



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Subject: Request for Information (RFI) No. RFI-520-21-000001

Project Name: Basic Education Quality and Transition to Lower Secondary Activity

Issuance Date: March 17, 2021

Response due: April 7, 2021 at 5 p.m., Guatemala time

Email address: guatemalaproposals@usaid.gov

Dear Partners:

The United States Government, represented by the Agency for International Development (USAID) in Guatemala, is seeking comments on a draft Program Description (PD) for the Basic Education Quality and Transition to Lower Secondary Activity. This Request for Information (RFI) offers the opportunity for interested individuals and organizations to provide recommendations on approaches for the implementation of this activity. USAID plans to issue a Request for Applications (RFA) within the next few months, subject to availability of funds. This RFI is open for comments from any interested U.S. and Non-U.S. organizations.

Issuance of this RFI and posting the draft PD for comments does not constitute a request for applications which will come later through a separate process. The RFI does not represent any award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it obligate the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any comments or questions.

USAID may use any information provided as part of your submission without incurring any obligation. Also, USAID/Guatemala reserves the right to or not to incorporate any and all comments into a funding opportunity or ultimately an award.

Comments on the draft PD should be submitted to USAID via email to Fabiola Loy at guatemalaproposals@usaid.gov no later than the date specified in this letter.

On the subject line of your email, kindly state the following: RFI RFI-520-21-000001 – [name of your organization]. You will receive an electronic confirmation acknowledging receipt of your response, but you will not receive individualized feedback.

This draft PD is distributed for industry comments on the content of the attached document USAID/Guatemala welcomes general comments to the draft Program Description. In particular, please consider in your review the following:

1. Which components of the program description, specifically the Activity Results to improve foundational skills and transition from primary to lower secondary, are local partners best positioned to implement during the activity and beyond?
2. What related ongoing or recent research, technical approaches, and/or activities from Guatemala or a similar context should USAID incorporate into the program description to support the achievement of this Activity's desired results?
3. What initiatives should this Activity prioritize in order to support GoG efforts to support learning, improve education access and quality, and increase transition from primary to lower-secondary schools?

To assist in the efficiency of this process please ensure that comments are concise and specific to information included within the draft PD; and submitted comments make specific reference to page and section numbers. Your response should not exceed five pages. Responses may be submitted in English or Spanish.

Please note that USAID is not seeking technical or cost application at this time. Do not submit any application. Only the information requested above will be considered. Thank you for your interest in this USAID initiative and we look forward to receiving your comments.

Sincerely,



Adam Cox
Supervisory Agreement Officer

Attachment No. 1: Draft Program Description – Basic Education Quality and Transition to Lower Secondary Activity

DRAFT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Basic Education Quality and Transition to Lower Secondary Activity

1. Overall Objective

This integrated education activity will improve foundational reading, writing, math, and social and emotional skills acquisition for children and youth, increase retention and transition rates from primary to lower secondary in rural Guatemala. This activity will also strengthen local subrecipient(s)' capacity to become a USAID implementing partner and transition the award to their leadership. The primary beneficiaries of this activity will be students in grades 4-6 and *primero básico*¹ as well as local partner organizations in the basic education sector who, with additional capacity building support, can confidently assume the implementation of this award once USAID determines that the local partner organization is capable of managing USG funds and contributes to specific actions during the five years of the prime award. The activity will also seek to identify gaps and shore up gains made from previous USAID investments in grades 1-3 as in the implementation of Bilingual Intercultural Education Models and reading intervention programs.

The Basic Education Quality and Transition to Lower Secondary activity (BEQT) will contribute to achieving USAID's Guatemala's CDCS Development Objective 2: Effective and Accountable Governance to Improve Quality of Life and Deter irregular migration; specifically under Intermediate Result 2.2: Improved quality of social services (health, education, water) and Intermediate Result 2.3: Strengthened citizen engagement and advocacy.

2. Development Challenge: Context & Opportunities

Students are not succeeding academically in primary grades and *primero básico*, and as a result many are dropping out of school. Available evidence from USAID assessments, MOE-produced reports, and consultations with GoG and international donors indicate that many students are not succeeding in their education and are leaving the school system due to the following key constraints:

- Low quality instruction and inability to foster foundational reading, math, and social and emotional skills. School subjects become a challenge and students leave school.
- Poor school system administration that does not effectively track enrollment, attendance, student learning (including social and emotional skills), and transition. This results in schools not being aware and able to respond to the needs of students.

¹ Primero basico is the first level of lower secondary, following grade 6.

- Lack of support outside of school from communities and families to practice foundational skills and ensure children enroll, attend, and transition to the next level of school, often due to other needs at home. Learners may experience a life-changing incident (e.g., teen pregnancy, need to work, loss of a loved one, etc.) and dropout of school.
- Many learners graduating from primary school do not have access to lower secondary education due to a shortage of seats.
- Lower-secondary schools are often too far for learners to attend and families cannot afford the transportation expenses. In addition, children and teenagers are forced to work at an early age because of poverty, food insecurity, among other factors.
- Limited capacity and resources of local institutions to sustain education gains as lead implementing partners. USAID/Guatemala has held contracts in the basic education sector with large international partners as lead implementers. While these contracts have improved capacity of local institutions such as basic education providers, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, etc. more targeted capacity building support is needed for local partners to transition to the role of lead implementing partners, assuming the prime position, and sustain education results over time.

3. Place of Performance

Interventions will take place at the national and sub-national level. At the sub-national level, USAID has identified Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango, El Quiché, and San Marcos as departments where there is a combination of higher migration in women as well as higher dropout rates, and this activity should target interventions in these departments. USAID currently operates in all but Baja Verapaz, and added this department as a result of data and consultation demonstrated a need to consider this new programming area.

