



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

RFA Issuance Date: April 30, 2015
Amendment Issuance Date: May 20, 2015
Closing Date: June 17, 2015

RFA-OAA-15-000011 – AMENDMENT 001

MODIFICATIONS/CHANGES:

1. Cover Page, replace application deadline with the following:

Applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 17, 2015

2. Page 15, SECTION I, I.7.2 Result 2: Equitable access for disadvantaged individuals to targeted fields increased, delete and replace with the following:

“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 that are being 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.”

3. Page 21, SECTION III, 2. COST SHARE, Replace the first paragraph only with the following:

“2. COST SHARE

The target cost share for this RFA is 30 percent of the USAID-funded amount – the minimum acceptable cost share is 15 percent. USAID endorses cost-sharing as an important principle in USAID-recipient relationships. Applicants that do not meet the minimum cost share (15%) 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.

4. Page 26, SECTION IV, Volume 1: Technical Application, Contents:, 1. Cover Page, bullet #4, delete and insert the following in lieu thereof:

- “Total proposed cost share/match (if applicable)”

5. Page 30, SECTION IV, Volume 2: Cost Application, 2. Budget Narrative, replace the first paragraph only with the following:

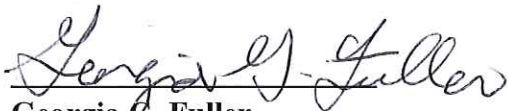
“2. Budget Narrative - Include a budget with an accompanying narrative which provides in detail the total budget estimates for implementation of the program being proposed. The narrative must provide sufficient information to adequately support and explain all proposed costs, i.e., the actual cost basis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

6. Page 31, Section IV, Volume 2: Cost Application, 3. Completed and signed “Certifications, Assurances, and other Statements of Applicant/Grantee.”, delete this line in its entirety.
7. Page 47, SECTION VIII, insert the following in its entirety:

“4. AUTHORIZED GEORGRAPHIC CODE

The authorized geographic code for this procurement of services is 935. In accordance with ADS 310.3.1.1 3), revised February 6, 2012, code 935 any area or country including the recipient country, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source. Please see ADS 310 for further details.”

ALL OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS REMAIN THE SAME


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

May 20, 2015
Date

Questions & Answers

1. Can USAID clarify if there is a time by which final proposals need to be submitted on July 11th? Or may we assume the submission time to be 11:59pm on July 11th?

Answer: Grants.gov does not provide for a deadline time, only date. Thus, applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 17, 2015.

2. Is this opportunity (RFA-OAA-15-000011) the “New Higher Education Activity” listed in the FY 15 3rd Quarter USAID Washington Competitive Forecast under the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean?

Answer: Yes.

3. Did the mission decide to combine the “Improved Workforce Tradables” (El Salvador) and the “Secondary Prevention Activity” (Honduras), opportunities listed on the 3rd quarter FY 15 USAID Mission Competitive Forecast, into the above referenced opportunity (RFA-OAA-15-000011)?

Answer: No. This procurement is issued by the Office of Regional Sustainable Development in the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean in Washington. It is unrelated to the opportunities listed in the Forecast by USAID/El Salvador and USAID/Honduras.

4. Is this opportunity (RFA-OAA-15-000011) one not previously highlighted in either the USAID Mission or Washington Competitive Forecasts?

Answer: This opportunity was listed as the “New Higher Education Activity” in the FY 15 3rd Quarter USAID Washington Competitive Forecast under the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. See also question 2.

5. Is there any repository on the internet where we could access “lessons of USAID’s 30 years of experience with offering similar scholarship programming in LAC”?

Answer: The evaluation reports provided in Annexes 1, 2, and 3 to the RFA document lessons from USAID’s 30 years of experience with offering scholarship programming in LAC. The design requirements, including those outlined in annex 5, are based on USAID’s experience with scholarship programming in LAC.

6. Is there any interest in an associate award under the INnovation for Agricultural Training and Education project?

Answer: No, there is no interest in an associate award under INnovation for Agricultural Training and Education. USAID intends to award a single cooperative agreement, and the INnovation for Agricultural Training and Education project does not have the needed scope to implement the full program described under the RFA. Organizations partnering to implement INnovation are welcome to apply.

7. Would USAID consider reducing the required cost share?

Answer: Yes. Please see modification #3 above.

