

USAID Guatemala Global Health Security Activity

NOFO: 72052025RFA00002

Questions & Answers Document

CONTRACTUAL QUESTIONS: (OAA)

1. Can USAID clarify the number of pages permitted for the CV of the Chief of Party? P.23 states 2 pages, while p.26 states 3 pages.

USAID Response: See response in question 3 below.

2. Can USAID please confirm CV page limits for key personnel? Page 23 states that CVs should be two pages each, whereas page 26 says they can be three pages maximum.

USAID Response: See response in question 3 below.

3. Can USAID clarify the maximum number of pages allowed for each CV? On page 23 of the RFA, it indicates that there are a maximum of 2 pages per CV. However, on page 26 of the RFA, a maximum of 3 pages per proposed key personnel candidate is allowed.

USAID Response: USAID confirms that the maximum number of pages permitted for the CVs of key personnel is 3.

4. Can USAID confirm that the Cover page, Executive Summary and table of contents are not included in the 25 page limit?

USAID Response: See response in question 5 below.

5. Section D2: Technical Application Format; pages 22-23. Can USAID confirm that the cover page counts toward the 25-page limit?

USAID Response: USAID confirms that the Cover Page, Executive Summary and Table of Contents are part of the 25 page limit.

6. Can USAID indicate the font size for text in tables. P.22 first states "Tables, however, must comply with the 12 point Calibri requirement; and later on the same page "Tables, graphs, and charts may use a smaller font, but not less than 8-point for any text"

USAID Response: See response in question 10 below.

7. Under Section D.1 on page 22, USAID states that "10 point font can be used for graphics and charts. Tables, however, must comply with the 12 point Calibri

requirement.” However, USAID also states under D.2 that “Tables, graphics, and charts may use a smaller font, but no less than 8-point for any text.” Can USAID please clarify font requirements for this application?

USAID Response: See response in question 10 below.

8. Section D1: General Content and Form of Application; page 22. The NOFO says “10 point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables, however, must comply with the 12-point Calibri requirement.” Section D2: Technical Application Format; page 22. The NOFO says “All text must be in Calibri, 12 font size, single spaced, 8 ½” x 11” letter size paper, with a minimum of 1-inch margins on all sides. Tables, graphs, and charts may use a smaller font, but not less than 8-point for any text.” Can USAID confirm that applicants may use a font smaller than 12-point for tables, graphs, and charts, but not less than 8-point for any text?

USAID Response: See response in question 10 below.

9. On page 22 there is conflicting language around font size for tables, graphs, charts and text boxes. Would USAID confirm that tables, graphs, charts and text boxes may use smaller but not less than 8-point font?

USAID Response: See response in question 10 below.

10. Can USAID clarify the font requirement for tables, charts and graphs? In the Preparation of Applications section on page 22, the RFA indicates that 10 point font can be used for graphs and charts but tables must comply with the 12point Calibri requirement. However, in the Technical Application format section, also on page 22 of the RFA, it indicates that tables, graphs, and charts may use a smaller font, but not less than 8-point for any text

USAID Response: USAID confirms that tables, graphs, and charts may use a smaller font, but not less than 8-point for any text. All other sections of the application must comply with the Calibri, 12 font size, single spaced, 8 ½” x 11” letter size paper, with a minimum of 1-inch margins on all sides.

11. Would USAID allow offerors to include the Organigram listed in Section D.2 on page 23 as an annex and not count it against the page limit?

USAID Response: No. USAID confirms that the organigram is part of the 25 page limit.

12. Could USAID consider applicants *with a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) that includes a fringe benefit rate (pg. 29)* may propose that associated cost in the “Fringe Benefits” category of the budget, as most USAID applications require (since fringe benefits, including a fringe rate per a NICRA, are a direct cost), rather than moving that cost to the “Indirect Charges” budget category?

USAID Response: Per 2 CFR 200.431 (c) Only the fringe benefits that will be charged directly to the project should be included in the “Fringe Benefits” budget section. If the organization has an agreement that covers indirect costs (like a general overhead rate), those fringe benefits should be listed under "Indirect Charges" instead of direct costs.

