



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Date: April 22, 2024

To: Potential Applicants

Edel Perez

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Date: 2024.04.22 17:51:57 Z

From: Edel Perez-Campos, Director Regional Acquisition & Assistance Office

Reference: Strengthening Integrated Health Services Activity (SIHSA)
Notice of Funding Opportunity No.: 72063624RFA00002

Subject: Amendment No. 1

The purpose of this amendment is to:

1. Extend the closing date and time for applications submission from May 15, 2024, to June 07, 2024 at 9:00AM GMT
2. Provide answers to the questions received by the due date of March 25, 2024; and
3. Revise Notice of Funding Opportunity No.: 72063624RFA00002. All changes made to the revised NOFO are highlighted in yellow.

All other terms of the Notice for Funding Opportunity remain unchanged.

Technical :

1. **Question:** Section A.IV Project Framework B. Results, Intermediate Results and Expected Outcomes A. Results-p. 16-17, On page 16 it says that “Outcomes that the SIHSA activity will achieve... are expected to contribute towards select targets planned for Sierra Leone’s Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition Strategy as follows...” *Are the targets which immediately follow the above sentence SIHSA’s targets that the project is expected to achieve in its respective districts by the end of Year 5? Or Sierra Leone’s country targets, to which SIHSA will contribute?*

Response: Yes, by the end of SIHSA year 5, the activity is expected to achieve the targets cited on NOFO pp 16-17. These are SIHSA specific targets.

2. **Question:** Section A.IV Project Framework B. Results, Intermediate Results and Expected Outcomes A. Results: p. 16-17 -Reduce maternal mortality ratio..., stillbirth rate..., neonatal and under five mortality rates... and adolescent birth rate..., *Should these results be achieved by 2025?*

Response: See response to question #1.

3. **Question .** Section A.IV Project Framework B. Results, Intermediate Results and Expected Outcomes A. Results: p. 16-17 - Reduce malaria morbidity by 40 percent from 2015 levels... *Should this result be achieved by the end of the project or by the end of the PMI Strategy 2021-2026?*

Response: Yes, it is expected the recipient will achieve this result by the end of the period of performance of the SIHSA activity. During the first two years of SIHSA, the activity would align with the U.S. President’s Malaria Initiative Strategy 2021-2026. Once the Sierra Leone national malaria strategy is finalized in 2025, the SIHSA activity would then target achieving the new national goals by the end of SIHSA year 5. USAID will have consultations with the recipient and the award may be modified accordingly.

4. **Question .** *In the Project Results Framework on NOFO page 14, each of the result areas have designated Level of Effort (LOE): 25% each for Results Areas 1-3, 15% for Result Area 4, and 10% for Result Area 5. Can USAID please clarify whether these LOEs refer only to the portion of personnel costs that needs to be under this ceiling for each of these result areas, or the total cost of the proposal which will be inclusive of personnel and all other costs?*

Response: The LOE percentages are merely intended to guide applicants in their resource planning. The budget narrative should contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs structure and readily see how it relates to meeting the objectives of the SIHSA activity.

5. **Question:** *Can USAID confirm that the LOE percent stated per result for the project result framework on page 14 is intended to guide applicants in their resource planning per result, and does not indicate a requirement for the budget to be split per result.*

Response: See response to question #4.

6. **Question:** *Page 45-47 describes the narrative requirements to describe the Technical Approach and includes sub-sections for each of the result areas (though does not explicitly call them Results). However, there is no specific subsection for Result 2. Was this omission intentional, or does USAID expect this description within the already-prescribed sub-sections?*

Response: Please refer to pages 19 - 20 of the NOFO. Result 2 begins in the bottom third of page 19, with Sub-result areas and illustrative indicators continuing through page 20.

7. **Question:** We assume that district strengthening (Result 3) and FP/RH/MNCH related activities will be addressed by the MOH and other donors working in the SIHSA malaria-only districts, and thus SIHSA will only focus on malaria-specific interventions and services in these districts. *Is this a correct assumption? Will SIHSA be expected to implement malaria-specific SBC interventions in these districts (Result 2)?*

Response: In both the malaria-only districts and the integrated districts SIHSA will focus on malaria-specific interventions and services that include Result 2, Result 4, and Result 5.

8. **Question:** Pages 5 and 14 (Project Results Framework) of Section A include the following five results and with corresponding sub-results:

1. Access to and quality of primary health care services (defined as family planning (FP), reproductive health (RH), maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) and Malaria) improved.
2. Key health behaviors adopted and sustained by individuals, households, and communities.
3. District management, leadership, and governance of health improved.
4. Functional and technical capacity improved for local organizations in the health sector.
5. National accountability for primary health care services increased.

However, on pages 45 to 47 of Section D and on pages 66 to 68 of Section E, four results are included as follows:

- Sub-criterion 1.1: Access to and Quality of Primary Health Care Services Improved
- Sub-criterion 1.2: District Management, Leadership, and Governance in Health Improved
- Sub-criterion 1.3: Functional and Technical Capacity Improved for Local Organizations in the Health Sector
- Sub-criterion 1.4: Adaptive Management: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
 - a. *Would USAID confirm that Sub-criterion 1.1 in Section D and Section E includes results 1 and 2 from the Project Results Framework in Section A?*

Response: Confirmed. Sub-criterion 1.1, as described in Sections D and E on NOFO pages 66-68, includes both Result 1 and Result 2 from the SIHSA Results Framework. It includes Result 1 “Access to and quality of primary health care services improved.” And it also includes Result 2 “Key healthy behaviors adopted and sustained by individuals, households and communities.”

- b. *Would USAID confirm that Sub-criterion 1.2 in Section D and Section E includes results 3 and 5 from the Project Results Framework in Section A?*

Response: Confirmed. Sub-criterion 1.2, as described on NOFO page 67, includes both SIHSA Results Framework Result 3 and Result 4 of the SIHSA Results Framework. It includes Result 3 “District management, leadership, and governance in health improved.” And, it also includes Result 5 of the SIHSA Results Framework: “National level accountability for primary health care services increased.”

Rapid Response/Crisis Modifier

9. **Question:** *Will anticipatory actions as well as emergency response activities be eligible to trigger a request to utilize funds?*

Response: No. The Rapid Response/Program Modifier is intended for emerging public health crises and will be considered only when USAID requests a plan which will guide the rapid response or use of the modifier.

Innovation Fund

10. **Question:** Section A.V Innovation Programming p. 26-27, “The goal of the Innovation Programming fund is to galvanize local entities’ involvement towards improving health outcomes, to catalyze upon local expertise to promote locally led development. It is expected that the Recipient will allocate a maximum of \$1,000,000 of the total activity budget to create and establish the “Innovation Programming” fund as part of its approach to support the demonstration of innovative models through local partnerships. This innovation programming is separate from the requirement to transition 2-3 sub-recipients during the life of the agreement. This programming is expected to support a minimum of two promising models or

innovations with subsequent support for scale up starting year two (2).” *Could USAID please clarify whether the Innovation Programming budget and activities should be described under a specific Result? Should the Innovation Programming fund be listed in the budget as a single lump-sum line item, or broken out according to specific activities? And if it should be broken out, how would USAID recommend Applicants identify budget lines as pertaining to the Innovation Programming?*

Response: It is up to each applicant to determine how to incorporate Innovation Fund activities into their technical approach. USAID has no recommendation on the budget other than to ensure that the narrative provides sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs structure and readily see how it relates to meeting the objectives of the SIHSA activity. See NOFO p. 27 Innovation Fund objectives.

11. **Question:** Section B.2 Innovation Programming - p. 32-33 “As part of the application submitted to USAID, the recipient will propose its preferred procurement management model which should inform whether the Recipient intends a central procurement process be used by the prime Recipient or by the sub-awardee.” *Could USAID please clarify the intention of this sentence? Please also confirm that the required grants manual and preferred procurement management model will be developed and submitted after award, once the innovation programming small grants fund is developed.*

Response: The preferred procurement management model should be included in the Innovation Funds/Grant Manual that will be submitted post award and does not have to be included in the application.