The Activity is considering working with three selected municipalities in each of the departments described above. The selection of the municipalities will need to consider dropout rates of indigenous, women and youth as well as the results shown at the municipal level in math and reading in previous national assessments. Level of migration within a municipality needs to be considered.

Rates of dropout are particularly high in rural Guatemala, as noted in Table 1 below:

Table 1 - Dropout Rates by Department in Grades 1, 5, 6, and *Primero Basico*

Departament	Dropout Rates (2019)			
	Grade 1	Grade 5	Grade 6	I Básico
Alta Verapaz	4.12%	3.37%	2.77%	4.94%
Baja Verapaz	5.77%	5.42%	4.38%	10.91%
Huehuetenango	7.49%	6.78%	5.74%	11.07%
Quetzaltenango	3.91%	2.68%	2.72%	5.35%
Quiché	4.20%	4.62%	4.24%	6.77%
San Marcos	6.38%	3.40%	2.97%	6.84%
Totonicapán	3.46%	2.81%	2.35%	5.29%

4.Relationship to U.S. Government and Government of Guatemala priorities

Relationship to USG Policies & Priorities:

The activity will be aligned with USG-supported commitments and strategies of the GOG, and will be centered on improving development of emergent literacy skills among Guatemalan students in the selected municipalities.

U.S. policy objectives² in Guatemala related to the wellbeing of Guatemalans include:

- Increasing citizen security in Guatemala.
- Engaging Guatemalan government institutions to fight corruption, increasing openness and transparency, supporting rule of law, and strengthening the effectiveness of government institutions to improve Guatemalan confidence in government agencies.
- Reducing irregular migration and illicit trafficking of goods and people to the United States by boosting broad-based economic growth, addressing the economic drivers of migration, and engaging the government and the private sector to reduce poverty.

U.S. Assistance to Guatemala

U.S. foreign assistance in Guatemala invests in citizen security, governance, and economic growth to discourage irregular migration, improve government services, increase transparency, fight corruption, and support repatriation and reintegration efforts.

Guatemala continues to face formidable challenges: weak governance, endemic corruption, pervasive poverty, food insecurity, severe violence, citizen insecurity, and inequitable access to

² <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-guatemala/>

economic opportunities and social services. These challenges drive irregular migration and contribute to the expansion of transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). U.S. efforts aim to protect U.S. citizens by addressing the security, governance, and economic drivers of irregular migration and illicit trafficking of people and goods.

The activity will also support Guatemala's Governmental General Policy 2020-2024, in advancements in both inclusive education services and primary school completion. The activity will explore ways to build upon the gains of the MOE's strategy *Aprendo en Casa*, and the previous administration's strategy *Comprometidos con Primer Grado* by prioritizing support to first grade students to improve achievement and increase internal efficiency at a critical point in primary school. The activity will also support implementation of the Open Government Alliance³, a presidential and global initiative that contains components relating to improving reading outcomes in early grades.

BEQT will support the implementation of SINAE⁴ where relevant. In addition this activity supports the National Decentralization Agenda which establishes the process through which the regulatory capacities of the national ministries are strengthened, along with the improvement of the capacities of the municipal authorities to invest and implement projects to improve development outcomes.

In addition, the activity will support GOG's commitment to fulfilling the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, specifically goal number four, by helping to promote stronger multilingual education at the primary level that will help reduce dropout rates, narrow literacy gaps, and decrease gender disparities. Gender inequality, in particular, is a cross-cutting issue that affects the long-term development of Guatemala. The activity should seek to support networks of women's groups where relevant, promote greater participation of women in community and civic activities, and consider gender differences related to developing appropriate strategies for foundational skills development among boys and girls. In addition, this activity will provide an opportunity to strengthen our engagement with Indigenous People and narrow the literacy gaps among indigenous and non-indigenous students.

Relationship to USAID/Education Priorities:

BEQT takes into consideration the following USAID Education Policy⁵ principles:

- Prioritize country-focus and ownership
- Focus and concentrate investments on measurably and sustainably improving learning and educational outcomes
- Strengthen systems and develop capacity in local institutions
- Work in partnership and leverage resources

³ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/policy-area/education/>

⁴ National Educational Coaching System.

⁵ USAID Education Policy (2018). Accessed at <https://www.usaid.gov/education/policy>

- Drive decision-making and investments using evidence and data
- Promote equity and inclusion

BEQT also aligns to the following USAID Education Policy priorities:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.

Building on lessons from prior work

In order to capture and incorporate lessons learned, this Activity will build upon prior USAID Activities that supported intercultural and bilingual education. Activities including, but not limited to, USAID’s Lifelong Learning and Reforming Education in the Classroom projects, have valuable experiences and lessons learned that should be considered when designing and implementing activities.

USAID works in partnership with the (GOG) to improve primary grade reading skills and provide educational opportunities for out-of-school youth. Some of the actions worked by the projects or still being conducted are:

- USAID has expanded support to the MOE to respond to COVID-19 strains on the system, implement the “I Learn at Home” strategy, plan for the return to school, and plan for completion of school years 2020 and 2021.
- USAID has focused on improving reading skills by promoting early grade reading as the backbone of lifelong learning as a result improving the quality of education.
- USAID supported activities that are implemented by the MOE at the central and local levels, such as the development, printing, and distribution of materials in Mayan languages and Spanish.
- USAID has supported teacher training at the local level and the strengthening of management and technical skills of MOE personnel.
- USAID continues its efforts in partnering with parents and communities to promote demand for quality education services and raise awareness of the important role that families play in their children’s education.
- USAID works alongside local governments to establish basic requirements for schools in order to foster a classroom environment conducive to improving reading skills.
- USAID provides technical assistance to the MOE to improve information systems and to promote the use of data generated by these systems to inform policy decisions.
- USAID activities provide opportunities for out-of-school rural indigenous youth in the Western Highlands to receive education and build skills to increase their access to sustainable livelihoods. Out-of-school youth create life plans and receive support accessing the education and training necessary to reach their goals.