13. Could USAID consider permitting applicants to propose individual consultants in the “contractual” budget category, as most USAID applications require, instead of the “Other” budget category? Pg. 30

USAID Response: No. As instructed in Page No. 30 of the RFA, Applicants should not include the costs for individual consultants in the “Contractual” category; consultant costs should be included under “Other”.

14. Per 2 CFR 200.306(b)(6), would USAID be amenable to applicants proposing their cost-share as an annual lump sum amount inclusive of all sources (prime recipient and all sub-recipients), accompanied by a detailed cost share plan included in the prime recipient’s budget narrative? If yes, please confirm that the SF-424A would not require the components of cost share to be broken down into major cost categories (pg. 33), since Section C of the SF 424A does not provide a breakdown by major cost categories.

USAID Response: No, as part of the analysis of the applicant's proposed budget, USAID must 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.

15. Could USAID please provide the Guatemala Local Compensation Plan (FSN) to better assist in reviewing and evaluating sub-recipient proposed salaries?

USAID Response:

Professional Level	Annual Basic Rate March 2024	
	Minimum	Maximum
Professional (High Level)	Q485,441.32	Q947,591.26
Professional (Mid Level)	Q432,241.09	Q669,974.61

Professional (Low Level)	Q312,340.76	Q484,129.80
Administrative Staff	Q152,646.71	Q366,344.76
Clerical Staff	Q43,346.69	Q168,919.13

Professional (High level) - FSN 12-13

Professional (Mid level) - FSN 11

Professional (Low level) - FSN 10

Administrative staff - FSN 7-9

Clerical Staff - FSN 1-6

16. What is the maximum MB size for attachments for submission per email?

USAID Response: For USAID, the maximum file size for email attachments is 10 MB.

17. Would USAID consider excluding the Cover Page and Table of Contents from the 25 page limit of the Technical Application listed on page 23?

USAID Response: USAID confirms that the Cover Page, Executive Summary and Table of Contents are part of the 25 page limit.

18. Can USAID confirm that the offeror can include the NICRA-based fringe in the fringe section, as 424A instructions say that "Fringe benefits may be treated as a direct cost or indirect cost in accordance with the applicant's accounting practices"?

USAID Response: Yes, per 2 CFR 200.431 (c) The recipient or subrecipient must allocate fringe benefits to Federal awards and all other activities in a manner consistent with the pattern of benefits attributable to the individuals or group(s) of employees whose salaries and wages are chargeable to such Federal awards and other activities, and charged as direct or indirect costs following the recipient's or subrecipient's accounting practices.

19. In keeping with AAPD 24-06, and given that the NOFO references updated 2CFR200 regulations like the new de minimis ceiling and includes the Standard Provisions by reference as well on page 59, can USAID remove the Table of Required Standard Provisions on page 59-62 or update it using the updated Standard Provisions as now included in ADS 303?

USAID Response: USAID will review and update the Table of Required Standard Provisions accordingly and will include it in the amendment of the Addendum.

20. Can USAID confirm that budgeted costs should be exclusive of VAT?

USAID Response: Yes, the budgeted costs should exclude VAT.

21. Given that the release and expected solicitation closing date coincide with the end-of-year holiday season, we respectfully request that USAID consider extending the NOFO's application closing date by at least two weeks. This extension would enable the industry to engage more effectively with relevant stakeholders and indigenous partners, many of whom take extended breaks in December. By allowing additional time for these crucial consultations, we can ensure a more comprehensive application that fully addresses USAID's objectives.

USAID Response: See response in question 22 below.

22. Given the question submission deadline and time needed for review and response to these questions and upcoming US and Guatemalan holidays, would USAID consider a two week extension of the proposal submission deadline?

USAID Response: USAID will extend the deadline to submit applications from January 6, 2025, to January 14, 2025.