12. **Question:** *Page 32 of the NOFO references that the Innovation Fund can be used to galvanize private sector companies. In addition to the Innovation Fund, can private sector activities, or that of private for-profit groups, be funded from the budget for core activities?*

Response: Yes, private sector companies and private for-profit groups may be funded if it fits within the technical approach and leads to reaching SIHSA objectives.

13. **Question:** *Could USAID please clarify if the “Innovation Programming Fund ” described on NOFO pages 26-27, is intended to focus on idea stage innovations across sectors or can for profit early-stage innovators can also be considered for small grant funding?*

Response: See response to question #12.

14. **Question:** *Please confirm that private and public sector entities would not be eligible recipients of innovation funding.*

Response: Public sector entities and institutions are **not eligible** for Innovation Fund grants.

15. **Question:** *Is the \$300k threshold per award or per innovation? Can an innovation receive more than 1 award over the course of SIHSA?*

Response: The \$300,000 threshold is for each grant/innovation activity grant established by the Recipient. No innovation activity grantee is expected to receive more than \$300,000 in funding.

16. **Question:** Is the small grants fund anticipated to make awards in year 1?

Response: The small grant funds (innovation funds) may be issued in year 1, this will depend on the recipient's technical approach and organizational capacity.

Questions on Key Personnel

Key Personnel Documentation

17. **Question:** On page 54 of the NOFO, it states, "*Annex C. Key Personnel CVs and References - NTE 2 pages for each proposed candidate for each of the key personnel positions*" Can USAID kindly confirm that this is 2 pages for each KP, so if we proceed with five KP, we have 10 pages for Annex C?

Response: Confirmed. Two (2) pages are allocated for each Key Personnel.

18. **Question:** On page 54, Section D.5.4, item 3 includes: "Key Personnel CVs and References [are not to exceed] 2 pages for each proposed candidate for each of the key personnel positions." To allow for a comprehensive presentation of key personnel relevant experience and work history, would USAID consider increasing the page limit for each key personnel CV to 3 pages for each key personnel?

Response: No. Two pages only for each CV. References may be provided on a separate page.

19. **Question:** Should Key Personnel references be provided within each candidate's respective CVs, or on a separate page?

Response: References may be provided on a separate page.

20. **Question:** Can USAID confirm that for each Key Personnel candidate, Applicants should provide a 2-page CV, as well as a letter of commitment on a separate page, in addition to the 2-page CV?

Response: Yes, applicants may provide up to 2 pages for key personnel CVs. The letter of commitment may be included as one separate page.

21. **Question:** On page 54 of the NOFO in section 5.4.3, USAID notes that each key personnel CV is not to exceed 2 pages. Would USAID consider increasing the page limit per CV to 3 pages, considering that the CVs must include the references as well?

Response: See response to question #18.

22. **Question:** On page 54, Section D.5.4, item 3 includes: “The CVs for each proposed Key Personnel candidate must include three (3) references, with complete contact information (including email addresses).” Would USAID allow references to be included on a separate page for each CV that is not subject to the page limits of the individual CVs?

Response: See response to question #19.

23. **Question:** On page 54, Section D.5.4, item 3 includes: “Annex must also include a letter of commitment signed by each person proposed as key personnel confirming her/his present intention to serve in the stated position and his/her availability to serve for the term of the proposed award.” Please confirm that the letter of commitment for each key personnel should be included on a separate page that is not subject to the page limits of the individual CVs?

Response: See response to question #20.

24. **Question:** On page 54 or the NOFO, USAID states the following: “[The] annex must also include a letter of commitment signed by each person proposed as key personnel confirming his/her present intention to serve in the stated position and his/her availability to serve for the term of the proposed award. However, on page 52, USAID states that “confirmation of proposed key personnel availability to serve for the full term of the award is strongly preferred.” *Could USAID please confirm commitment to availability for the full term is preferred, and not required?*

Response: Yes, commitment to availability for the full term is strongly preferred, and not required.

25. **Question:** Please confirm that Annex C (described on page 54) can be 2 pages per CV plus 1 page for references (due to the references being required on a separate page on page 52).

Response: Confirmed.

Key Personnel Citizenship & Credentials

26. **Question:** Section D, 5.2.b Key Personnel- p. 49-51, Page 49 says the Director Fin & Ops “must” be an expat. Page 51 says that role is “recommended as expatriate staff.” *Please clarify whether the role is required to be an expatriate.*

Response: No, the role is not required to be an expatriate. The NOFO has been modified.

27. **Question:** The NOFO states that the Director of Finance and Operations (DFO) must be an expatriate. Is it required that the individual who fills this position be a citizen of the United States?

Response: See response to question #26.

28. **Question :** Section D.5.2.b (p. 51) outlines the minimum requirements for the Director of Finance and Operations. Would USAID consider accepting a bachelor's degree with additional years of relevant experience for the educational requirement?

Response : Yes, please see the modification.

29. **Question:** For the Director of Finance and Operations, would USAID consider candidates that have considerable experience (over 10 years) in lieu of a Masters' Degree, which is currently required?

Response: Yes, please see the modification.

30. **Question:** Would USAID consider reducing the number of years of experience for the Chief of Party (COP) position in order to expand the pool of qualified Sierra Leonean national candidates?

Response: Yes, please see the modification.

31. **Question:** Page 50 states that "The Recipient should provide descriptions and qualifications for each of the positions." Would USAID prefer that information during the proposal stage or after award? If during the proposal stage, may Applicants have 1 additional page per Key Personnel position allowed within Annex C's page limit (5 additional pages total in Annex) or should it be provided elsewhere?

Response: The initial application must include the documentation and qualifications for each proposed Key Personnel candidate. For the Key Personnel documents required at application stage, Annex C's page limit remains unchanged.

32. **Question:** Section D, 5.2. Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance- P. 52-53, *Is the Applicant required to use the Template provided in Annex 1 (p. 79) to complete the "Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance" portion of the Technical Application as described in Section D, 5.3? Or is this section of the proposal meant to be written in a narrative format rather than use the table template provided?*

Response: The Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance narrative requirement for the Technical Application is separate from the past performance reference check. The Applicants must utilize the Past Performance Reference template in Annex 1 Pg. 79 to provide past performance references. The Past Performance Template (for references) should be

included in the cost application. USAID leaves it to the applicant to determine how best to communicate their experience and capacity following the guidance under section 5.3 Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance.

33. **Question:** On page 52 of the NOFO, in section 5.3, USAID notes that the institutional capacity and history of past performance section should not exceed 3 pages. Would USAID consider increasing the page limit for this section to allow applicants to best display their qualifications?

Response: The number of pages under the Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance remain the same: NTE 3 pages.

General Staffing Questions

34. **Question:** Can USAID please clarify if equivalent years of relevant experience can replace a required degree?

Response: Yes. Verified educational certificates (including training certificates) plus years of relevant work experience could serve as an equivalent to a required degree. Please see modification to the key personnel section.

35. **Question:** Can USAID please clarify if educational certificates and years of work experience can serve as an equivalent to a required degree?

Response: See response to question #34.

Applicant's Institutional Capacity/History of Past Performance

36. **Question:** Section D, 5.3 Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance -P. 52-53, *In the Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance section, should the Applicant include the capacity and past performance of its proposed subrecipients?*

Response: Yes.

37. **Question:** Must applicants use the Past Performance Template on page 79 of the NOFO in order to draft the 5.3. Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance section of the Technical Application?

Response: See response to question #32.

38. **Question:** Should Applicants draft a narrative (NTE 3 pages) for the 5.3 Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance section of the Technical Application, and also provide a certain number of Past Performance references drafted in alignment with the Past Performance Template provided on page 70 of the NOFO? If so, please confirm the number of Past Performance references to be drafted in alignment with the Past Performance Template.

Response: See response to question #32.

Transition Awards

39. **Question:** In Section A.I (p. 5), the NOFO states that "the SIHSA prime recipient will identify 2-3 local organizations to build their technical and organizational capacity during years 1 and 2 of the award, for a transition award in year 3 of the activity." However, SIHSA is structured as a five-year cooperative agreement with a prime recipient and sub-recipients.

A. Given the local partner's direct funding via Transition Award in Y3-5, how does USAID envisage the institutional relationship between the prime implementer of the cooperative agreement and the Transition Awardees during that timeframe?