USAID Education Results and Accomplishments

- Bilingual education for indigenous students – USAID has supported the MOE’s design and implementation of the literacy model – a pedagogical strategy for bilingual contexts to promote the development of reading skills of early grade students in their mother tongue and in Spanish as a second language. This approach includes development of methodologies and educational materials, teacher training, parental and community involvement, and professional development programs for technical staff of the departmental education offices and educational coaching specialists.
- Improved education information systems – USAID has supported the MOE to build and enhance information systems. Now that the MOE has advanced from a paper-based system to a web-based, user-oriented dashboard of education indicators, USAID has helped the MOE develop tools to leverage this data for better informed decision-making. USAID assistance is now supporting development of smartphone applications with the goal of real-time access to school-level education indicators of particular interest and utility to departments and municipalities. An example is the app to register information required by the MOE’s system and health protocols.
- Alternative basic education quality programs – USAID has developed learning standards for technical and vocational training programs and standards of implementation for institutions that implement these programs. These standards are contributing to strengthened alternative basic education for out-of-school youth and MOE capacity to monitor and assess the quality of these programs.
- Girls’ education – USAID has supported the MOE to develop policies that advance gender equality and women’s empowerment and improve gender equality in education. With support from USAID and other collaborators, the MOE has conducted gender studies, provided scholarships for girls, advocated for girls education at the community level, and developed practical gender-sensitive education materials and training for administrators, technical officials, and teachers. As a result, there have been significant improvements in gender equality. At the pre-primary level, the gender gap narrowed from 83 to 93 girls for every 100 boys, and in lower secondary, girls’ access expanded from 67% to 86% from 1993 to 2013.

Relationship to the 2020-2025 USAID/Guatemala Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS):

USAID Guatemala’s new five-year CDCS was approved on August 27, 2020, and the BEQT activity is being designed around the current strategy, directly contributing to Development Objective 2 (DO2), “Effective and Accountable Governance to Improve Quality of Life and Deter irregular migration,” which hypothesizes that parallel improvements in income, health and nutrition, and education among Guatemala’s rural poor will foster the sustainable rural development necessary for social and economic equity that deters irregular migration. Target beneficiaries include historically underserved and excluded populations in the Western Highlands (WH) where there are high concentrations of poverty. The activity will support achievement of IR 2.2 Improved quality of social services (health, education, water), and IR 2.3

Strengthened citizen engagement and advocacy. Regarding the Journey to Self-Reliance Roadmap,⁶ the activity will address “Social Group Equality,” which is related to “Inclusive Development in the Commitment Dimension,” as well as “Poverty Rate and Education Quality under the Capacity Dimension.” In addition the activity will be aligned with USAID's draft “2020 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy.”

Relationship to other USAID/Guatemala activities:

The activity will support USAID/Guatemala's education portfolio in several critical ways by impacting learning outcomes at the classroom level and linking to other activities. For example, USAID/Guatemala activities Lifelong Learning and REAULA worked closely with the local colleges and universities developing training program for teachers and created the Consortium of Colleges and Universities; there may be an opportunity in BEQT to work with local universities to improve pre-service teacher training for foundational skills instruction. In addition, Puentes and Lifelong Learning activities have worked to strengthen and prepare professionals working with SINAE during the assessment/ evaluation as well as to the implementation of the program; BEQT will link to advances made with SINAE where relevant. This activity will also build into the results achieved by Nexos Locales project aiming at developing and strengthening the work with communities and municipalities of the WH to improve development outcomes. By supporting the transition to *primero básico*, the activity will link to the Puentes activity and support outcomes in lower secondary education.

Coordination with other donor activities: Other donors and development partners are also active in the education sector in the departments selected, or have indicated common priorities and strategic interests. These include USDA/McGovern Dole, UNICEF, the World Bank, GIZ, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and others. The interest party must demonstrate knowledge of these activities and present a plan to coordinate actions to avoid duplication of efforts and create synergies.

5. Theory of Change

The activity has two theories of change: the first for (a) improving the foundational reading, writing, math, and social and emotional skills of children and youth and (b) increasing the rate of student transition from primary school to lower secondary; the second for building the capacity of local subrecipient(s) to become a prime USAID implementing partner and transition the award (including the foundational skills development and transition to lower secondary interventions) to their leadership.

Theory of Change I:

IF in-person and remote foundational skills instruction improves for all learners in grades 4-6 and *primero básico* in target municipalities; school management systems are strengthened to

⁶ Journey to Self-Reliance: FY 2021 Country Roadmap for Guatemala. Accessed at <https://selfreliance.usaid.gov/country/guatemala>

monitor and improve enrollment, attendance, quality of education, and key grade level transitions; and community and family engagement outside of school is strengthened to support foundational skills development and equitable access to school of all learners; **THEN** young learners in target municipalities will improve foundational learning skills, more learners will successfully transition from primary school to lower secondary education, and more learners will complete lower secondary.

IF the activity improves the performance (e.g., administrative, financial, technical) of new and/or underutilized local subrecipient(s) to support students' acquisition of foundational reading, writing, math, and social and emotional skills as well as transition from primary to lower secondary education; **THEN** the local subrecipient(s) will acquire the capacity to successfully implement and sustain interventions that improve foundational skills and student transition outcomes and eventually become USAID prime implementing partner(s) in a transition award. In the prime implementing partner role, and with capacity developed in the areas mentioned, the local partner organizations will sustain the work of foundational skills development and student transition to lower secondary education.

