

Questions/Answers under RFA-111-14-000003
USAID/Armenia Advanced Civil Society
for Accountable Governance Program

No.	Questions/Comments	Answers
1	The DOAG signed with the Armenian government is mentioned in the RFA and was also mentioned at the pre-application conference, where I got the impression that it is a publicly available document. Where can I obtain a copy?	The document will be publicly available upon ratification pending.
2	What is the allowed maximum percentage for overhead?	Since no local organization has negotiated indirect/overhead rates with U.S. Government, the local organizations are requested to present all costs attributed to this activity as Direct or Other Direct Costs.
3	Can we also include 'contingency' line in the budget?	Contingency or miscellaneous costs are unallowable. All costs should be specified and attributed to the project.
4	Is it required to develop both PMEP and Logical Framework? If yes, won't there be too much overlap between the two?	The subject RFA (page 30) requires that applicants provide both the PMEP and Logical Framework.
5	Can as a key staff the Application include CVs of those who are currently employed in USG projects?	Yes.
6	Should consortium staffers make a certain percentage of volunteer donations from their monthly salaries, would this be viewed as co-sharing costs under future RFA program?	Yes.
7	Does each of the applicant consortiums have to target all the marzes (regions) of Armenia or they can target only a few of the marzes?	That depends on the applicant's programmatic approach.
8	Besides the consortium members other civil society actors (local NGOs, experts or individual service providers) will have to be selected in order to support the project in particular regions (let me call them "local partners"). However, for this stage we think it would not be wholly possible to include the names of all these local partners in the application, since these partners (at least	Applicants are requested to propose an application that the best meets the requirements of the RFA in terms of the team/consortium composition.

	most of them) will be identified in the course of implementation based on the assessment of local capacities. Is it mandatory to provide the names of the local partners in the application or is it all right if we just describe how we are going to select them?	
9	May the Prime Applicant outsource the accounting service for the project financial operations to a company or an individual accountant should be hired?	Yes it may, however the organization should demonstrate cost/benefit analysis of outsourcing versus hiring an accountant.
10	One of the required documents is the copy of the organization's accounting manual. Please, clarify on this. Is it the organizations' policies and procedures or the accounting policy, or something else?	This is organization's manual which describes internal financial management policies and procedures of the organization.
11	Another required document is the applicant's financial reports for the previous 3-year period, which have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID. At present, we are in the process of audit by an international auditing company which will evaluate last 6 years financial operations and reports.	The applicant may submit its external audit report it has available for the last 3 years.
12	May an organization (local branch of an international foundation) be listed as a member of Consortium, if it is co-funding some of the planned activities (such as monitoring and research), but does not receive money from the given USAID grant?	Yes.
13	To what extent are the expected results presented in RFA fixed and complete? Can some of them be reworded, rearranged, added or omitted?	USAID expects that the program will achieve all results listed in the RFA. It is up to the applicant to propose additional results if it chooses.
14	The RFA is confusing as it seems to have two different overall goals. Pg. 8 - 10 sounds more like a political/social reform program led by Armenian CSOs. Pg. 10-20 read more like a civil society development program. While the two are not mutually exclusive and NDI is a believer of a "learning by doing" methodology, the two don't exactly line up in the RFA. For instance, through conducting anti-corruption programs, CSO aren't exactly going to develop themselves, diversify their funding, or impact the CSO enabling environment.	USAID expects that the application (and eventually the program) will focus on civil society development program objectives/results as described in subject RFA. Each consortium will seek to achieve these results in their respective reform areas.

15	What are USAID's expectations for discreet civil society development activities?	Please refer to the Result Areas of the Program Description under the subject RFA.
	How much is this program about achieving results in the 3 focus areas and how much about CSO development? In other words, are the 3 focus areas as means for achieving civil society development? Based on AID's framework, it seems as if the greater focus is on the development of civil society a bit more than the concrete realization of specific reforms.	Yes, the main focus of these programs is civil society engagement in reform areas and at the same time, contributing to CSO development in Armenia. Please refer to the Program Description under the subject RFA. See above.
16	What are AID's expectations?	USAID expects that the program will succeed in achieving results in all four Result Areas as described in the RFA.
17	Does AID envision a specific role for international advisory organizations in contributing to civil society develop seeing that it is challenging for Armenian CSOs to identify and address their own needs.	The consortium (applicant) will need to determine the role and need for an international partner.
18	Can volunteer contributions from the salaries of the program be calculated as co - sharing the costs?	Yes.
19	Is there a geographic preference for the project? Should it include Armenia's entire territory or selected marzes?	Please see Question #7.
20	The 10% contribution of the consortium – could it be only in-kind or should be a combination of in-kind and cash?	It can be both: in-kind contribution and/or combination of in-kind and cash.
21	What is the minimum/maximum number of organizations to be included in the consortium?	It is up to the Applicant to propose number of organizations in the consortium that will lead to successful and effective implementation of the activity.
22	Can an organization that is new (does not have a project implementation history) be part of the consortium?	Yes, it can. Please also refer to Question #57.
23	It was said that a consortium can include both non-profits and for profits, however, USAID does not pay the profit of the organizations. Can a for-profit think tank be a prime organization and its employees or experts get paid for their work?	A for-profit think tank organization can be proposed as a prime organization if it meets all the definitions for a “local organization” as specified in the RFA. Employees/experts of the eligible organizations will be compensated for their work. However, there will be no profit or fee under this application.