Response: The initial relationship may be one of prime and sub-recipient, with mutual accountability and decision-making so that local leadership is promoted throughout the entire award. Once USAID has issued a transition award, it is expected that the SIHSA prime recipient will continue to provide mentorship to the transition awardee.

B. Per section A.VII (pp. 27-28), sub-recipients should be able to "independently manage significant (a minimum of 20%) technical and budgetary components of the SIHSA activity beginning in year three (3) of the award." Given that the prime recipient is expected to provide mentorship to the sub-recipient, can USAID kindly clarify what is meant by "independently manage"?

Response: Per ADS 303mbb, the transition award recipient must be capable of performance without reliance on the initial award recipient.

40. **Question:** Is two (2) the minimum number of Transition Award sub-recipients the Prime recipient is to identify under this Activity, and is three (3) the maximum number of Transition Award sub-recipients the Prime recipients is to identify under this Activity?

Response: It is expected that two (2) Transition Award sub-recipients would be the minimum and up to three would be the maximum. See NOFO p. 27.

Capacity Building of Local Partners

41. **Question:** Please confirm that local organization capacity strengthening activities (with intended 15% LOE) are not limited to the 2-3 organizations identified as potential primes for transition awards and that any local organization can receive capacity strengthening support.

Response: It is expected that all local organization sub-awardee(s) under the SIHSA award will receive organizational capacity strengthening as well as technical capacity strengthening. This capacity strengthening is not limited to just the 2-3 local organizations identified as potential transition awardees.

42. **Question:** If the Transition Plan is to be submitted at the end of year 1, when is the initial transition plan intended to be submitted?

Response: Please refer to NOFO page 71, Table 1: Summary of Required Reports. The due date for the Transition Plan for proposed sub-recipients is to be determined (TBD) upon award signature.

43. **Question:** Page 39 states “Applicants MUST provide as part of the application package; information and supporting documents that prove that local organization proposed for sub-awardee partnerships satisfy the qualifications of a local organization in view of the applicable USAID definition for local organization provided above.” Where should applicants include this information? For example, may applicants include a Technical Annex or a Cost Annex that is not listed in the NOFO?

Response: Yes, applicants may submit a separate attachment (Annex D) with the information required to prove the local organization(s) that are proposed satisfy the qualifications of a local entity.

Sierra Leone Health Sector Partner Landscape Assessment (PLA)

44. **Question:** Please confirm that organizations not identified in Annex 7 may still be eligible as potential prime awardees under transition awards.

Response: Annex 7 -- was posted merely to provide context. It is not a list of the only potential prime awardees to be considered under transition awards. USAID neither requires nor encourages the Prime applicant to engage only with the local health sector organizations named in the NOFO Annex 7 PLA as the 2-3 Transition Award subrecipients under SIHSA. Rather, ALL available, potential local health sector organizations may be considered in the application, provided the organizations meet USAID’s definition of “local entity,” and provided that the proposed local organization would bring skills in the respective health area(s) proposed for that organization by the Prime Applicant.

45. **Question:** Can you describe how Prime applicants and their partners should use the PLA document while developing the application and the SIHSA project design?

Response: See response to question #44.

46. **Question:** Does USAID require or encourage the Prime applicant to engage only the local health sector organizations named in the PLA as the 2-3 Transition Award subrecipients under SIHSA?

Response: See response to question #44.

47. **Question:** Can the Prime applicant propose and engage local health sector organizations as Transition Award sub-recipients who are not among those organizations listed in the PLA?

Response: See response to question #44.

48. **Question:** Can USAID confirm whether applicants are solely expected to partner with the 86 local NGOs that responded to the self-assessment survey covered under Annex 7 of the NOFO, the Sierra Leone Health Sector Partner Landscape Assessment? For Instance, page 19 of Annex 7 states that “After our analysis, we recommend 24 organizations to USAID/Sierra Leone. The 24 organizations invited to participate in the KIIIs comprise the list of recommendations; however, we want to emphasize that all 86 organizations taking the self-assessment survey could be considered potential partners for USAID.” Will USAID accept proposed local NGO sub-recipients beyond the 86 organizations listed in Annex 7?

Response: See response to question #44.

Private Sector Engagement

49. **Question:** Can the Prime applicant engage private sector partners and collaborators in SIHSA implementation who work within any sector or industry, even outside of the health care sector? Does USAID have any preferred private sector activities or industries in terms of private sector engagement?

Response: Yes, the prime applicant may engage private sector partners and collaborators in SIHSA implementation who work within any sector or industry, even outside of the health care sector, provided the private sector engagement (PSE) furthers objectives of the SIHSA activity. And no, USAID does not have any preferred private sector activities or industries in terms of private sector engagement.

50. **Question:** Could USAID please elaborate on the illustrative indicator listed on NOFO page 25, under result 5 “Health Private sector organized – or number of private health sector associations”? Is the expectation to establish new and multiple private associations or to empower the existing associations and integrate sustainability and accountability?

Response: No, the expectation is not to establish new and multiple private associations. SIHSA will enhance MOH capacity to engage with private sector health stakeholders, and promote private sector reporting of its health service delivery data to the MOH and DHIS2.

51. **Question:** Since SIHSA will focus primarily at community and district levels, should the national level private sector engagement interventions be designed to support the efforts of FHM and the Quality of Care Project?

Response: Yes, SIHSA national level efforts would support efforts of FHM and the Quality of Care Project, while also engaging with stakeholders in the private sector and the MOH Private/Public Sector Unit.

Annexes to the Technical Application

52. **Question:** There are 3 required Annexes (Annexes A, B, and C) for the Technical Application, and furthermore, the NOFO states page limits for most Technical Application sections. Can additional Annexes (i.e., Annexes in addition to the required Annexes A, B, and C), be included in the application?

Response: The annexes required for the Technical Application section are:

Annex A: Activity Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) - High-level summary

Annex B: Organogram

Annex C: Key Personnel CVs, References, and Commitment Letters

Annex D. Local Entity Documentation: This annex may be submitted to include the documents proving that the local organizations proposed as sub-recipients satisfy the definition of a local organization.

53. **Question:** On Section 5.4 on page 53, when describing the Activity Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP), USAID writes, “The AMELP must present a high-level summary of the Activity’s Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) (See template in NOFO ANNEX). The applicant will provide a summary of the proposed AMELP methodologies, tools, and processes to be used, in particular, how the applicant will define and measure objectively verifiable outcome and output level indicators and targets for the proposed approach to achieve the Activity goal and all five Activity results areas. It would succinctly discuss the approach to knowledge capture (“learning”).” Could USAID please clarify if applicants are required to provide an Indicator summary table, as shown on page 91, at the proposal stage?

Response: Only the 3-page high-level AMELP summary is required at the proposal stage. The Indicator Summary Table and related AMELP would be submitted after the SIHSA award is made.

54. **Question:** On page 53, Section 5.4 (Annex A) includes: “The applicant will provide a summary of the proposed AMELP methodologies, tools, and processes to be used, in particular, how the applicant will define and measure objectively verifiable outcome and output level indicators and targets for the proposed approach to achieve the Activity goal and all five Activity results areas.” For Annex A, could USAID please confirm that applicants are not required to include a table of indicators, which will be provided with the complete AMELP upon award?

Response: See response to question #53.

55. **Question:** On page 45 of the NOFO, it seeks a timeline, what timeframe is desired, and would USAID offer additional annex space to allow for a PY1 timeline?

Response: The timeline is from beginning to the end of the 5-year award. Applicants are free to select a graphic -- timeline, milestones, or Gantt chart -- or any other approach. Provide a **very brief** narrative re: exit strategy and sustainability plan. Keep within the Technical Application page limit. No additional annex space is allowed.

56. **Question:** Will USAID require an annex for the Past Performance References provided in Annex 1 of the RFA? If not, where should they be included? How many Past Performance References should be provided?

Response: See response to question #32.

57. **Question:** Page 49 of the NOFO requires the organizational structure to be presented in an organogram. Please confirm that this is the same organogram as required on page 50 and as part of Annex B.

Response: Yes, this is the same organogram as required on page 50, Annex B.

58. **Question:** Please confirm that Annex C (described on page 54) can be 2 pages per CV plus 1 page for references (due to the references being required on a separate page on page 52).

