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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

RFI Number: 7200AA19R00065
Subject: Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU)
Issuance Date: June 18, 2019
Response Due Date: July 2, 2019 Closing Time: 5:00pm EST

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking feedback on a planned new activity on strengthening country health information systems in low and middle income countries (LMICs). Any future solicitations or funding opportunities will be announced on www.grants.gov.

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit input from organizations that have knowledge and experience in providing technical assistance to improve country health information systems, both paper and digital in LMICs. We are seeking to gather information about the global community's capabilities to work on specific areas of health information systems development and improvement of the use of such data for decision making to improve health outcomes. USAID is also interested in understanding the challenges faced in measuring and monitoring the impact of improved health information systems at the country level.

The priority areas of the new project include assisting countries in their efforts to strengthen the operating environment for national health information systems, improving the interoperability of different information systems and improving the use of such data in local decision making.

Specific areas of inquiry include the following:

- 1) Measuring change -- One element in question is how best to measure and track the outcomes and impact of such a project. We are seeking feedback on current frameworks and measurements for reporting on improved information systems and whether there are priority areas or indicators that can be used to effectively indicate when a country has reached one level and is moving towards the next level, even if the reality is that many components are needed for change, is there a way to develop key indicators of progress?
 - a. What are the most effective ways to measure and track the impact of a 5 year project focused on working with host country health information systems?

- b. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of the different frameworks that have been developed to monitor country progress in moving along a spectrum of health system information development?
 - c. What are the priority indicators that can be used to effectively indicate improvements at the country level and what rationale is used to make the determination?
- 2) Data Quality Assessments -- While there has been significant work on data quality assessments (DQAs) to enhance the quality of data in an information system, we are seeking comments and experience on what factors should be considered when developing standards for quality, such as validation and timing.
 - a. What are the global trends or best practices that could be used to establish standards for data quality and data quality assessments?
 - b. USAID is interested in key factors to be considered when developing standards for data quality, such as validation and timing, please identify the key factors and the rationale for using them.
 - c. What lessons learned can you share regarding any successes in increasing data use at community, facility, district and other subnational levels?
- 3) Local Institutions -- Reliance on local capacity is a key priority for USAID and this PD proposes work with local in-country institutions of higher learning or public health institutes to assist in the long term sustainable approach for building the next generation of health professionals that may include mentorships with health facilities to work on real-time data to support evidence for health decision making.
 - a. What are the best practices for engaging and partnering with local institutions of higher learning, local public health institutes or other institutions that could actively participate in this type of project and what program elements would be priority components for local institutions?

Please also let us know of any other gaps noted.

This RFI is issued solely for information gathering and planning purposes. It does NOT represent any award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor does it obligate the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any feedback to the RFI questions. Information received as part of this RFI shall become the property of USAID therefore, proprietary information that cannot be shared should not be sent. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future Request for Application (RFA), if any is issued.

Submittal Instructions

Organizations should submit a response of no more than five pages in length, excluding the cover page. Organizations should provide clear feedback and comments on questions noted in the RFI. Responses to all questions are not required. A brief narrative describing the organization's experience, expertise, and related focus areas is encouraged.

Responses should include a cover page with the following:

Reference Number: 7200AA19R00065

Date

Name of Point of Contact at the Organization: _____

E-mail of Point of Contact at the Organization: _____

Name of the Organization: _____

Address of the Organization: _____

Additional Notes/ Instructions

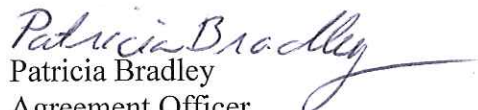
All aspects of the new design have not been finalized and will benefit from meaningful and substantive comment from the broader community of interest.

Submit responses to this RFI to the agreement officer at chisu@usaid.gov, no later than July 2, 2019.

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We look forward to receiving your feedback on the attached questions.

Sincerely,


Patricia Bradley
Agreement Officer
USAID

DRAFT SUMMARY PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Program Description

The Agency for International Development's (USAID) Global Health Bureau is designing a new project entitled, Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU). The purpose of the project is to strengthen host capacity to produce high-quality health information, to optimally manage such information and to promote the use of information for decision-making. A country's ability to identify their own health needs and track progress is dependent on reliable and valid data. As health information systems in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) progress toward self-reliance, leadership of host-country counterparts is essential for implementation, monitoring, governance and long-term sustainability. Building country capacity includes strengthening the enabling environment, as well as the systems and technology used for implementing the system itself. This new project is intended to align activities, priorities and systems with host-country strategic objectives and contribute to building a country's capacity and ability to manage its own development journey.

Over the years, USAID has encouraged the development of tools and approaches to improve the use of data by health workers and managers alike, yet much remains to be done to incentivize the health workforce to access and use that data. Incorporating the use of existing tools and new technologies to promote supportive supervisions and adaptive management at the national and sub-national levels, along with digitizing work processes and interoperability of existing information systems, will contribute to increasing the availability of quality information and visualization for enhanced decision making at the country level.