24	Are overhead costs allowed?	Please see Question #2.
25	What are exactly the Certifications and other attachments requested from local NGOs?	All Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Recipient are included under Annex A of the subject RFA.
26	Could you provide the link to the Development Objective Cooperative Agreement with the GoA?	The document is not yet published as it is pending ratification.
27	In the RFA-111-14-000003, Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance Project's call is mentioned that "Following completion of the second year of the activity USAID is planning to conduct a mid-term external performance evaluation of the activity". Who will cover expenses of evaluation? Consortia or USAID directly?	USAID will pay for the evaluation separately; it is a third party evaluation.
28	How will consortia members receive funding? Through consortia leading organization or directly by the USAID?	USAID will enter into an agreement with a leading/prime organization and will pay directly to the prime. Consortia members will receive funding from the leading organization/prime.
29	Will pre-award certifications, assurances, and other statements be signed only by the leading organization or by all members of consortia?	Certifications, assurances, and other statements are required to be completed and signed only by the leading organization/prime.
30	Weather participation of an international partner a requirement?	It is up to the consortia members to include international organizations or propose international experts: that is not a requirement.
31	Weather an organization can apply for two reform areas?	We are looking for organizations to apply only for one reform area <u>as a prime</u> . The same organization can be proposed under <u>other reform areas as a sub</u> . In case the organization is interested to apply for two reform areas simultaneously, then it can be a prime in one reform area and be proposed as a sub under the second or third reform areas.
32	"These programs will be implemented by consortia of civil society organizations for a period..." Do all organizations within the consortia have to be CSOs? What if there is an organization (not a CSO) that also does work in civil society, would they qualify to be part of the consortia?	Yes, please see the definition for a local organization described in the RFA.
33	Page 4: "To address the deficiencies of the system the GOAM set new targets and areas for reform in the 2012-2015 ADS and has explicitly requested USAID technical assistance in advancing pension, local governance, and e-governance reforms." What	The examples of e-governance could be: providing services to population through automated and transparent systems.

	does USAID mean by ‘e-governance’? It is also referred to pages 10 and 12.	
34	P. 17: “each consortium may include international organizations as sub-recipients”. Can an international organization be a sub-recipient on multiple consortia?	Yes, it can.
35	What mechanism or selection process will be used by USAID to select an organization to perform the external mid-term evaluation?	Usually USAID outsources evaluations to external organizations through a competitive process.
36	Can a consortium (I suppose to individual organization being on multiple bids) apply for more than one policy reform area?	Please see Question #31.
37	Is there a ceiling, in terms of a percentage against overall project budget, on sub-grants/sub-contracts to international organizations?	We expect that at least 50% of the cost of the activity should be budgeted for the prime.
38	P. 7: “USAID expects to fund consortia of local organizations – one or more for each of the policy reform areas targeted.” What is the maximum number of consortia that can receive funding per policy reform area?	USAID will determine the number of awards per reform area based on the review of applications.
39	P. 18: “recipients are encouraged to set aside funds for activities to strengthen the consortium, such as team building, strategic planning and similar activities” and p. 19. Are these activities expected to be allocated within the prime’s budget?	It is up to the consortia members to propose their approach.
40	P. 19: “USAID/Armenia anticipates awarding a separate activity that will run in parallel to this one on Local Capacity Development through local intermediary organizations.” When is the LCD initiative expected to be awarded and launched? What “range of services and expertise” will be made available to the consortia through that program?	The range includes institutional capacity development among other activities.
41	P. 16: “USAID/Armenia expects that all consortia will work together in achieving results under Result area 4.” Are the consortia expected to coordinate their activities during the implementation phase only? Will the responsibility for coordinating the activities of the three consortia rest with the awarded consortia or USAID?	Consortia are expected to take a lead and coordinate in this result area.