Response: Yes, Annex C can be 2 pages per CV, plus one (1) separate page for references.

59. **Question :** May Applicants include an annex with endnotes that does not count against page limit?

Response: No endnotes.

60. **Question:** Please confirm that there is no work plan annex required as part of the application: the Work Plan Template (Page 93, Annex 5) is the intended template for the Annual Work Plan as required for the Awardee only (as described on page 71).

Response: Correct, no work plan annex is required as part of the application. The work plan will be submitted after the award is made.

Technical Approach

61. **Question:** On page 6 of the NOFO, in section A, USAID writes, “based on consultations with the WB and FCDO, USAID identified five districts for focused integrated primary health care services (FP, MNCH, RH, and malaria). USAID, through the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), has been supporting malaria activities in ten districts and, under SIHSA, five districts will have an integrated package of services (MNCH/FP/RH/malaria). In the other five districts, SIHSA will only support malaria interventions.” Can USAID please clarify if SIHSA applicants are expected to take over the malaria activities of PMI in these districts or if PMI will be continuing to operate in these districts alongside SIHSA? Could USAID please clarify the expected package of interventions?

Response: PMI will continue to operate in its current districts alongside SIHSA. SIHSA will be expected to collaborate with other PMI mechanisms. The expected package of interventions for malaria are described in the NOFO. As the SIHSA activity is focused on health facilities at the district level, it will perform malaria case management, as well as malaria data management such as reporting into Sierra Leone HMIS systems and the DHIS2. Sources of information that are publicly available are previous years’ Malaria Operational Plans and the Country Profile on the PMI website in the Sierra Leone section, and the *MOHS 2020 Standard Operating Procedures for the Health Management System:Data Management Procedures Manual I*.

Questions on Procurement of Supplies and Pharmaceuticals

62. **Question:** Could USAID please clarify if applicants will be responsible for budgeting for the procurement of necessary malaria supplies (such as bednets and antimalarials) and pharmaceuticals (for facility and community health needs), or will the applicant instead liaise with PMI and other existing programs in-country to obtain supplies?

Response: SIHSA will not be responsible for procurement of any malaria supplies or commodities.

63. **Question:** Is there another mechanism through which USAID will support procurement of essential medicines and commodities (including family planning methods and malaria

commodities) or is the expectation that the recipient will procure essential medicines and commodities (including consumables) as part of the SIHSA activity?

Response: Yes, USAID uses other existing mechanisms to procure essential medicines and commodities.

64. **Question:** Could USAID please clarify what support (outside of the SIHSA budget), if any, PMI will supply for malaria support in the five SIHSA ‘malaria only’ districts?

Response: See response to question #47.

65. **Question:** On page 10 of the NOFO, USAID writes “See Annex A for more information on malaria programming and priorities.” An Annex A is not provided. Could USAID please provide Annex A?

Response: There is no Annex A related to malaria programming and priorities, as the information intended for that Annex was incorporated into the NOFO. The NOFO has been modified. For further information on malaria programming, please see the US Presidential Malaria Initiative (PMI) website, Sierra Leone section, for Malaria Operational Plans and a Country Profile.

66. **Question:** On page 10 of the NOFO, it states, “See Annex A for more information on malaria programming and priorities. This may be missing or mislabeled, can USAID kindly share it?”

Response: See response to question #50.

Questions on Remuneration of Health Workers

67. **Question:** On page 6, USAID writes, “USAID, through the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), has been supporting malaria activities in ten districts and, under SIHSA, five districts will have an integrated package of services (MNCH/FP/RH/malaria). In the other five districts, SIHSA will only support malaria interventions. In three of these districts, PMI has provided incentives to community health workers (CHWs). SIHSA is expected to continue this in the short-term.” Could USAID please clarify the amount of the incentives that PMI currently provides to CHWs in the districts where SIHSA will assume that responsibility?

Response: In the “Malaria only” SIHSA districts, the PMI support to CHWs is only expected to continue in three districts: Pujehun, Falaba and Kailahun, in line with the existing CHW policy. In all “integrated” SIHSA districts, the awardee should plan and budget for at least one to two years of remuneration to CHWs. The amount to be budgeted will depend on what the current

Sierra Leone national CHW policy states at that time and the number of CHWs in the respective SIHSA intervention districts. Please see Table 2, below.

Note: the reason the table states the equivalent CHW incentives in USD is to stabilize the monthly incentive payments to the CSWs in a context where the Sierra Leone currency is subject to volatility.

Table 2: Monthly incentives for CHWs and Peer Supervisors

Type of CHW	Amount in Leone	Equivalent in USD
CHW in hard to reach	250,000	25
CHW in easy to reach	150,000	15
Peer Supervisor	300,000	30

42

Questions on Technical Application

68. **Question:** Pages 45-47 describes the narrative requirements to describe the Technical Approach and includes sub-sections for each of the result areas (though does not explicitly call them Results). However, there is no specific subsection for Result 2. Was this omission intentional, or does USAID expect this description within the already-prescribed sub-sections?

Response: Please refer to pages 19 - 20 of the NOFO. Result 2 begins in the bottom third of page 19, with Sub-result areas and illustrative indicators continuing through page 20.

69. **Question:** Should the project target tertiary level healthcare facilities (HCFs) as well as primary and secondary?

Response: Tertiary level facilities are not targeted. SIHSA targets primary healthcare facilities, as well as district hospitals in the integrated districts and malaria only districts.

70. **Question:** Does the project intend to include the procurement of essential medical supplies, minor medical equipment, and last mile distribution or will this be addressed in a separate funding mechanism?

Response: Procurement of essential medical supplies will be addressed by separate USAID implementing mechanisms that have a separate USAID funding stream.

71. **Question:** The NOFO outlines that construction will not be authorized under this award, please confirm that the project has no intention to support infrastructure work at health facilities? E.g. expanding labor wards, drilling of boreholes to supply water, procurement of solar systems to provide light?

Response: Supporting infrastructure is not necessarily construction. Decisions to improve infrastructure will be handled through the work planning process in consultation with the USAID Office of Acquisitions and Assistance Agreement Officer for SIHSA.

72. **Question:** Could the project facilitate support to private facilities or is it limited to government facilities only? E.g. faith-based hospitals co-funded by MoH.

Response: Yes, the activity may provide support to private facilities.

73. **Question:** There is a provision for training and capacity building, does that include long-term training e.g. midwifery course for 2-3 years?

Response: USAID suggests that long-term training of 2-3 years is not a good fit with the five-year SIHSA activity. Rather, USAID suggests that shorter term training be considered. Once the SIHSA activity is underway, health worker training needs and training modalities might evolve and the Agreement Officer, together with the USAID/SL Health Office, may consider alternate approaches.

74. **Question:** The project intends to strengthen the referral and follow-up systems. In Sierra Leone a national emergency medical service (NEMS) is in place. Does the project allow the provision of direct support to NEMS ambulances? E.g. maintenance of ambulances, fuel, and provision of DSA for those involved in the referral process.

Response: Supporting NEMS will be left to the discretion of the applicant provided the NEMS support aligns with the SIHSA Results Framework.

75. **Question:** Should the project support One-Health related activities which go beyond MoH, e.g. joint training of community health workers and animal health workers on zoonotic disease messaging to engage their communities?

Response: No. One-Health related activities that go beyond the MOHS are not included in the USAID SIHSA activity.

76. **Question:** Is it possible to make available the reports referenced on page 9 – namely, the World Bank funded Private Health Sector Assessment (Jan 2020) and the health market scoping activity under the USAID Frontier Health Markets program?

Response: The World Bank-funded Private Health Sector Assessment (Jan 2020) is a public document that can be found online. The Sierra Leone health market scoping report by the USAID Frontier Health Markets activity is not publicly-available and will be uploaded soonest to the grants.gov website where the NOFO is posted.

77. **Question:** On page 6, the NOFO states “To address the high newborn mortality, SIHSA will leverage lessons learned from the UNICEF/MOH initiative that supported the establishment of Special Care Baby Units. Successful Applicants will liaise and coordinate closely with the MOH, the WB, FCDO, UNICEF, and GF to harmonize approaches and catalyze investments.” Given SIHSA’s focus on Primary Care Units, does USAID consider Special Care Baby Units- usually in district hospitals – to be part of or closely linked to an integrated primary care system for small or sick newborns?