23. 16. Section B.2 on page 7 (Cost Sharing) requires that the recipient provide 15% of the projected total estimated amount in cost share. Rather than requiring cost sharing, we propose that USAID require leveraging, which can take a variety of forms (anything of value that is measured, such as financial contributions, third-party contributions, pro bono technical assistance, or donated services or property). We agree with the need for partner buy-in and believe leveraging instead of cost sharing would better promote USAID's goals of sustainable development and localization, given the limitations and management demands surrounding cost share. Requiring leverage rather than cost share brings the following advantages:

- a. Leverage diversifies the partner base since not all potential recipients are familiar with cost share and have the systems in place to properly implement and account for it.
- b. The same goal of partner buy-in and contribution can be accomplished via leverage and without the extensive cost share documentation requirements that can be burdensome for local partners, especially government counterparts or local civil society organizations that already have very limited resources.
- c. Leverage can be attractive in obtaining support from other donors to pay for part of an activity without requiring the full breadth of cost share documentation. It allows an implementer to take advantage of a window of opportunity more effectively as it is easier to set up donor-sharing agreements and track leverage.
- d. Given the sensitive nature of this activity's scope, the cost share requirements may distract potential local partners from overall goals. Many relevant organizations with sensitive populations may not wish to supply the

documentation needed to show cost share; it may, in fact, cause them to lose trust in our efforts.

By changing the requirement in the NOFO from cost share to leveraging, applicants will have the opportunity to present their approaches for ensuring that grantee buy-in requirements are met and verified throughout implementation to best promote USAID's goal of sustainable development. Ultimately, we believe that leverage requirements (rather than cost share) promote equitable participation from new local partners who may otherwise be intimidated by the stringent cost share requirements. Is USAID amendable to replacing the cost share requirement with a leveraging requirement?

USAID Response: USAID/Guatemala confirms that only a cost-share is required under this RFA. By requiring a cost-share, USAID ensures that the Recipient will contribute to mobilizing additional resources, providing greater flexibility in programming and local partnerships, which will help optimize the achievement of the Activity's goal. A cost-share requirement of 10% to 15% is considered reasonable, realistic, and achievable throughout the Activity's duration, while supporting its objectives.

24. On page 41, Section F, Criterion 2, Subcriteria 1.3 states that past performance will be evaluated as part of the Management and Staffing Plan and Organizational Capacity section. However, the NOFO asks applicants to include a Performance History demonstrating organizational capacity and relevant technical expertise as Annex E. Would USAID, please confirm that past performance will be evaluated using Annex E?

USAID Response: USAID confirms that we will evaluate Criterion 2, Subcriteria 1.3 using Annex E. In addition, USAID reserves the right to obtain past performance information from other sources including those not named in the applications. Please note that the information contained in this Annex E, must coincide with the information requested in Section D.3 Business Application Format.

25. On page 26 of the RFA, under Annex E Performance History, USAID is requesting submission of 5 examples of past performance. However, under Section E of the Business Application format, the RFA states that applicants must provide a "recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement or fixed price contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, including any fixed amount awards involving similar or related programs, not to exceed 5 years." Can USAID clarify whether all applicant past performance information for the last five years is required or should applicants submit 5 examples of past performance? We ask that USAID consider limiting the requirement to the 5 most relevant past performance references, as is customary in many solicitations. In addition, will USAID require past performance documentation from any proposed consortium partners?

USAID Response: See answer in question 27 below

26. Can USAID clarify whether the applicant needs to submit both Annex E in the technical application and History of performance section in the business application? These sections seem repetitive.

USAID Response: See answer in question 27 below

27. On page 34 of the NOFO regarding history of performance in the business application, USAID says “In accordance with the information in Section D.2. Technical Application, Annex E, the applicant must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement or fixed price contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, including any fixed amount awards involving similar or related programs, not to exceed 5 years.” Can you clarify whether this is referring to the 5 relevant programs under Annex E or all contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements the applicant has been awarded?

USAID Response: Page No. 26 states that applicants must include a list (maximum of five) most relevant contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs; it also indicates that the information contained in this Annex E, must coincide with the information requested in Section D.3 Business Application Format, e: History of Performance. Therefore, applicants must submit a list of a maximum of 5 relevant past performance references during the last 5 years.