With foundational skills improved, the rate of student transition to lower secondary increased, and local partners' capacity developed to sustain and carry forward the work of foundational skills development and student transition to lower secondary, the activity will increase the sense of rootedness and employability for youth, especially indigenous youth and young women, in Guatemala. In the long-term, these results will contribute to USAID Guatemala's CDCS Development Objective 2: Effective and Accountable Governance to Improve Quality of Life and Deter irregular migration; specifically under Intermediate Result 2.2: Improved quality of social services (health, education, water) and Intermediate Result 2.3: Strengthened citizen engagement and advocacy.

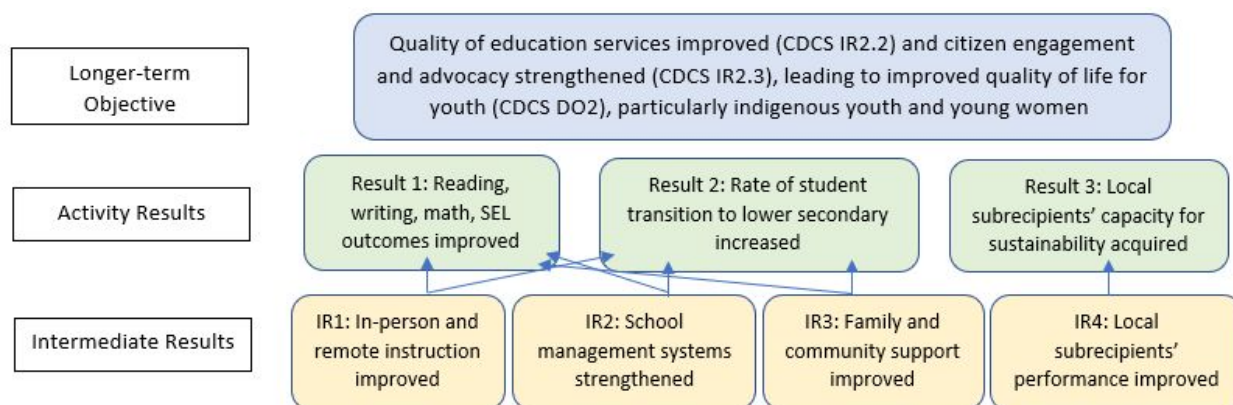
6. Results Framework

BEQT will implement solutions to the development challenge in the geographic areas outlined above and will advance the following Activity Results: Result 1. Reading, writing, math and social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes improved; Result 2. Rate of student transition to lower secondary⁷ increased; Result 3. Local capacity for sustainability acquired.

To accomplish the Activity Results, BEQT will focus on four Intermediate Results (IRs): IR1. In-person and remote instruction improved; IR2. School management systems strengthened; IR3. Community and family support to education increased; and IR4. Local subrecipient(s)' performance improved

⁷ UNESCO glossary definition for survival rate: "Percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of a given level or cycle of education in a given school year who are expected to reach a given grade, regardless of repetition." Accessed at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary>. Transition rate means the percentage of a cohort of students that moves from one level of education to the next level.

As outlined in the theories of change section, IRs 1, 2, and 3 will lead to the achievement of Activity Results 1 and 2. IR 4 will lead to Activity Result 3.



The activity will take into account the USAID Reading MATTERS Framework⁸ for improving foundational skills for all learners in the program, emphasizing inclusion of marginalized groups such as indigenous children and youth, girls, and learners with disabilities. In the long-term, improved quality of education service delivery and increased foundational skills will lead to improved quality of life for young learners and their families, which may contribute to deterring out-migration.

7. Approach and Illustrative Interventions

Activity Result 1: Reading, writing, math, and SEL outcomes improved

The focus of this Activity Result is for learners in grades 4-6 and *primero basico* to improve their foundational reading, writing, math, and social and emotional skills. These skills will be measured by regular assessments, which should be aligned to internationally recognized standards such as the Global Proficiency Framework. IRs 1, 2, and 3 on improved in-person and remote instruction, strengthened school management systems for foundational skills acquisition, and improved family and community support for foundational skills acquisition will lead to the achievement of this Activity Result. As a secondary focus of this Result, BEQT will determine what foundational skills gaps remain in grades 1-3, specifically for reading and SEL, by supporting assessments and monitoring implementation at those grade levels and providing recommendations to the GOG, local institutions, and other donors.

Activity Result 2: Rate of student transition to lower secondary increased

The aim of this Result is to keep more learners in school through the upper primary grades and successfully transition them to lower secondary education. The Result will be measured

⁸ USAID Reading MATTERS Framework, 2018. Accessed at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/usaaid-reading-matters-conceptual-framework>

following the UNESCO definition for transition rate:⁹ “Number of young people attending the first grade of lower secondary school as a percentage of those attending the final grade of primary school.” Like Activity Result 1, IRs 1, 2, and 3 on improving in-person and remote foundational skills instruction, strengthening school management systems for keeping learners in school, and improved family and community engagement to keep learners will school will lead to the achievement of Activity Result 2. The activity will help develop capacity at the schools, districts, and local government levels to carefully track enrollment, attendance, and transition and address issues that lead to dropout and academic failure.

Activity Result 3: Local subrecipient(s) ' capacity for sustainability acquired

BEQT is planned to be a transition award as outlined in ADS 303,¹⁰ wherein an initial award is made to a prime implementing partner who will develop the capacity of local subrecipient(s) to become more capable of receiving a direct award from USAID or other donors. An initial task of the activity will be to work with USAID to establish explicit criteria that the local subrecipient(s) would need to meet to qualify for the transition award. After four years of implementation and capacity building of local subrecipient(s), the prime implementing partner will inform USAID of the potential suitability of the transition award to local subrecipient(s), according to the established criteria. The capacity building interventions (e.g. administrative, financial, technical capacity building) for local subrecipient(s) will contribute to their ability to implement and sustain foundational skills instruction for the target populations in the BEQT areas as well as improve the rate of transition of learners to lower secondary education.