Response: Yes, Special Baby Care Units are part of the integrated primary care system.

Consortia Formation

78. **Question:** Are there any restrictions as to the number of international and/or local partners in a consortium?

Response: USAID has placed no limits on the number of international and/or local partners in a consortium. Prime applicants should consider the cost and management burden of having many consortium members.

79. **Question:** Can USAID confirm whether sub-recipients on a consortium (e.g., international and local non-governmental organizations) are required to be exclusive to that consortium?

Response: No exclusivity arrangements are required.

80. **Question:** Is it expected that local partners do not enter into exclusivity agreements with international partners to be included on consortia but instead can be on several bids?

Response: See response to question #79.

81. **Question:** Given the local partner assessment outlined in Annex 7 and the list of recommended partners – is it expected that local partners do not enter into exclusivity agreements with international partners to be included on consortia but instead can be on several bids?

Response: USAID does not have “recommended partners” for SIHSA. NOFO Annex 7 is merely illustrative and for context. It is a “snapshot” of the Sierra Leone health sector at the time the survey was conducted in October 2022. Since that time, many of the Sierra Leone organizations listed in Annex 7 may have had changes in personnel, organizational focus and capacity, etc.

82. **Question:** Please confirm that local organizations can be sub-recipients/consortia partners even if they are unlikely to meet the criteria to become possible primes on transition awards.

Response: Yes, local organizations may be sub-recipients/consortia partners even if they are unlikely to meet the criteria to become possible primes on transition awards.

Questions on Annexes to Technical Section of the NOFO

83. **Question:** On page 13 of the NOFO, USAID writes, “Data use and feedback between central level districts remains poor (See Annex B: DHIS2 Evaluation Report).” An Annex B is not provided. Could USAID please provide Annex B?

Response: See modification, Annex 8.

Cost Application

84. **Question:** Section D.6 Business (Cost) Application Format -p. 54, The Cost Application must contain the following sections (which are further elaborated below this listing with the letters for each requirement): *Please confirm that no information is required for section k) workplan co-creation phase and that this section should not be submitted as part of the cost application?* P.54

Response: No information is required for section k) co-creation phase. This would be part of a series of activity start-up activities, such as the initial “award” kick-off conference that USAID will convene with the successful applicant and its team.

85. **Question:** Does USAID expect the budget to have a summary sheet that shows the Level of Effort funding budgeted per what is assigned percentage wise in the Project Results Framework for each of the five result areas?

Response: No, this is not required at the application stage

86. **Question:** Can USAID confirm that the LOE % stated per result (in the Project Results Framework on page 14 of the RFA) is intended to guide applicants in their resource planning per result, and does not indicate a requirement for the budget to be split per result?

Response: The LOE percentages are intended to guide applicants in their resource planning. It is not required that the budget be split per result.

CONTRACTUAL

87. **Question:** Section A.I, Section A.IV - p. 5 “[Th]e prime recipient will identify 2-3 local organizations to build their technical and organizational capacity.... for a transition award in year 3...”. p. 23 “the prime awardee will be responsible for performing organizational capacity assessments (OCA)... to determine which local organizations will be viable for transition awards.”.p. 24 “the prime will work closely with the Mission to determine which local partners are best placed to receive transition awards.” *Noting that the section of the RFA on p. 5 uses the word “recipient” instead of “applicant”, could USAID confirm if applicants are supposed to identify the 2-3 local organizations during the proposal stage, from among the prime applicant’s proposed sub-grantees? Or will the transition partners be identified after the award?*

Response: The SIHSA prime recipient will be expected to identify 2-3 local organizations and build their capacity during years 1 and 2 of the award, and recommend the organization(s) for a transition award. The transition award partner(s) will be identified after the award and the transition plan will be submitted after award upon request by USAID.

88. **Question:** Section A.VI Innovation Programming - p. 2- Rapid Response program modifier. *Is the Active Shock Response Plan due with the proposal?*

Response: No. A Rapid Response/Program Modifier will be activated in the event there is an emerging public health crisis and USAID requests a plan which will guide the rapid response or use of the modifier. The applicants should include a budget supplemental line item of \$4.5M in their budget.

89. **Question:** Section A.VII Transition Awards- Transition Awards: p. 23 “As part of SIHSA year one work planning, the recipient will modify the initial transition plan submitted as needed...”. p. 27 “The prime recipient will be required to submit a transition plan identifying 2-3 local sub-recipients...”. p. 36 “In its Transition Plan, the initial award Recipient will identify potential local organizations...” *Is the Transition Plan due with the proposal as a separate annex, incorporated within the text of the narrative technical application, or at a later date as requested by the AOR?*

Response: The Transition Plan is not required with the application. Only the award recipient will be required to submit the Transition Plan.

90. **Question:** Section A.VII Transition Awards : p. 27-28 “It is expected that the prime implementing partner will adequately prepare their subrecipients’ management, organizational and health technical capacity so that they are able to independently manage significant (a minimum of 20%) technical and budgetary components of the SIHSA activity beginning in year three (3) of the

award.” - *Please confirm that USAID would expect a minimum of 20% of the Year 3-5 budget to be set aside for transition awards.*

Response: The recipient is expected to plan to shift a minimum of 20% of the technical components of the SIHSA in Years 3 through 5 of the activity to the approved local sub-awardees which are being prepared for transition awards. There is no set-aside budget for transition awards within the prime award. The applicant's technical approach will dictate how a subawardee is incorporated into the activity and the respective budgets, and USAID will not make those recommendations. The transition award will be a separate award which will be administered by USAID and subject to funding availability. It is expected that the prime recipient will maintain 80% of the core technical activities as well as continue to mentor the transition award recipients for the duration of the prime award period of performance, and should budget accordingly. The exact nature, scope, period of performance and funding amount of the transition awards will be determined by USAID, although input and recommendations from the prime recipient will be considered. Modifications to the existing prime award may be necessary and that determination will be made by the cognizant Agreement Officer.

91. **Question:** Section A.VII Transition Awards - p. 28 “The Mission will issue transition awards that will transfer “at least 20% of select SIHSA technical implementation” to local partners.”. *Are prime applicants still supposed to budget for 100% of the award (\$40.5M not including \$4.5M rapid response modifier) and later USAID will remove some of this budget from the recipient’s award and transfer those funds to new transition awards?*

Response: The transition award funding is not included in SIHSA's Total Estimated Amount of \$45million. The transition awards will be separate stand-alone awards that will be administered by USAID subject to funding availability and will not utilize SIHSA activity funding.

92. **Question:** Section B.3 Rapid Response /Program Modifier and Program Implementation Flexibility - p. 33 “The total estimated amount for this activity is \$45,000,000.00 and includes the Rapid Response/Program Modifier budget line item of \$4,500,000. Approximately \$40,500,000 of funding resources will be available for core activities (not including any Rapid Response/Program Modifier activities).” *Please confirm that the Rapid Response/ Program Modifier budget line item of \$4,500,000 should be considered inclusive of any indirect cost rates.*

Response: The Rapid Response/Program Modifier budget line item of \$4,500,000 should not be considered in any indirect cost rate calculations. The Rapid Response/ Program modifier budget line will only be utilized on an as needed basis during the life of the activity.

93. **Question:** Section B.4 Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards: p. 34 “The anticipated period of performance is five (5) years. The estimated start date will be determined

based on timelines in which negotiations and necessary responsibility determinations have been completed.” - *For budgeting purposes, would USAID please identify an estimated start date for this activity.*

Response: USAID anticipates issuing an award on/about September 2024.

94. **Question:** Section B.8 Transition Awards: p. 37 “Funding levels of direct transition awards will correspond to the scope and scale of the proposed interventions and the total value for each year of the sub-grant.” *Since Transition Awards are meant to be direct grants from the Mission to the local entity, could USAID clarify why this sentence uses the word “sub-grant”?*

Response: The NOFO is being modified, please refer to the modification.