Problem Statement

A well-functioning health information system can be transformative for supporting strategic management decisions for the health sector. At the host-country level, limited capacity to collect, analyze and use health data for decision making continues to impede the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of health programs and outcomes. Health workers in developing countries often struggle with multiple program-specific information systems. There is an ongoing need for harmonization and interoperability of systems to improve reporting and reduce the potential for duplication of data. The quality of data is often a limiting factor that contributes to the lack of confidence in using the data. Limited accountability of the data input into the system impedes the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of overarching system.

Project Objective

The project is intended to strengthen country capacity and leadership to manage and use health information systems for increased evidence-based health decisions and ultimately improved health outcomes. Integration and harmonization of systems across health areas is needed to improve data collection, analysis and use at national and sub-national levels. The project will work to achieve this objective by concentrating on four result areas:

- 1) Strengthened host-country governance of health information systems and the enabling environment;
- 2) Increased availability and quality of health data and information;
- 3) Health data and information used for decision making to address health priorities, gaps and challenges at national and subnational levels; and
- 4) Enhanced capacity of local partners to promote data used for decision-making.

IR1: Strengthened host-country governance of health information systems and the enabling environment. A strong health information system evolves within a supportive enabling environment with appropriate policies and regulations, governance and oversight bodies, sufficient investments, and skilled health information workforce. The project is intended to provide technical assistance supporting host- country efforts to strengthen the enabling environment for national health information systems. Specific activities might include: strategic planning, development of roadmaps for advancing the improvement of effective health information systems; resource needs mapping that may include alignment of donor resources to address country priorities; and health data analysis for improved advocacy and support. Strengthening country- level capacity to plan and manage health information systems may also include strengthening governing bodies or data councils, which oversee and advocate for health information system priorities, government commitments, and policies, regulations and standards that form the information architecture. Given the principles of self-reliance, the project would assist host countries in strategic planning, budgeting and financial commitment for the enabling environment. In recent years, the global health community has identified stages of health information systems development including core characteristics that can be measured and tracked as a country matures to more advanced stages. One indicator of success for the project might be based on its contribution to helping countries progress to more advanced stages within the continuum of health information systems development.

IR2: Increased availability and quality of health data and information: Health policy makers, managers, community leaders and civil society organizations need a holistic picture of a health system's functions and performance. Considering that many countries have fragmented routine health information systems, the project is intended to provide technical assistance to integrate data from various systems thereby expanding the availability of quality health information, plus reducing duplication and redundancy of multiple systems. An applicant would adapt or refine existing tools that can be used for assessing a country's information systems interoperability

needs and priorities at national and community levels. Interoperability of systems would target the improved availability of data and information to address health priorities and trends, defining common requirements and specifications for systems, establishing guidelines and regulations for interoperable systems, and developing processes and standards for monitoring data collection. The span of subsystems includes health program-specific information systems, human resource management, logistics management, laboratory, disease surveillance and community-based systems across the health sector. Project activities would enable the exchange of data and key indicators, from within these systems allowing decision makers to break down information and access the data needed for decisions. The project would work with country counterparts to explore opportunities to use technological advances, while ensuring the products and approaches are consistent with the Principles for Digital Development and the Donor Principles on Digital Health, also endorsed by USAID, and prioritize use of standardized software platforms or “global goods” that enhance interoperability, scale and sustainability.

IR 3: Health data and information used for decision making to address health priorities, gaps and challenges at national, subnational levels. While basic health information systems are in place in many countries, there are challenges related to data quality and use of the data generated. The project will apply a range of tools and approaches to strengthen the demand for and use of health information within the health system. Project support may include training and technical assistance on the use of data at the national and subnational health facility and community levels. Project activities may target the strengthening of data review meetings, hands-on practicums for in-service learning, the development of job aids and other decision-support tools and technologies for health workers, including supportive supervision that can help institute a culture of data use. Given the need for improving the quality of data collected at the point of service, the project may provide training and technical assistance on data quality assessments (DQAs), development of data management processes and standard operating procedures for periodic review and adaptive management techniques. With the growing emphasis on data as a means for tracking health coverage, and trends, the project may include placement of technical advisors at the national or district level to support host-country decision making. The project is intended to accelerate work through local institutions, therefore, may include health informatics and data analysis curricula development with an emphasis on the use of health information for health decisions, pre-service and in-service training with mentorship programs or practicums at local health facilities that would allow students to access real-time data and information or to conduct DQAs and analysis.

IR4: Enhanced capacity of local institutions and partners to support optimization of health information systems in the health sector. The project is intended to specifically seek opportunities for promoting sustained contributions of local institutions, particularly institutes of higher education. It would be asked to develop transition pathways for local partnerships over the course of the project that will allow for such organizations to shift from sub-recipient under a USAID award to direct funding from USAID. This may include strengthening organizational, financial, and programmatic capacity for sub-partners interested in transition awards.