IR1. In-person and remote instruction improved

The aim of IR1 is to improve in-person and remote instruction to help all grade 4-6 and *primero basico* learners in the target regions of rural Guatemala to develop foundational reading, math, and social and emotional skills. To improve in-person and remote instruction, the activity will work with MOE, departments, municipal governments, and schools to assess needs and address the gaps in foundational skills service delivery for all learners in the target areas. As a secondary focus of this IR, the activity will determine what instructional needs remain for grades 1-3, specifically for reading and SEL, by supporting assessments and monitoring implementation at those grade levels and providing recommendations to the GOG, local institutions, and other donors.

⁹ UNESCO, Indicators, Transition rate to lower secondary. Accessed at

https://unesco-wide-production.herokuapp.com/indicators/trans_prim#?sort=mean&dimension=all&group=all&age_group=trans_prim&countries=all

¹⁰ USAID ADS 303. Accessed at <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303>

IR1 Illustrative Interventions:

- After the lessons learned by MOE and the country's educational institutions, during school closures due to COVID-19,^{11,12} perform an inventory and diagnostic to assess the effectiveness of alternative approaches to face-to-face learning and identify gaps in remote and in-person foundational skills training, instruction, and materials.
- Support the MoE to update the curriculum for foundational reading, writing, math, and SEL skills instruction in grades 4-6 and *primero basico* for in-person, remote, and hybrid modalities.
- Provide training and ongoing coaching support to teachers on foundational reading, writing, math, and SEL instruction for grades 4-6 and *primero basico* for in-person, remote, and hybrid modalities. Training and coaching will integrate support from the National Educational Coaching System (SINAE) and/or universities where possible.
- Align teaching and learning materials (TLMs) to the updated curriculum for foundational reading, writing, math, and SEL skills in grades 4-6 and *primero basico*, and support MOE and municipal governments to deliver copies of the materials to each student in the target areas.
- Support teachers and schools to conduct regular assessments, both formative and summative, to inform instruction. Training and coaching to teachers will emphasize regular assessment.
- Partner with local universities to improve pre-service training for teachers of foundational reading, math, and SEL skills, aligning pre-service with in-service training. BEQT may partner with local colleges and universities to develop a training program for teachers to become certified coaches in foundational skills (SEL included) under the UDL approach.
- To promote inclusive education, the BEQT activity should incorporate an approach known as Universal Design for Learning (UDL)¹³ understood as the promotion of quality education that respects individual differences. The inclusive education perspective promotes positive acceptance of personal, social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, physical and gender differences. Inclusive education seeks to support learning for all, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups including students with disabilities, indigenous children, and girls, by promoting access to education on a full and equitable basis with others.

¹¹ https://issuu.com/_dca/docs/publicaci_n_legal_del_diario_de_cen_2c7c01c5d6b562

¹² <https://lahora.gt/coprecovid-lanza-la-estrategia-para-retorno-seguro-a-clases-en-2021/>

¹³ USAID Universal Design for Learning to Help All Children Learn to Read Toolkit (2019). Accessed at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/universal-design-learning-help-all-children-read-0>

IR1 Illustrative Results:

- Diagnostic/needs assessment conducted to identify gaps in remote and in-person foundational reading, writing, math, and social and emotional skills training, instruction, and materials.
- Foundational reading, writing, math, and SEL curriculum for grades 4-6 and *primero basico* improved. Inclusive UDL approach for quality education that respects individual differences integrated into the curriculum.
- Teacher performance of foundational skills instruction improved across in-person, distance, and hybrid learning modalities.
- Teaching and learning materials developed/improved and distributed to each teacher and student in the program.
- Regular assessments conducted to understand the progress of each learner.
- Partnerships with universities established to improve and align pre-service teacher training for foundational skills instruction with in-service training and coaching.

IR2. School management systems strengthened

The aim of this IR is to strengthen school management systems to achieve coherence in policy and implementation and ensure learners are enrolling, attending, learning, and transitioning through the upper primary grades to *primero basico*. To strengthen Guatemalan school management systems, BEQT will focus efforts at different levels in the system, potentially supporting the MOE, departmental and municipal governments, school districts, and schools.

IR2 Illustrative Interventions:

- Strengthen the capacity of school administration to monitor student enrollment, attendance, and transition to subsequent grades. This may include supporting the development and implementation of early warning systems that alert school administrators and teachers to students that are at-risk of dropping out.
- Support counseling and psychosocial support of students and teachers at the school level.
- BEQT will also support MOE to incorporate benchmarks for grades 4-6 and *primero basico* reading and math outcomes aligned to internationally recognized standards such as the Global Proficiency Framework.¹⁴

¹⁴ Global Proficiency Framework. Accessed at <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/global-proficiency-framework-reading-and-mathematics>

- Explore the possibility of policy change with the MOE to require automatic enrollment for learners moving from grade 6 to *primero básico*.
- BEQT will explore the possibility of policy change with the MOE to require the school principal be an established position in schools.

These actions are expected to happen within the first year of implementation.

- To address the limited number of seats in lower secondary, BEQT will explore options for opening up more seats, implementing flexible distance learning modalities such as through radio, and subsidizing transportation costs for those living more than five kilometers away from the nearest secondary school¹⁵.
- BEQT will seek to link to the health and other sector activities where possible to provide access to WASH facilities in schools to improve access, especially for girls.
- BEQT work with the host country education management with DIGEDUCA to improve data collection and utilization. The last time learning outcomes were collected for learners in grades 3 and 6 was 2014. With the impact of COVID-19, it is important to understand where young learners are in their foundational skills and how much remediation and differentiation is needed.
- BEQT will work at the subnational level with municipalities¹⁶ strengthening their investments in quality education¹⁷, likely to include at a minimum appropriate teaching and learning materials for all teachers and students and quality training/support for teachers, and key transitions using evidence and channeling the guidance and tools that MOE Departmental Education Offices provide to achieve results in their territories. Students have unique codes that can be used to track their progress in the system. In Guatemala, municipalities receive resources from the central government by law, in addition they manage resources assigned by the Development Councils National System, and have limited authority to collect taxes.

