*http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ADS/200/*), which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. Applicant environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this RFA.

In addition, the recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

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.")

The recipient must comply with the provisions of LAC-IEE-15-13 (provided in Annex 6 and summarized below). The environmental compliance provisions are as follows:

A **Categorical Exclusion** is issued to the LAC Regional Higher Education Program; all activities fall into the following categories according to 22 CFR 216.2(c) (2):

- (i) Education, technical assistance or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.);
- (iii) Analysis, studies, academic or research workshops and meetings;
- (v) Document and information transfers;
- (xiv) Studies, projects or programs intended to develop the capability of recipient countries to engage in development planning, except to the extent designed to result in activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.).

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.

SECTION VII – FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

1. USAID AGENCY CONTACTS

Abdulaziz A. Yousuf	Sharon M. Baker	Georgia G. Fuller
Agreement Specialist	**Agreement Officer**	**Supervisory Agreement Officer**
USAID, M/OAA/RM/LEMO	USAID, M/OAA/RM/LEMO	USAID, M/OAA/RM/LEMO
State Annex 44, 506-C	State Annex 44, 506-E	State Annex 44
301 4th Street, SW	301 4th Street, SW	301 4th Street, SW
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Tel.: 202 567 4203	Tel.: 202 567 5809	Tel.: 202 567 5033
ayousuf@usaid.gov	shbaker@usaid.gov	gfuller@usaid.gov

SECTION VIII – OTHER INFORMATION

1. FUNDING

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

2. RESTRICTION ON PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Applicants who include data they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purposes should:

- Mark the title page with the following legend: "This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed - in whole or in part - for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this applicant as a result of - or in connection with - the submission of this data, the U.S. Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting grant. 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 pages___."; and
- Mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following legend: "Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

3. OTHER

- The LAC Regional Workforce Development program to be implemented under this RFA builds on the Scholarships for Education and Economic Development (SEED) and its precursor, the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS), while broadening and refocusing the scope of activities. SEED and CASS provided two-year technical training programs for youth and six- and twelve-month professional development programs (the majority of latter for teachers). Evaluations of these programs are available in annex 1, 2, and 3; the evaluation in annex 1 is also available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacx232.pdf.

- The program was announced by President Obama in April 2015 as part of slate of new U.S. government programs to support at-risk youth in the region. The other programs include:
  - A new Department of Labor program in El Salvador and Honduras that will build partnerships with employers to develop market-relevant skills training for at-risk youth
  - A new Millennium Challenge Corporation program in Guatemala under its threshold agreement that will improve the quality, equity, and relevance of secondary education to better prepare the country's diverse youth to succeed in the labor market, and support efforts to mobilize resources to increase public funding for education.
  - The Multilateral Investment Fund New Employment Opportunities Initiative, launched at the 2012 Summit of the Americas, will train one million youth in partnership with private sector organizations by 2022.

  For more information see the fact sheet at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/09/fact-sheet-president-s-young-leaders-americas-initiative-and-programs-su.