28. Can USAID confirm that no branding and marking plan is required at the time of application submission?

USAID Response: USAID confirms that per 2 CFR 700.16, USAID requires the submission of a Branding Strategy and a Marking Plan by the “apparently successful applicant after merit review of an application for USAID funding.

29. Does USAID Guatemala restrict primes from forming exclusive teaming agreements with local organizations?

USAID Response: See response in question 31 below.

30. Is it permissible to form a three-party consortium, where each party is responsible for a specific objective.

USAID Response: See response in question 31 below.

31. Can USAID clarify its position regarding whether international organizations should partner exclusively or non-exclusively with local partners? Does USAID

expect international partners to form only nonexclusive partnerships with local partners in line with USAID localization policy?

USAID Response: Eligibility for this award is not restricted. This funding opportunity is open to all entities and is not restricting the formation of teams with local organizations.

32. Annex 1, page 58, Footnote (1) – The Summary Budget Template requires that “at least fifty (50) percent of the cost of award performance incurred for personnel must be expended for employees of the prime/local entity.” According to Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations (A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303), RAA 27, this is applicable to awards where eligibility is restricted to local entities, considering this is a full and open solicitation, could USAID please remove this footnote?

USAID Response: This footnote will be removed in the amendment to this RFA.

33. Page 30 of the NOFO states "Construction activities are not eligible for reimbursement under the resulting award". Question: does this include laboratory renovations or refurbishments?

USAID Response: 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. Laboratory equipment and supplies and related inputs would be allowable, but not construction nor remodeling based on the construction definition here.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS:

34. Can USAID clarify if the draft MEL plan in Annex 1 must include the numeric targets and baseline for all proposed indicators?

USAID Response: If known, please include numeric baseline and proposed periodic targets (including proposed end of Activity targets) for indicators proposed in the draft MEL Plan. If not known, please include the proposed estimated magnitude of change (e.g., estimated percent increase) or other estimated measure of performance or indicate “TBD”.

35. Section C. Geographic Focus – Can USAID clarify the priority departments in the Western Highlands and provide the names of the departments?

USAID Response: Page 17 indicates that “The Activity will be implemented primarily in under-resourced, high-need areas within Guatemala, including priority areas within the USAID portfolio, such as the Western highlands, Alta and Baja Verapaz, and the Peten/Biosphera Maya area. The Activity will focus on the national and subnational regions aforementioned and remain flexible to priority geographies for health security.” The exact geographic location of implementation will be determined in consultation with the Government of Guatemala upon award. It is not envisioned at this time that the Activity will be implemented in Central America.

36. Section C. Geographic Focus – USAID states that the geographic scope may expand to include “other countries in the region”. Can USAID clarify if this project is intended to reach other countries in Central America, or rather other regions/Departments within Guatemala?

USAID Response: See answer in question 35 above.

37. Under Result Area 2.1 – Strengthening of National Laboratory Systems, an illustrative result is to strengthen the capacity of national laboratories to perform critical testing processes and procedures. There are only 2 national laboratories in Guatemala. Can USAID confirm if this activity is limited to national level labs only?

USAID Response: The Activity is not limited to strengthening the national laboratories and may include strengthening sub-national and other priority laboratories as well to strengthen the national laboratory system.

38. Additionally, we would appreciate confirmation that the funding is intended for a single project in Guatemala.

USAID Response: USAID confirms that the funding is intended for a single Activity in Guatemala.

39. In alignment with the USAID MEL plan template linked on page 25 of the solicitation, could USAID please confirm that the applicant may provide only end of activity targets for the submission of the MEL annex, as periodic targets will be updated annually?

USAID Response: See answer in question 34 above.

40. Under Objective 1, USAID has generously provided priority technical areas for the first year of activity implementation. Could USAID also specify the priority technical areas for Objectives 2 and 3? This will help ensure that all applications fully align with USAID’s needs.

USAID Response: There are details in the NOFO for all objectives, including illustrative activity examples. Specific priority technical areas for Objective 2 and 3 will be determined upon award with the Government of Guatemala, and will include efforts to (per Objective 2) enhance Guatemalan health systems capacity to rapidly respond, control and mitigate the impacts of emerging infectious disease outbreaks and (per Objective 3) enhance Guatemala's capacity to effectively respond to emergent health threats and public health emergencies.