95. **Question:** Section C.2 Cost Share or Matching:p. 39 “USAID has established a mandatory minimum recipient cost share of five (5) percent of projected award Total Estimated Amount for the SIHSA award.” *Please confirm that the mandatory minimum of 5% cost share should be applied to the \$40,500,000 of funding resources available for core activities only (excluding Rapid Response/Program Modifier activities).*

Response: Yes, the mandatory minimum of 5% cost share should be applied to the \$40,500,000 of funding resources available for the core activities.

96. **Question:** Section C.1 Eligible Applicants: p. 39”REQUIREMENT: Applicants MUST provide as part of the application package; information and supporting documents that prove that local organization proposed for sub- awardee partnerships satisfy the qualifications of a local organization in view of the applicable USAID definition for local organization provided above.”- *Please confirm that the supporting documentation required for local organizations proposed as sub-awardees should be submitted as an appendix to section d) budget and budget narrative of the cost proposal.*

Response: See response to question #43.

97. **Question:** Section D.3 General Content and Form of Application: p. 42 “Budget amounts must be detailed in U.S. Dollars (USD)” - *Given the fluctuation in exchange rates and the high inflation rates in Sierra Leone, would USAID propose an exchange rate for use in the cost application?*

Response: The applicant is encouraged to perform their internal market research and include their proposed exchange rate in their cost application. USAID will evaluate cost applications

based on the USD amounts.

98. **Question:** Section D Application and Submission Information: p. 42 “Font: “...Single spaced, 12 point Calibri,... Tables however, must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman requirement.” *Please clarify the required font for the narrative and tables.*

Response: Tables and graphics must comply with the 10-point Calibri font requirement.

99. **Question:** Section D.6.b SF 424 Form(s):p. 54-55 - *The SF 424B form is referenced in both sections b) and c) of the cost application. Please confirm that this form only needs to be submitted once as part of section b.*

Response: Confirmed, only one Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B) form is required to be submitted with the cost application.

100. **Question:** Section D.6.d Budget and Budget Narrative- p. 55 “Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. Applicants must submit a summary and a detailed budget as follows (each proposed sub-award must include the same cost element breakdown) See Annex 2 for Summary Budget Template” - *The budget template identified as Annex 2 appears to be a detailed budget template instead of summary budget template. Please confirm that the excel sheet provided is an illustrative view of a detailed budget and the summary budget should align to the major cost categories identified in SF 424-A.*

Response: In order to facilitate a cost review, USAID encourages Applicants to use the Annex 2 Excel sheet template which includes both a summary budget and a detailed budget template. Under the Summary Budget, the applicant is encouraged to ensure that the applicant’s summary budget aligns with the major cost categories identified in SF 424-A.

101. **Question:** Section D, h) Branding Strategy and Marking Plan: p. 59-63 - *Could USAID confirm if the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan annexes are required to be submitted as part of the initial application (using the templates provided in Annex 6 of the NOFO)? Or will the AOR request these documents at a later date?*

Response: A Branding Strategy and Marking Plan is to be submitted only by the Apparently Successful Applicant, upon request from the Agreement Officer.

102.Question: In Section B.8 (pp. 35-38) and Section C.1 (p. 39), the NOFO uses a variety of terminology in discussing transition awards and award eligibility. Can USAID kindly clarify any distinctions between the terms “local entity,” “local organization,” and “local partner”?

Response: The terms “local entity,” “local partner,” and “local organization” are used interchangeably to mean the same thing. The term “local partner” refers to a local entity and/or organization that the award Apparent Successful Applicant intends to work with under the SIHSA activity and for the purposes of this NOFO and resulting award meets the definition found in ADS 303.

103.Question: Section D. 3 (p. 42) states that tables must comply with the requirement for Times New Roman; however, there is no previous requirement for Times New Roman. Can USAID kindly confirm that applicants can use Calibri 10 for tables and textboxes, in alignment with the requirement for graphs and charts?

Response: See response to question #98.

104.Question: Section D.6.h.1.c. (p. 59) states that “failure to submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.” Would USAID clarify whether the Branding Strategy & Marking Plan is required upon submission or only upon request from the agreement officer?

Response: See response to question #101.

105.Question: Do proposed Transition Award sub-recipients need to be identified at the application stage and named in the application? Can proposed Transition Award sub-recipients be identified post-award, in the initial stages of SIHSA implementation?

Response: See response to question #90.

106.Question: The NOFO states (p. 27-28): “It is expected that the prime implementing partner will adequately prepare their sub-recipients’ management, organizational and health technical capacity so that they are able to independently manage significant (a minimum of 20%) technical and budgetary components of the SIHSA activity beginning in year three (3) of the award.” - *In terms of 20% of the budget being shifted to Transition Award sub-recipients in Year 3, does this 20% indicate 20% of the budget of the remaining 3 Years of the Activity (i.e., 20% of the budget for Years 3, 4, and 5), or rather does this 20% indicate 20% of the total, 5-year Activity budget (i.e., 20% of \$40,500,000)?*

Response: See correction. USAID is referring to 20% of the core technical activities, and there is no shift in budget from the prime recipient to a transition award recipient. If a transition award is approved, USAID expects to fund that award separately.

107.**Question:** The NOFO states (p. 24): “The prime will be required to develop a Transition Plan to clearly indicate how the capacity building of the local organizations is expected to progress during the first two years of SIHSA implementation. As part of SIHSA year one work planning, the recipient will modify the initial transition plan submitted as needed with the local organizations, including identification of barriers limiting transition capability and sustainability.” *In regards to the “initial transition plan” referenced in the paragraph immediately above, must this “initial transition plan” be developed at the application stage and be described in detail in the application, or can the “initial transition plan” be developed in Year 1 of SIHSA implementation?*

Response: See response to question #89.

108.**Question:** Can proposed Transition Award sub-recipients receive sub-awards for their participation in SIHSA during the first 2 years of SIHSA implementation?

Response: Yes, potential transition award recipients can serve as subawardee’s on the SIHSA Activity if they meet the definition of local entity and comply with Transition award guidance found in ADS 303.

109.**Question:** Page 42 of the NOFO mentions 2 fonts, both Calibri and Times New Roman. Can USAID please confirm that Calibri is the required font for all materials to be submitted with the application?

Response: All applications must comply with the 12-point Calibri font requirement, and all Tables and Graphics must comply with the 10-point Calibri font requirement.

Construction

The NOFO states on page 64 that construction will not be authorized under this award.

110.**Question :** Is any level of physical infrastructure construction or rehabilitation allowed under the SIHSA award? For example, can existing structures be rehabilitated to advance program design and goals, such as in the context of increasing accessibility (e.g., installing ramps for those unable to use stairs)?

Response: Construction is not contemplated for reimbursement under this award although some infrastructure related activities that are not construction may be considered

111.**Question:** On pages 4, 5, 27, 28 and 36 of the NOFO, USAID describes the transition awards, and uses slightly different language each time. Could USAID please clarify if the 2-3 transition awards will be part of the \$45M award, or if the direct transition awards will be awarded outside of the \$45M SIHSA project.

Response: The transition award(s) will be stand-alone award(s) and separately funded from SIHSA.

112.Question: On page 27 of the NOFO, USAID writes, “the prime recipient will be required to submit a transition plan identifying 2-3 local sub-recipients which have an expressed interest in becoming USAID prime awardees.” Will USAID allow prime recipients to identify and name more than 3 local organizations?

Response: There is nothing prohibiting the recipient from identifying more than three (3) local organizations in their transition plan; however, final approval will be determined by USAID.

113.Question: On page 42 of the NOFO, in section D.3, USAID writes, “Use standard 8 ½” x 11”, single sided, single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, 1” margins, left justification and headers and/or footers on each page including consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and applicant’s name. 10-point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables, however, must comply with the 12-point Times New Roman requirement.” Could USAID please clarify if the font for the applications is Calibri or Times New Roman?

Response: See response to question #109.

114.Question: Could USAID please clarify if 10pt font could also be used for text boxes?

Response: See response to question #109.

115.Question: Are there any restrictions as to the number of international and/or local partners in a consortium?

Response: No, there are no restrictions.

116.Question: Given the local partner assessment outlined in Annex 7 and the list of recommended partners – is it expected that local partners do not enter into exclusivity agreements with international partners to be included on consortia but instead can be on several bids?