IR2 Illustrative Results:

- Capacity of administration and systems of both primary and lower secondary schools strengthened to monitor student enrollment, attendance and transition.
- Counseling and psychosocial support (PSS) provided to at-risk students and teachers who need assistance.

¹⁵ exitoescolarenciclobasico.org/oportunidades-de-aprendizaje

¹⁶ Clusters of municipal governments which share a common interest.

¹⁷ In 2019 Guatemala passed the Decentralization Law ratifying future dissemination of authorities to municipal leaders and empowering them to become more influential in managing education within their community.

- Data about the education system related to quality of education and transitions in grades 4-6 and *primero básico* collected, analyzed, and utilized to inform policy and budgetary decisions.
- Benchmarks for reading, math, and SEL as well as policies established to be implemented in grades 4-6 and the *primero básico* of lower secondary of the participants' schools.
- Partnerships and linkages to other sectors such as health and transportation established to improve access to quality education and transition for all learners in the target areas.
- Local data collection systems improved, including the MOE's Directorate for Evaluation and Research to reactivate measurement for foundational skills.

IR3. Community and family support to improve foundational skills and transition improved

This component will focus on increasing engagement with communities and families to support foundational skills practice outside of school as well as enrollment, attendance, and transitions in school. This will likely entail exploring flexible modalities for education, development and distribution of community education resources, guidance and training for families and communities to support remote learning, and subsidies for transportation for learners that live far from school.

IR3 Illustrative Interventions:

- As many as 20 percent of young learners are dropping out of the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the anticipation of more abandoning school.¹⁸ Therefore, BEQT will explore the feasibility of providing technical support to communities and families for learners in grades 1-6 and *primero basico* to support their access to education and learning at home. With distance learning materials developed through Lifelong Learning, BEQT could potentially support the implementation of these materials and of distance learning as a flexible modality for early primary learners.
- The increased community and family support may entail building upon the *Juntas Escolares*, which are civil society organizations composed of parents of students and teachers, whose objective is to work together to improve education services in their communities. The *Juntas Escolares* contribute to and participate in the decentralization of the education system by optimizing the administration of resources destined for their communities. The *Juntas Escolares* could play a role in enrollment, attendance, learning, and transition of all learners in the target areas.

¹⁸ Ferdy Montepeque, 2020, "Educación, bajo la sombra de la deserción y la brecha digital," elPeriodico World Review. Accessed at: <https://especiales.elperiodico.com.gt/aniversario24/educacion-bajo-la-sombra-de-la-desercion-y-la-brecha-digital.html>

- Community members participate in college level certified coaching programs and PSS to increase academic and social and emotional support to students.

IR3 Illustrative Results:

- Reading skills practice outside of school increased.
- Community support improved to increase and maintain student enrollment, attendance, learning, and transition.
- BEQT prevented school dropout in selected municipalities for a cluster of secondary and primary schools geographical connected. The needs assessment presented an estimate of the percentage of the school population requiring support with their foundational skills. Half of the population were indigenous, female or children with disabilities.
- BEQT, together with community leadership, increased municipal education investment and strengthened governance systems through progressive policies, partnerships, and capacity building.
- BEQT collaborated with municipalities to partner with the private sector and leveraged resources to be invested in the priorities defined by constituents and municipal authorities, in line with central MOE priorities. Education quality investments will be defined based on data and evidence available on best practices to improve learning outcomes.
- BEQT expanded the resources available to invest in education quality at the municipal level in three municipalities of the departments of Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Quiché and San Marcos.
- BEQT developed a college level certified coaching program and PSS for teaching and community members to increase student's support.

IR4. Local subrecipient(s) performance improved

In line with the Journey to Self-Reliance and the New Partnership Initiative, a key objective of BEQT is to build capacity of new and underutilized local partners to become qualified lead implementers of foundational skills development and student transition activities in rural Guatemala.

By the end of year 4 of the award, the prime implementing partner will inform USAID of the potential suitability of the Transition Award application. The recommendation will discuss how the proposed local subrecipient(s) meets the above criteria for the Transition Award.

IR4 Illustrative Activities:

- Develop the capacity of the local subrecipient(s) to become more capable of receiving a direct award from USAID or other donors.
- Provide technical assistance to local subrecipient(s) to partner with and support local governments.
- Provide technical assistance to the local subrecipient(s) in the areas of institutional management and domestic resource mobilization.
- Build capacity of local subrecipient(s) to take over management of Results 1 and 2 of this activity on improved foundational skills development and increased rate of student transition to lower secondary education.

IR4 Illustrative Results:

- Organizational performance improved to the selected sub-recipient(s) receiving organizational capacity development support.
- Technical assistance provided to the selected sub-recipient(s) in the following key organizational areas: 1) Legal Structure, 2) financial management and internal control systems, 3) procurement systems, 4) Human resources systems, 5) Project Performance Management, and 6) organization sustainability. BEQT built capacity to the local organization to support students to access foundational skills (reading, math and SEL)
- Assistance to the selected sub-recipient(s) provided to ultimately prepare it for a Non-U.S. Organization Pre-award Survey (NUPAS) or a similar detailed analysis in accordance with ADS 303.3.9.1 that achieves the same objectives as the NUPAS.
- Deficiencies identified in the NUPAS or similar analysis mentioned above were corrected to ensure compliance with USAID regulations and policies.

8. Other Considerations

Cross-cutting principles

The following section outlines the cross-cutting principles that will guide this activity. They are necessary components to ensure that beneficiaries receive quality services free of stigma and discrimination.