41. Given that the Draft MEL Plan (Annex A) is limited to three pages, does the Indicator Table not count toward the three-page limit? Or is the limit three pages inclusive of the table?

USAID Response: The indicator table should not be counted towards the three pages for the draft MEL plan, the three page limit is for the narrative component of the MEL plan.

42. On page 23, the instructions for the technical application note the proposal must start with the Theory of Change section, can USAID clarify whether applicants may include a problem statement and contextual description in the Theory of Change section?

USAID Response: Yes, this would be acceptable.

43. On page 11 of the RFA, it notes that "sustainable management of Guatemala's rich biodiversity" is one of the elements needed to strengthen Guatemala's resilience against health security threats. However, this technical focus does not feature in the objectives or the illustrative results. Can USAID clarify their expectations related to supporting biodiversity management under this activity?

USAID response: There is no biodiversity management expected for this activity.

44. Under Section C, page 17 of the RFA, it notes that the geographic areas of focus of the Activity are "underresourced, high-need areas within Guatemala, including priority areas within the USAID portfolio, such as the Western highlands, Alta and Baja Verapaz, and the Peten/Biosphera Maya area". Can USAID clarify whether the "sub-national levels" referenced in Result 1.4, 2.2, and 3.1 and in Section D. Target Groups and Beneficiaries and E. Other Considerations refers only to those priority areas mentioned on page 17?

USAID Response: See answer in question 35 above.

45. Under Result 2.1, page 14 of the RFA, one of the illustrative results references support to strengthen the testing capacity of national laboratories. Can USAID clarify whether it is in scope for this Activity to budget for the purchase of

laboratory equipment, supplies and minor renovations to add testing capacity or will those costs be covered by another mechanism?

USAID: Laboratory equipment and supplies and related inputs would be allowable, but not construction nor remodeling.

46. Under Result 3.2, page 17 of the RFA, can USAID clarify the meaning of "encroachment" in the context of this activity?

USAID Response: For the purposes of this RFA, "encroachment" is defined as the interaction between humans and animals in a manner that increases the risk of zoonotic disease transmission. This includes situations where human activities intrude or encroach into previously wild animal habitats.

47. Under Result 3.2, page 16 of the RFA, RCCE is described as being "crucial for an immediate and effective response to acute infectious disease." Can USAID clarify whether RCCE interventions under the activity should focus solely on supporting health emergency response functions or may they also be used to enhance prevention by promoting change in beneficiary knowledge and behaviors around ongoing high risk activities?

USAID Response: RCCE interventions can be leveraged for Objectives 1, 2, and 3, including for prevention, detection, and response activities.

48. Under Result 3.2, is it USAID's expectation that the Activity will be responsible for designing RCCE materials, print or electronic, that will also be used by other service delivery partners? Would the Activity also be responsible for printing and/or distribution of those RCCE materials for use by other service delivery partners?

USAID Response: Page 16 states that Result 3.2 is to establish and operationalize a RCCE strategy.

49. Section D, page 25. For the Annex B Year 1 Workplan, should applicants prepare a workplan for a 12-month period of performance or for a 6-month period of performance (March 30 to September 30, 2025)?

USAID Response: Page 25 indicates that "This Annex will include a draft year 1 work plan", which means a one year or a 12 month work plan.

50. On page 8 of the NOFO, USAID states that the WHO/PAHO Joint External Evaluation tool, which was completed in 2023 in Guatemala. USAID's GHS programming is focused on filling critical gaps in ten priority technical areas, including building sustainable, resilient, and coordinated "One Health" capacities that address human, animal, and environmental health. Question: Can USAID send the report of this document?

USAID response: This information is public and available online.

51. Can USAID clarify in which departments in the Western Highlands the awardee is expected to implement with activity? The main five departments in the Western Highlands are Huehuetenango, Quiché, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, and Totonicapán, but other departments, such as Sololá and Chimaltenango, are sometimes included in the Western Highlands.

USAID Response: See answer in question 35 above.