Response: This NOFO is unrestricted and open to all interested applicants. USAID has no requirements regarding consortium partners. The utilization of consortia is at the discretion of the applicant. NOTE that Annex 7 was provided ONLY as a reference for information and context.

117.Question: Please confirm that local organizations can be sub-recipients/consortia partners even if they are unlikely to meet the criteria to become possible primes on transition awards.

Response: Yes, confirmed.

Partners/Local organizations

118.Question: Should/can the local organizations we anticipate including as sub-recipients and have the potential to prime transition awards form part of the consortia that bids? Or should the 2-3 organizations only be identified through year 1 of the award in conjunction with wide consultation with USAID/GoSL and following completion of OCAs? Should section D of the technical approach outline in a high-level way how selected (not yet identified) organizations capacity will be strengthened or specifically how the organizations in the consortia already identified will specifically have their organizational capacity strengthened?

Response: It is up to the discretion of the applicant whether to name a potential transition awardee at the application stage or include it as a consortia member at the application stage. Also, USAID does not have a preferred approach in how the applicant addresses organization capacity strengthening, it is an individual decision.

119.Question: Please confirm that organizations not identified in Annex 7 may still be eligible as potential prime awardees under transition awards.

Response: The transition award may be issued to local sub-recipients who have been identified, prepared, mentored and recommended by the Prime recipient of the SIHSA award, and have been approved by USAID to manage US government funds. If a local organization is assessed to be ready to receive direct USAID funding, then a stand-alone separate direct award (Transition award) will be issued by USAID to the local organization(s).

Transition Awards

120.Question: Page 28 outlines that the prime recipient should assume a mentorship role during the second half of the award period. Please can you clarify what responsibility the prime recipient has over transition awards once in place directly between USAID and the local organization(s) – in particular regarding risk transfer?

Response: The Transition awards will be stand-alone awards directly funded by USAID. USAID and the prime will have consultations to determine the readiness of the sub-awardees to assume a prime role and negotiate any modifications to the existing award if necessary, as well as take into consideration any special conditions or recommendations that may be necessary for the transition awards.

121.Question: A minimum of 20% of the technical and budgetary components of SIHSA are anticipated to be managed by local organizations by year 3 of the award – is there any maximum threshold?

Response: USAID expects a minimum threshold of 20% of the core technical components will be managed by local organizations by year 3 of the award; however, there is no maximum threshold contemplated.

122.Question: What is the anticipated timeframe for a decision/approval to access funds between a request being formally submitted by the Prime and being approved by USAID?

Response: Assuming this question refers to accessing rapid response/program modifier funds in the event of a crisis, USAID is not in a position to know a timeframe as it will depend on funding availability and the situation.

123.Question: Page 42 details that the estimated started date of the NOFO must be used in the cost application – please can you clarify which date should be used given that the anticipated start date in SECTION B (page 34) is not provided?

Response: See response to question #93.

124.Question: Can USAID confirm whether the transition awards, which will total approximately 20% of the budget allocation from year 3 onwards, are expected to be made from the \$40.5 million of funding resources available for core activities under SIHSA or will the funding for these awards be made from a separate budget from USAID to the chosen LNGOs?

Response: See response to question #106.

125.Question: Can USAID confirm whether planned transition awardees are expected to be named as sub-recipients on this application?

Response: The transition award recipient will be recommended by the prime award recipient during the post award stage. Yes, per ADS 303 transition awardees must have been sub-recipients.

126.Question: Page 71 of the NOFO states that a transition plan is required to be submitted by the end of year 1 of implementation. However, page 24 of the NOFO notes that the prime recipient will modify its 'initial transition plan' during year 1 of activities. Can USAID confirm whether an initial transition plan is required to be submitted as part of this application process?

Response: See response to question # 87 and 89.

127.Question: Can USAID confirm whether local NGOs can serve as implementing partners starting from Year 1 of activities, or are all localNGOs expected to complete the transition award process?

Response: Yes, if a local NGO believes it has the capacity to successfully implement the SIHSA activity, then they are encouraged to submit their full application by the application closing date.

128. Question: On page 42 it is stated that applications must use a 12 point Calibri font. However, it is subsequently stated that tables must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman

requirement. Can USAID confirm whether applicants should use Calibri Throughout the application?

Response: See response to question #109.

129.**Question:** Can USAID confirm whether budget narratives are required for all sub-recipients? Page 55 of the NOFO does mention that detailed budgets are required for each sub-recipient but does note this for budget narratives.

Response: See response to question #96 above and see NOFO modification on page 56.

130.**Question:** On page 55 of the NOFO, it is noted that “Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation.” Can USAID confirm that these policies should be included as an annex to the Business (Cost) application?

Response: Yes, confirmed.

131.**Question:** For budgeting purposes, could USAID please indicate the month when the project is likely to start?

Response: See response to question #93.

132.**Question:** Could USAID please confirm that a Branding Strategy is not due with the Cost Application, but rather, is due after such is requested by the Agreement Officer?

Response: See response to question # 101.

133.**Question:** Can USAID please clarify whether the transition awards can be provided to local organization sub-recipients that are not part of the formal consortium or are these awards intended only for local partners that are included in the consortium?

Response: A local subrecipient which is being considered for a transition award does not have to be a consortium member. Also, see response to question #119.

134.**Question:** Does USAID expect the budget to have a summary sheet that shows the Level of Effort funding budgeted per what is assigned percentage wise in the Project Results Framework for each of the five result areas?

Response: The budget narrative should contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs structure and readily see how it relates to meeting the objectives of the SIHSA activity.

135. **Question:** Regarding the transition awards that are starting in Year 3, can USAID please clarify whether the funds are to be allocated on an equal basis amongst the 2-3 local sub-recipients, or does the Prime applicant have flexibility in terms of how it is allocated amongst the selected sub-recipients as long as the total adds up to a minimum of 20%?

Response: See response to question #90.

136. **Question:** Does USAID have a maximum ceiling or expectation for the percentage of the total award that can be transitioned to local sub-recipients or is that entirely up to the Prime applicant as long as the minimum 20% threshold is met?

Response: See response to questions #90 and #106.

137. **Question:** Page 55 of the NOFO requires a Certificate of Compliance, stating the following: "Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA)." The NOFO does not include a Certificate of Compliance template, and we cannot find any reference to a Certificate of Compliance within USAID's ADS resources, including the 303 supplements. The only reference we can find online is archived within USAID's ADS resources (2012-2017): [ADS 30359s1](#). Upon review of this archived file, we note that several of the regulations in the document are outdated (e.g., A-133 audits, 22 CFR 226), so we are wondering whether this requirement is still applicable. We also note that a similar question was raised to USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's (BHA) under a separate funding opportunity, 720BHA23APS00002, [here](#). BHA's response was to remove the requirement altogether. Could USAID provide an updated template for a Certificate of Compliance, or if no longer applicable, remove this requirement from the NOFO?

Response: Section D6.C. (3) On page 55 has been updated to delete the sentence "*Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).*"

138. **Question:** Page 42 of the NOFO states that body text in applicant submissions should be in 12 pt. Calibri font, with 10 pt. Calibri font for graphs and charts, and also states that 12 pt. Times New Roman font should be used for tables. Could USAID please clarify the font type and size requirements for body text, tables, and graphs?

Response: See response to question #109.

139. **Question:** The NOFO suggests a modifier program over the Activity's five years. If no emergency or shock occurs during the life of the Activity, what happens to this funding for the Activity?

Response: Please note that only \$40,500,000 of funding resources will be available for core SIHSA activities over the 5 year period of performance. The \$4,500,000.00 Response/Program Modifier under this award is subject to availability of funding and will be invoked at the discretion of USAID. In a case whereby the Response/Program Modifier is not invoked, USAID will modify the award accordingly.

Cost

140.Question: On page 27, 33 and page 55, the NOFO does not suggest it requires a detailed breakdown of the 'Rapid Response / Program Modifier and Program Implementation Flexibility Budget'. Page 27 explicitly says "it is expected that the award will include a budget supplemental line item of \$4,500,000...". Annex #2 Summary Budget Template suggests that this fund does not need to be broken down with detailed costings and timeframes, however, is a discretionary fund which USAID may draw down on upon formal request to the AOR. Please confirm that during submission, no further detail for this fund is required.