Indigenous Engagement, Community Ownership, and Inclusion

Activities must be developed and implemented in coordination with local communities and in response to their self-identified needs and priorities. The active engagement with indigenous peoples in design and implementation of local initiatives, as well as national and local

policy-making processes, is necessary to achieve sustainability, and the organization in charge of implementing the activity will work, wherever possible, with and through local systems and organizations. During consultations and audience research conducted by USAID, community members have emphasized the importance they place on donors consulting with potential beneficiaries and with local authorities before carrying out the program of activities or specific interventions and the necessity of collaboration between communities and local authorities to meet the needs of the population. Similarly, they expressed frustration at the historical lack of opportunity for effective participation for reasons that range from patterns of discrimination, risks of persecution for participation and a need to focus survival priorities in other areas. The organization will engage with indigenous peoples through existing networks and as members of the Advisory Committee to prioritize activities according to indigenous people's needs and preferred approaches.

Youth

Guatemala's youth bulge presents significant challenges for the country as many youth are unemployed or under-employed. USAID's strategic approach to youth encapsulates four core domains (assets, agency, contributions and enabling environment) for youth to develop strong socio-emotional and life skills to bolster them in adulthood. Providing youth with education and employment opportunities is imperative for Guatemala's future growth and for the U.S.; young people under 18 years old comprised 10 percent of Guatemalans apprehended on the southern U.S. border in 2019. Family units including children and youth comprised 70 percent of all apprehensions during the same period. Addressing these challenges is essential for youth to meaningfully participate in the Guatemalan economy rather than seeking opportunities outside the country. Further, these youth are Guatemala's future leaders; substantively supporting and engaging with youth presents a significant opportunity to influence America's future allies. USAID will seek to include youth in decision-making and other empowerment activities across the portfolio to give them a voice in Guatemala's future and strengthen recognition of the value they bring to organizations and decision-making bodies. These efforts will also strengthen their ties to Guatemala, presenting substantive alternatives to migration.

Gender

USAID's commitment to advance gender equity and to pursue gender as a key development issue must be fully reflected in this activity. Gender considerations must be integrated into the activities, ensuring that men and women, as well as vulnerable groups, benefit from USAID support and that gender awareness is built into the activities. The history of exclusion and isolation of women in the WH, as well as their limited experience engaging with national institutions, means that measures must be taken to provide them with the tools to participate in activities and opportunities. The prime implementing partner must ensure all interventions comply with the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy to enhance women's empowerment, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and reduce gender gaps. The activity will seek to address the underlying, gender-based constraints to behavior change and demand for and use of health services, working with both sexes and across age groups to increase effectiveness. Quality of services will be defined to include cultural competency and

gender equitable service provision. According to USAID’s 2018 Gender Assessment: “The main challenge that women face in participating in USAID/Guatemala projects is related to their limited levels of personal autonomy coupled with time poverty. This is particularly the case for married women, or adolescents and young women still living in their family homes.”

Sustainability

The prime implementing partner will identify, build on, and scale activities that will lead to sustainable changes in the young learners’ foundational skills development and transition from primary school to *primero basico* of the Guatemalan population. It is anticipated that with the Recipient’s TA, GOG efforts will be sustained beyond the life of the activity, and therefore an exit strategy should be clearly defined from the beginning. Throughout implementation, the organization will assess the commitment and ability of GOG institutions to take on USAID-funded interventions. Annual reports, a preliminary report on year 4 will include a section on the transition and sustainability status of specific interventions selected by USAID. Collaboration with other USAID activities: Maintaining effective communication and collaboration mechanisms with other USAID and other donor programs will be necessary, especially at the municipality and community level. The Recipient will be able to play a central role in implementing and advancing activities in conjunction with USAID sector programs for the WH, including activities in health, education, agriculture/value-chain, WASH, governance and FTF activities. The prime implementing partner must submit concrete plans to communicate, coordinate, and harmonize work with select USAID partners in the WH.

Climate Risk Management

Climate risk management (CRM) is required for all USAID-supported projects, with limited exceptions. Climate risk is the potential for negative consequences on activity objectives and/or outcomes due to changing climatic conditions. The focus of CRM at USAID is on the risk to USAID development programming. The CRM process may also identify potential development opportunities associated with current and expected climatic and meteorological changes, including chances to achieve additional development objectives (including increasing climate resilience and reducing GHG emissions).

Climate risks can be manifested through potentially severe adverse consequences for development programs resulting from the interaction of climate-related hazards with the vulnerability of societies and systems. A climate risk may arise when an intervention element, target, or beneficiary is exposed to a climate hazard such as higher temperatures, flooding or drought. The level of risk increases both as the severity and probability of negative impact increases. Per USAID policy, moderate and high climate risks must be addressed in the activity design and/or during implementation. In some cases, USAID may accept a/some risk(s) upon consideration of tradeoffs and how USAID can best achieve its development objectives.

Climate risk ratings are defined as:

- Low climate risk - climate change is unlikely to materially impact achievement or sustainability of activity outcomes.
- Moderate climate risk - climate change may materially impact achievement or sustainability of activity outcomes.
- High climate risk - climate change is likely or highly likely to materially impact achievement or sustainability of activity outcomes.

Climate variability and change is expected to have significant impacts on Guatemala's development goals, and is likely to negatively affect Sustainable Forest Management outcomes if it is not considered during activity implementation. Projected changes in Guatemala are expected to include increasing temperature and decreasing precipitation by 2050. The duration of the canícula is likely to increase and rainfall patterns will become increasingly variable with heavy rainfall events followed by dry days, triggering more droughts and flooding.¹⁹

All of these changes are likely to have direct negative impacts on activity outcomes. As temperatures and precipitation decrease, the risk of fire will increase, making fire management more difficult (and more important in the long-term). Pest outbreaks are likely to become more common in both the forest and the agricultural sectors, threatening overall productivity and cutting into profits. Increasing heat and drought will threaten viability of reforestation and natural regeneration and heat stress can reduce worker productivity. Prime implementing partner shall consider the identified climate risks when proposing interventions and explain how they will account for these risks.