The revised cost share requirement is a minimum of 15 percent cost share and a target of 30 percent. We realize that 30 percent may be ambitious, thus the minimum requirement is 15 percent. Applicant is to propose a cost share that they consider to be achievable. The cost share requirement supports three goals: increasing program scale; sustainability of program results and activities; and commitment of partners and sub-partners to success of the program activities. The regional program is anticipated to incorporate numerous partnerships, including (but not limited to) the creation of private sector alliances and the establishment of academic linkages.

8. Page 15, section I.7.2 Result 2: Equitable access for disadvantaged individuals to targeted fields increased states, “Local scholarships will be provided to study targeted fields at the workforce development institutions improved under Result 1”. Does this mean that USAID expects Result 1 to occur primarily or entirely before Result 2 activities?

Answer: No. Please see modification #2 above. USAID expects that Result 1 and 2 activities will be implemented at the same time and that the local scholarships will be provided to study at the institutions that are benefiting under result 1 in the targeted fields at the benefiting institutions. This sentence can be revised to state: Local scholarships will be provided to study targeted fields at the workforce development institutions that are being improved under Result 1.

9. Please clarify what is meant on page 30, Volume 2: Cost Application, bullet 2 that states, “This narrative must be a part of the SF-424A form”. SF-424A is a budget spreadsheet form (or online form) that does not have field for narrative descriptions of cost.

Answer: Please see modification #5 above. The sentence is modified to read, “This narrative must be consistent with information provided in the SF-424A.”

10. Please clarify if offeror should submit Certifications, Assurances, and other Statements of the Applicant/Grantee with the proposal or only after an offeror is the presumed awardee. Page 24 says these are not required with the proposal, but page 31 says they are.

Answer: Please see modification #6 above. Page 31, #3, deletes this sentence in its entirety. Certifications, Assurances, and other Statements of Applicant/Grantee are not required to be submitted as part of the initial application.

The Agreement Officer will request the Certifications, Assurances, and other Statements of Applicant/Grantee of the apparently successful applicant.

11. Kindly confirm that signed “Certifications, Assurances, and other Statements of Applicant/Grantee” are not requested with the application as is stated on page 24 of the RFA. Page 31 of the RFA states that they must be submitted.

Answer: See Question #10.

12. Page 33 on Selection Criteria, section a bullet 2 state, “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...”. Please describe the activities that are negatively referred to here as “supply-focused” and distinguish this from the activities requested in the RFA that are, in part, targeting education institutions, or, if you will, “education suppliers”?

Answer: While we recognize that the capacity building of target institutions addresses supply, USAID intends that the focus be on meeting labor market demand. USAID expects a range of activities that work with training and education institutions to bridge them to the demand side of the workforce development spectrum. Illustrative activities may include: strengthening the use of labor market demand assessment and analysis, establishing linkages with employers, integration of entrepreneurship curriculum and project-based work, developing partnerships that offer students work-study opportunities, career counseling and

other job intermediation services, and/or other interventions. Interventions may also extend outside of training and education institutions such as working with employers or job intermediation service providers, as necessary, in order to facilitate the transition from education to employment. Importantly, activities will be measured primarily in terms of increases in employability and employment, with capacity building indicators serving as intermediary measures to that overall goal.

13. Would USAID consider providing the number of target education and training institutions that applicants are expected to work with over the life of the project?

Answer: The number of target academic training units and institutions is to be determined by the applicant and will depend on the applicant's approach and ability to mobilize cost share, partnerships, and other resources as well as factors such as the labor market needs, local workforce development capacities, etc. USAID anticipates the recipient will work in at least three target countries as stated in section I.6.1 of the RFA, and that one or more target institutions will be selected in each country (section I.6.3). It would be acceptable to work with one institution per country or to work with multiple institutions.

14. Please clarify the number of target beneficiaries (secondary school graduates or those with an equivalent technical/accelerated learning degree) the program is to reach.

Answer: The number of target beneficiaries will depend on the applicant's technical approach and ability to mobilize cost share, partnerships, and other resources and is to be determined by the applicant. Applicants should consider numbers of target beneficiaries receiving improved education as a result of result 1 activities as well as those benefiting under result 2.

15. Would USAID consider replacing some percentage of the cost share with leverage?

Answer: No.

16. Can USAID confirm that the cost share requirement is in fact between 20-35%? Does USAID have a specific vision for how they see applicants achieving this high cost share requirement?

Answer: USAID has revised the cost share requirement to 15 percent with a target of 30 percent. See response to question 7. Based on similar higher education partnerships programs, potential cost share could include (but is not limited to): volunteer services provided by technical and professional personnel, other faculty and staff time, direct tuition reduction offered to participants, freezing annual tuition fee increases, waiving of entrance exam fees, staff costs and level of efforts of university ancillary and academic offices contributing directly to the support of program activities beyond routine student activities, cap on direct and indirect management costs, provision of physical space, contributions by private sector partners, host country government tuition reductions or program contributions, and unrecovered indirect costs. Please see 2 CFR 200.306 *Cost sharing or matching* for additional information.