Response: Confirmed. No further budget details are required for the Rapid Response/ Program Modifier at the time of application.

141.Question: On page 28 the NOFO outlines *"The prime implementing partner should expect to shift a minimum of 20% of select SIHSA technical implementation to the select local sub recipient or sub-awardees once they are granted Transition Awards."* Can USAID confirm if they are referring to 20% of the total award value, or 20% of that year and subsequent years' spend?

Response: See response to question #90 and #106.

142.Question: On pages 59-63 of the NOFO, it states *"Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy."* Can USAID kindly confirm that the Branding & Marking Plan is not due at proposal submission?

Response: See response to question #101.

143.Question: Should local organizations targeted for the transition award be proposed by the applicant at proposal stage? Or will they be identified jointly at the award stage?

Response: It is not required to identify the targeted local organizations for transition awards at the application stage. It is at the applicant's discretion if it chooses to do so.

144.Question: Can an applicant utilize their own budget template with the required categories, or must the annexed budget template be used?

Response: In order to facilitate USAID's cost/budget review, USAID encourages applicants to use the Annex 2 Excel sheet template.

145. **Question:** Would USAID provide the current Local Compensation Plan for Sierra Leone?

Response: Please see the current Local Compensation Plan for Sierra Leone in the table below

Category	Grades		Annual Rate in Leones	
	From	To	Minimum	Maximum
Entry-Level Professional (Administrative, Officers, etc.)	FSN 1	FSN 6	33,248	90,431
Mid-Level Professionals	FSN 7	FSN 9	75,534	218,490
Senior-Level Professionals	FSN 10	FSN 12	192,351	490,256

146. **Question:** On page 42, Section D.3 includes: 10 point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables however, must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman requirement.

- o Could USAID please confirm that tables must comply with the Calibri font requirement?

Response: See response to question #109.

- o Would USAID allow fonts other than Calibri 10 point to be used for graphs, charts, and tables, provided that the fonts are legible without magnification?

Response: See response to question #109.

147. **Question:** On page 42, Section D.3 includes: "The technical application must be a searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate." However, on page 44, Section D.5 includes: "Attached file formats must be MS Word and PDF." To assist with complying with the 25MB file size limit, please confirm that the technical application may be submitted in searchable and editable PDF format only.

Response: Applicants are requested to submit their technical application in PDF format.

148. **Question:** On pages 53 and 54, Section D.5.4 lists the three required annexes (AMELP, Organogram, and KP CVs and References). Past Performance is not included in the list of required annexes, however a Past Performance Template is included as Annex 1 to the NOFO on page 79.
- a. Please confirm that applicants are required to submit past performance references using the Past Performance Template?

Response: The Institutional Capacity and History of Past Performance requirement is separate from the Past Performance References check. The applicants must utilize the Past Performance Template in Annex 1, pg. 79 to provide past performance references.

- b. If so, please confirm that past performance references should be included as Annex E to the Technical Application?

Response: The Past Performance Template (for references) is to be included in the cost application.

- c. Please confirm that applicants may submit up to five contracts or grants past performance references for projects of similar size, scope, or complexity with work performed within the past eight years per the language at the bottom of page 52.

Response: Applicants are recommended to provide 3-5 past performance references from within the last eight years in Sierra Leone and/or in other developing countries similar to the Sierra Leone context that demonstrate the experience and capacity of the Applicant and its proposed partners to manage and execute projects/activities of similar size, scope, complexity, and operational environment to the proposed SIHSA activity.

149. **Question:** What is the anticipated start date that applicants should use to build assumptions?

Response: See response to question #93.

150. **Question:** Will USAID require an annex for the Past Performance References provided in Annex 1 of the RFA? If not, where should they be included? How many Past Performance References should be provided?

Response: See response to question #148.

151. **Question:** Please confirm that Applicants are not required to submit the Transition Plan (pages 27, 36), Rapid Response /Program Modifier Plan (page 33), and Innovation Programming Funds Grants Manuals (page 32) at the application stage, and that they are required only upon award as described on page 71.

Response: Yes, only the award recipient will be requested and required to submit the Transition Plan, Rapid Response /Program Modifier Plan, and Innovation Programming Funds Grants Manuals, upon award signature.

152. **Question:** Please confirm that the Shock Response Plan described on page 27 of the NOFO is the same as the RapidResponse/Program Modifier Plan as described on pages 33 and 71.

Response: Confirmed.

153. **Question:** Please confirm that Applicants are not expected to name proposed transition awardees at the Application stage.

Response: See response to question #125.

154. **Question:** Should the preferred procurement management model be included in the Transition Plan after award or should it be included during the application stage in the management section of the Technical Narrative, or in should it be included during the application stage in an Annex or Cost Application (pg 33 of the NOFO)?

Response: See response to question #152.

155. **Question:** On page 38 of the RFA, USAID indicates that it “will consider Transition Awards throughout the whole period of implementation of this activity, and if circumstances permit, after the award ends”. Should Transition Award applicant budgets have closing dates coincide with that of the prime, or may they propose a timeframe that extends past the prime awardee’s end date?

Response: See response to question #90.

156. **Question:**Page 42 lists Calibri as the required font except in tables (which is allowed to be in Times New Roman); canUSAID confirm if tables should also be in Calibri?

Response: See response to question #109.

157. **Question:** Page 44 states that “Large graphics files are discouraged.” Can USAID describe what it considers to be a large graphics file?

Response: As instructed on page 43 of the notice of funding opportunity, the file size must not exceed 25 MB.

158. **Question:** Given the emphasis on localization, will USAID allow sub-recipients to not yet have a UEI at the time of proposal submission? For example, may sub-recipients have their sam.gov registration and UEI in progress at the time of submission? If yes, can USAID remove the requirement from page 59?

Response: See updated language. Sub-recipient UEIs will be requested prior to the award.

Note that at the time a sub-awardee is being considered for a direct USAID transition award, they must be registered in SAM.

159. **Question:** Given the uncertainty around the timing and selection of potential Transition Awardees, can USAID confirm that the full value of sub-recipient budgets should be captured within the Prime Applicant's 5-year, life of program budget?

Response: The transition award is a separate direct award issued by USAID to recommended "prime-ready" local organization(s) and funded separately from the SIHSA activity. Transition award funds are not and should not be reflected in the SIHSA application.

160. **Question: a.** Does the 20% budget expectation for transition awards mean that each Transition Award should be for 20% of the total estimated amount, such that two Transition Awards equal 40% of the total estimated amount? Or does it mean that the sum of transition awards should total 20%? **b.** Should the 20% for Transition Awards in Years 3-5 be budgeted as a lump sum, given that the TransitionAwardees will not be named until after award? **c.** In this case, existing partners that may become TransitionAwardees would only submit detailed budgets for Years 1-2?

Response:

- a. No.
- b. See response to question #34 above. Transition awards to an approved sub-recipient will be through a direct award from USAID and funded separately from the SIHSA budget; therefore, a transition award amount should not be reflected in the SIHSA budget.
- c. Yes, that is one possible approach.

161. **Question:** Can USAID clarify whether the 20% for Transition Awards is calculated based on the total estimated amount of \$45 million or is it based on the total budget without the \$4.5 million Rapid Response / Program Modifier(\$40.5 million)?

Response: See response to question #106. The 20% is a reference to core technical activities; it is not meant as a budget reference.

Question 164: Given the uncertainty around timing, do the Transition Award partners need to be formally awarded consortium members, or will they receive a separate award? If it is the latter, will it be included in the SIHSA award or a separate award?

Response: No, and please see the response to question #106.

162. **Question:** Please confirm that there is no work plan annex required as part of the application: the Work Plan Template (Page93, Annex 5) is the intended template for the Annual Work Plan as required for the Awardee only (as described on page 71).

Response: No, the work plan shall be requested from the Apparently Successful Applicant at the pre-award stage.

163. **Question:** We note that the recently released update to the OMB Uniform Grants Guidance outlines an increase in the de minimus rate from 10% to 15% for all awards issued after October 1,2024. Given that many local partners will use the de minimus rate – can we plan for a 15% rate in their budgets under this Award?

Response: No, the de minimus rate remains the same as this policy has not taken effect and USAID expects to make an award prior to October 01, 2024.