42	P. 17: “Proposals in which international partners play a technical assistance role, rather than a substantial implementation or management role will be viewed more favorably.” Is there a limitation of the level of effort for international STTA (ceiling on either number of days or funding level)?	It is up to consortia members to determine the necessary level of effort: however “proposals in which international partners play a technical assistance role, rather than a substantial implementation or management role will be viewed more favorably”.
43	P. 19: “USAID encourages each consortium to incorporate activities to assess and strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of the consortia, their own organizations and their network of partners with which they work on selected reforms”. Is there guidance on the ceiling or percentage of funds that can be set aside for capacity building activities against the total project budget?	It is up to the applicant(s) to determine the need and level of funding needed for capacity development.
44	P. 23: “Government controlled and government owned organizations in which the recipient government owns a majority of interest or in which the majority of a governing body are government employees, are included in the above definition of local organization.” Does this mean that governmental organizations are not precluded from applying? Can a governmental organization play a prime or a sub role within a consortium?	Yes. The eligible organizations should also refer to the Section IV. “Application Review Information” of the subject RFA.
45	P. 24: “It is required that a minimum of 10% of the proposed budget will be generated as a cost-share from non-USA government funding or in-kind support for the proposed program.” Would USAID consider replacing, in part or entirely, the cost-share requirement by leveraging?	No, the RFA requires cost-share contribution.
46	P. 29: Implementation plan: A detailed implementation plan for the 1 st year – Does USAID have preference for the format of the implementation plan - Gantt chart vs. narrative, or both? Life of project implementation plan – Should it cover 5 years?	USAID does not have a preference for the format of the implementation plan. As stated in the RFA, under Technical Application Format and Content on page 29, “life of project implementation plan outlining an achievable plan given the program objectives, budget and timeframe”.

	Would USAID consider moving the Implementation Plan into Annexes?	No.
47	P. 30: It may be challenging to meet the past performance requirement of listing all contracts, grants and cooperative agreements by consortium partners in the past 3 years within 27 pages of the technical approach. Would USAID be amenable to having this information presented in an Annex?	Yes, past performance information can be included under Annexes in case it is too extensive.
48	P. 30: Among annexes listed are CVs of key staff. What other annexes are allowed?	Please refer to the instructions under Technical Application Format and Content of the RFA. In addition to CVs, some charts or tables can be included under Annexes. Please note that if annexes contain information that relates to the technical application, they will not be scored (e.g. placing elements of technical understanding and proposed approaches in an annex is unacceptable).
49	Key staff. Is there a limitation on the minimum or maximum number of key staff? Can expat and TCN staff be proposed as key staff?	Key staff should not exceed 5 persons. It is up to the Applicant to propose an expat or TCN as a key staff.
50	P. 30: “Applications will be evaluated on a Best Value basis.” Can you expand on how “best value” will be determined?	The most advantageous balance of price and quality of the technical application, achieved through competitive procurement methods in accordance with stated selection criteria.
51	P. 32: Applicant should have “adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the award.” Can you clarify this statement? Please confirm that recipients will receive monthly advances.	In case of cost reimbursement mechanism, this is the ability of a potential recipient to spend its own funds and periodically get reimbursed upon furnishing proper financial reports. In case of advance/liquidation mechanism, it is the ability of organization to receive and manage advances from the USAID and liquidate them accordingly.
52	P. 32: Branding strategy. Will USAID consider issuing activity-specific of blanket waivers for the awards?	If there is a need, USAID will review requests for waivers on case by case basis.
53	Is there any guidance re: including a small grants component as a percentage of the total project budget?	There is no guidance on sub-grants component: it depends on programmatic approach proposed by the applicant.
54	Can local CSOs that do not have NICRA with USG include their established indirect rates in the budget or should all costs be presented as direct expenses?	No, if the organization does not have NICRA such costs should be included under other direct costs. Please also refer to Question #2.
55	Is it possible for the same NGO to be a winner as a prime under	Yes, it is possible.

	two activities: Development Grants Program and Advanced Civil Society for Accountable Governance?	
56	If an organization doesn't have a prior experience working with USAID and never has had an audit before, can such an organization be considered for an award?	As stated in the RFA: "Applicant(s) under consideration for an award that have never received funding from USAID will be subject to a pre-award review". Also, USAID can make an award decision with conditions for the organization to improve its financial/management systems. We will expect annual audits under consortia for a prime. Therefore, prime applicants should include annual costs for audits in their cost applications.
57	If the prime is less experienced, will consortium's experience be looked at as one?	Yes, we will look both on prime and consortium experience and will evaluate as a whole, as a consortium.
58	Will the partner's cost share be acceptable?	Yes, it is between the prime and the sub-grantee to decide on cost share.
59	Can one consortium work on two reform areas?	We are looking for a prime to apply for one reform area. If an organization is willing to apply for two reform areas, then it can be proposed as a sub-grantee under the second reform area. Please also see Question #31.
60	Can there be sub grantees other than consortium members?	Yes.
61	Weather the total available funding of \$10,050,000 is for Armenia or the region?	The total anticipated funding level for this activity is for Armenia.
62	What's the division of the budget between capacity development and reform area programming?	It is up to the applicant to propose a relevant division in the budget. The proposed budget should reflect the organization's technical approach.
63	Who will be included in the pre-award assessment (only prime or also the partners) and what will be assessed?	It will focus on the prime level, but if there is a need USAID will ask for a limited pre-award review of partners. The assessment will include pre-award review of financial and managerial systems of the applicant.
64	On page 32 of the RFA, under C.2 the following is required from Applicants: "Projected budget, cash flow and organizational chart", etc. What is the period of projection and what sources should be included?	The projected budget should be for 2014 only and should not include the funds to be received under this RFA.