17. Please confirm that the total proposed funding level and estimated cost share/match is to be included on the cover sheet of the technical proposal (page 26), as it is our understanding that the technical and cost proposals are to be kept totally separate.

Answer: Please see modification #4 above. Page 26, SECTION IV, Volume 1: Technical Application, Contents; 1. Cover Page, bullet #4, delete and insert the following in lieu thereof: "Total proposed cost share/match (if applicable)"

18. Is a monitoring and evaluation section required in the body of the proposal or as an annex?

Answer: USAID has not required a monitoring and evaluation plan as part of the application to this RFA, but rather will require its submission post-award. In lieu of including an elaborated M&E plan within the application, USAID requires a one-page table of illustrative indicators with targets as described in the Instructions to Applicant. This one page table is to be submitted as Annex B. See instructions for Annex B on page 29 of the RFA.

19. For the Cost Application, the RFA requests a History of Performance (page 32), in which 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". Given that applicants could have received a large volume (several hundred) of contracts, grants, cooperative agreements in that time period, we respectfully request the option of providing a list of ten relevant contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements received in the last three fiscal years.

Answer: Please provide the information as requested in the RFA.

20. Should applicants use the standard USAID short form for PPRs?

Answer: There is no standard form to be used. Provide the information in a format that is easily understandable.

21. What is the geographic code for this RFA?

Answer: Please see modification #7 above. Page 47, SECTION VIII, insert the following in its entirety:

"4. AUTHORIZED GEORGRAPHIC CODE

The authorized geographic code for this procurement of services is 935. In accordance with ADS 310.3.1.1 3), revised February 6, 2012, code 935 any area or country including the recipient country, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source. Please see ADS 310 for further details."

22. The RFA focuses on 2 to 3 year program delivery around existing academic institutions. Would USAID consider different structures of program delivery including modular structure, flexible entry/exit points, 4/6/12/24 months certifications of competencies, etc?

Answer: Yes. The focus is on tertiary-level technical training. However, there is flexibility as appropriate based on market demand and institutional capability to incorporate other structures of program delivery, such as modular structures,

flexible entry/exit points, and shorter-term certifications of competencies. USAID encourages the range of education, training, job intermediation services and other supports that increase access to workforce development services and that prepare a diverse workforce to enter into and succeed in all types of job profiles that are demanded by the labor market.

23. Would USAID kindly clarify that we may use project funds to pay stipends for trainees?

Answer: Yes. Project funds may be used to pay stipends for trainees.

24. Are secondary school drop-outs eligible for some programs which may not require secondary school graduation?

Answer: The focus of the LAC Regional Workforce Development program is intended to be tertiary-level technical training. We recognize that some of the local institutions that are beneficiaries under result 1 may not require secondary school graduation. Thus, secondary school non-completers may also benefit from the institutional capacity-building of the workforce development programs and may be counted as beneficiaries of the programs. USAID expects that the scholarship recipients will be secondary school graduates.

25. Is the expectation of USAID to follow the profile of beneficiaries used in the SEED scholarships program?

Answer: USAID's expectation for the profile of the targeted beneficiaries of the overall program under this RFA is explained on p.10, section I.6.4. USAID expects that beneficiaries of the scholarships component of the program under result 2 will fit this profile and show promise to serve as future leaders in the chosen fields (p.15, I.7.2). The profile is similar but not identical to the profile of beneficiaries required under the SEED program.

26. Could USAID provide more detail regarding the expectation to strengthen institutions that offer English Language Training?

Answer: From the preliminary assessments included in Annex 4 of the RFA, USAID anticipates that entities exist in each country with capacity to implement English language training. In some cases, the English language training capacity may exist within the technical training institution, and in others it may need to be offered in collaboration with another entity. When the English-language training capability exists within the institution, USAID anticipates that limited capacity building may be required to strengthen and integrate this component. When it exists only in an external entity, USAID expects that the Recipient would select the strongest English-language training institute to complement the technical training, requiring limited additional strengthening.

27. Could USAID provide more details about its expectation to work with national governments?

Answer: Some examples of working with national governments could include partnering to reduce tuition at a state institution, collaboration on provision of scholarships, establishing nationally-recognized credentials, identifying pathways to jobs (e.g., in the public sector), providing funds to support scholarships, and so on. In the

case of SEED, host country governments guaranteed teachers' jobs and continued to pay their salaries while the teachers participated in training programs. In one case, the government support scholarships for an additional cohort of teachers.