Integrated Conflict-Sensitive Analysis

USAID/Guatemala considers social conflict dynamics in all activities to support the overarching goal of a more secure Guatemala that fosters greater socio-economic development and sustainably manages its natural resources. Conflict sensitivity encourages organizations to understand and track conflict dynamics in the contexts in which they are working. As changes arise, organizations must adapt their activities to minimize their potential negative effects and build upon their positive effects on conflict. The application of conflict sensitivity usually does not require a major restructuring of an activity or an explicit focus on peacebuilding; adjusting small activity details can have significant impacts on interaction with the conflict context.

¹⁹ 2017 USAID Climate Change Risk Profile Guatemala:

https://www.climatechange.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID%20ATLAS_Climate%20Change%20Risk%20Profile_Guatemala.pdf

In an effort to ensure interventions are conflict-sensitive, USAID/Guatemala requires that activities: a) do not inadvertently create or exacerbate social conflict; b) factor in the possible impact of existing or potential conflict on staff, implementing partners, and the activities themselves; c) seek appropriate opportunities to mitigate tensions and sources of conflict; and d) support constructive collaboration between communities in conflict when possible.

As part of a conflict-sensitive approach, the prime implementing partner must ensure that all activities undertaken do not worsen social conflict dynamics in activity sites and support constructive collaboration between communities in conflict, when possible. As part of building a foundation for social cohesion while also pursuing the sectoral objectives of this activity, the project must reflect awareness of impacts of trauma on local staff, beneficiaries, and communities, and incorporate strategies to strengthen trauma resilience. Resources on conflict sensitive practices, tools, and literature can be found at:

<http://www.dmeforpeace.org/peacexchange/>,

<http://cdacollaborative.org/publication/the-do-no-harm-framework-for-analyzing-the-impact-of-assistance-on-conflict-a-handbook>, and

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/Guatemala_Conflict_Vulnerability_Assessment.pdf.

Behavior Change Communication

USAID seeks to include Behavior Change Communication (BCC) as a strategy to generate and enhance the generalized support needed for empowerment and sustainable change. USAID considers social and behavior change to be a product of multiple overlapping levels of influence, including individual, interpersonal, community, and organizational, as well as political and environmental factors. As such, social and behavior change communication is a best practice in development organizations; an essential basis for effective programming that deepens and expands the impact and sustainability of development programs. The project shall incorporate BCC in implementation and coordinate with other USAID/Guatemala BCC efforts.

USAID defines BCC as the systematic application of interactive, theory-based, and research-driven communication processes and strategies to create/enhance ‘tipping points’ and social support/mobilization for change at the levels of individual, community, and society (enabling environment). SBCC employs communications strategies in three areas of action: Interpersonal, Social Mobilization, and Advocacy. High-quality BCC is characterized by grounding in behavior change theory; use of a proven programmatic process; attention to both individual behaviors and interpersonal and social influences; and bi-directional, interactive communication.

BCC is based on formative research among audiences to develop and distribute coordinated messages, materials, and activities through a range of different communication channels, including but not limited to traditional mass media and social media; community-level activities; interpersonal communication; and non-traditional media.

Collaborating, Learning and Adapting

This activity is expected to incorporate a systematic CLA approach that involves strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management. The CLA approach is based on the understanding that development efforts yield more effective results when coordinated and collaborative; test promising, new approaches in a continuous manner to identify improvements and efficiencies; and build on what works and eliminate what does not. CLA creates the conditions for fostering broader development success by:

- **Collaborating:** Facilitating collaboration internally and with external stakeholders to understand local systems, context, and relationships, as well as to strengthen locally-led socio-economic development. This will also facilitate learning and knowledge sharing among projects that are related and complementary to this activity and the institutions it seeks to strengthen.
- **Learning:** Generating and incorporating new learning, innovations, and performance information into the project strategy to inform management and design. USAID expects the prime implementing partner to use innovative methodologies for learning and data collection. In addition, the Recipient/contractor should define and execute a MEL Plan as a tool to support CLA and capture project progress and performance to ensure objectives are being met and learning captured.
- **Adapting:** Translating learning from implementation experience or external sources into strategic and programmatic adjustments; considering changing conditions and emerging risks and game changers. This is achieved by adjusting work plans, interventions, management structures, and operational approaches to account for contextual shifts or learning from a team's experience, while explicitly sharing a clear, well-articulated rationale for adjustments along the way.

The Recipient will develop and apply strong internal MEL systems. As part of the project's implementation, the Recipient, working closely with USAID/Guatemala, should develop dynamic MEL practices that contribute to CLA. Performance monitoring will continue throughout project implementation, while learning phases will provide opportunities for intensive analysis, reflection, and evaluation.

COVID-19 Considerations

Given the effects of COVID-19 and its epidemiological development, USAID expects this activity to adopt and tailor its interventions within the context of COVID-19 to ensure the safety of its implementing staff and beneficiaries, while also meeting its goals. A close coordination must be developed with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, USAID IPs, municipal and local governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other counterparts to promote synergies in achieving health and nutrition outcomes, but also limiting risks of spreading the disease both in health providers as in the general population. The available

evidence shows that COVID-19 clinical picture in children and pregnant women is usually mild, but independently of the disease severity, confirmed or suspected cases must receive the appropriate infection and prevention care to decrease and avoid the devastating impacts of COVID-19 community spread. Innovative modalities of strengthening human resources skills and providing services will be of the utmost importance for achieving targets and avoiding the disease spread simultaneously.

11. Period of Performance

The anticipated activity period of performance is five years, starting on the date of the signature of the award.