28. Per page 10, I.6.4 Target Beneficiaries, the RFA indicates that "About 50% of beneficiaries should be women and at least 50% should be from rural areas and secondary cities." Is USAID flexible to changing these percentages after the country assessments have been performed?

Answer: Yes. While USAID anticipates that these percentages will be realistic for the overall program, there is flexibility to adjust them based on the country assessments. USAID expects each country will have a different profile.

29. Is it USAID's intention to base project implementation in Honduras? If so, do recipients need to allocate a specific percentage of the budget to Honduras?

Answer: No. This will be a regional project, working in at least three countries. It is up to the implementer to decide where to base headquarters for the regional project implementation, keeping in mind that the USAID project manager will be based in Washington, D.C.

30. Page 26, point c states, "The technical application must be submitted as a single PDF document. It must be formatted for 8 ½ by 11 inch paper, Times New Roman 12, and have one inch margins on the top, bottom, and both sides". Would USAID please clarify if this guidance refers only to the technical narrative or the annexes as well?

Answer: The guidance is for the entire technical application – narrative and annexes.

31. The guidance for naming the technical application annexes is described one way on page 25 and another way on page 28. Please clarify which set of instructions applicants should use in preparing their applications.

Answer: The information on page 25 was intended to be descriptive. Please use the annex titles on page 28.

32. Per page 26, if we would like to include an Acronyms list, is it included in the 2 page limit for the Table of Contents or is it considered its own separate page?

Answer: The Table of Contents and Acronyms list together should fit within the 2 page limit.

33. Per page 29, for Annex A Draft Implementation Plans, the applicant is required to provide narrative in addition to the timeline/Gantt charts. Can USAID kindly clarify what they expect in the narrative sections?

Answer: The Gantt chart provides a shorthand visual summary of the workplan. The narrative should explain in more detail what is illustrated by the Gantt chart and how the activities fit together and lead to the results.

34. Per page 31 in the RFA, can USAID confirm that partner letters of commitment are to be included as an annex in the Cost/Business proposal?

Answer: The partner commitment letters should be included in the Cost/Business volume.

35. Is there a MB limit (per email) for the electronic submission?

Answer: Please limit each email to 5MB. If multiple emails are required, please ensure to number them, e.g., 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etc.

36. Is there a limit on the number of attachments (per email) for the electronic submission?

Answer: There are no limits to the number of attachments per email. However, as per the response to Question #35, please limit emails to 5MB.

37. On p. 10 in section I.6.2, the RFA states, "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." Can USAID confirm that the applicant is expected to conduct this assessment process after being awarded the cooperative agreement, not during the initial proposal process?

Answer: Yes. Applicants are not expected to conduct an assessment. The Recipient is expected to conduct the assessment after award.

38. On p. 10 in section I.6.3, the RFA states, "USAID expects that the Recipient will conduct an assessment process to identify the possible target institution or institutions in each target country...the process of selection of institutions needs to incorporate consultation with the local USAID Mission." Can USAID confirm that the applicant is expected to conduct this assessment process after being awarded the cooperative agreement, not during the initial proposal process?

Answer: Yes. Applicants are not expected to conduct an assessment. The Recipient is expected to conduct the assessment after award.

39. On p. 11 in section I.6.5, the RFA states, "[the] 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." Can USAID confirm that the applicant is expected to conduct this assessment process after being awarded the cooperative agreement, not during the initial proposal process?

Answer: Yes. Applicants are not expected to conduct an assessment. The Recipient is expected to conduct the assessment after award.

40. On p. 11, the RFA states, "...the 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." Can USAID confirm that the applicant is expected to identify these institutions after being awarded the cooperative agreement, not during the initial proposal process?

Answer: Yes. Applicants are not expected to identify the partner institutions to deliver the study abroad component. However applicants will want to address plans for how colleges will be identified after award.

41. Is there a possibility of receiving grant funding for smaller scopes of services? Our organization specializes in transition, education, workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and we have a multi-national company we'd love to feed our program graduates through, but a \$35M grant is well outside of our capabilities. Is there a way for us to receive funding under this grant or will this be awarded to a sole organization?

Answer: USAID plans to award a single cooperative agreement to implement the full program. An organization with capacity to implement a subset of the program as a sub-awardee may want to partner on an application with an organization that has the capability to serve as the prime organization and manage the overall project.