



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

EFFECTIVELY RESPONDING TO USAID FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

“How to Work with USAID” Training Series

Visit [WorkwithUSAID.org](https://www.WorkwithUSAID.org) to learn more.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Increase your understanding of:

- Where to find USAID funding solicitations;
- The main components of a solicitation;
- Key elements to be included in your response and how to incorporate best practices as you prepare to partner with USAID;
- The process the Agency uses to evaluate submissions and select an award recipient; and
- The underlying U.S. Government and USAID regulations that apply to the award process.



WHY USAID PARTNERS WITH ORGANIZATIONS



USAID Mission:

To lead the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance efforts.

USAID offers this assistance on behalf of the American people through partnerships and investments that:

- Save lives;
- Reduce poverty;
- Strengthen democratic governance; and
- Help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

TYPES OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

USAID offers two main types of funding opportunities.

1 ASSISTANCE: grants or cooperative agreements

The Agency provides funds to a recipient for a public purpose, functioning as a financial supporter with limited involvement. To be considered, submit an application or concept note.

2 ACQUISITION: contracts

USAID purchases goods and services from a contractor for USAID's own use or to implement an Agency activity. USAID is an involved buyer and provides primary direction under strict terms and conditions. To be considered, submit a proposal.

For details, see the [“Understanding USAID Awards”](#) module.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

U.S. GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

- The **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)** governs how USAID issues grants and cooperative agreements.
- **Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR)** include primary rules that guide how U.S. Government agencies acquire supplies and services.

USAID INTERNAL POLICIES

- The **Automated Directives System (ADS)** outlines operational policies covering all Agency and partner activities. Assistance awards are governed by ADS Chapter 303: “Grants and Cooperative Agreements.” Acquisition awards are governed by ADS Chapter 302: “Direct Contracting.”
- **USAID Acquisition Regulations (AIDAR)** govern how USAID administers public funds.

FIND OPPORTUNITIES

- The **USAID Business Forecast**, found on USAID.gov, is a searchable database of funding opportunities in the planning stages. The Agency will not accept applications, concept notes, or proposals at this stage.
- **SAM.gov** is where USAID announces open acquisition opportunities. These announcements are called Requests for Proposals (RFPs).
- **Grants.gov** is where assistance opportunities are announced through Annual Program Statements (APSs) or Requests for Applications (RFAs).

See the “[Understanding USAID Awards](#)”
module for more information.



READ THE OPPORTUNITY CAREFULLY



When you find a solicitation announcement that looks interesting, first read the entire document carefully.

Review several key sections:

- The “Statement of Work” or “Program Description,” which defines the purposes and objectives and specifies what activities USAID wants to fund;
- The “Eligibility Information” section, which specifies the requirements for organizations that can respond to the specific funding opportunity; and
- The deadline.

Consider your readiness to meet the requirements. Leaving out required information can result in USAID judging your submission to be “non-responsive,” which will remove it from consideration.

UNDERSTAND THE EVALUATION PROCESS



Solicitation documents will explain how USAID will assess submissions to select a partner.

If a point system is utilized, study the scales and recognize that different sections may be relatively more important than others.

If no numerical points or scales are used, selection factors will be listed. Read carefully to understand if factors are prioritized or not.

Remember that every factor listed is considered, and your submission should therefore address all factors, not just what is prioritized.

“BEST VALUE”

Notice:

- The RFP is competitive;
- Organizational eligibility;
- Cost proposal criteria; and
- Best value determination.

USAID/Sri Lanka anticipates one (1) Cost Plus Fixed Fee completion-type contract, covering a performance period of five (5) years from the date of award. The procurement will be conducted through full and open competition procedures, pursuant to Part 15 of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) (48 CFR Chapter 1). Any type of organizations (large or small commercial [for profit] firms and nonprofit organizations) are eligible to compete.

The United States Government (USG), represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission to Sri Lanka and Maldives in Colombo (USAID/Sri Lanka), is soliciting proposals from qualified organizations interested in providing the services described in the attached solicitation. The principal geographic code for this contract is 937 and the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code is 541990.

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The overall estimated cost of this procurement is approximately \$19 million dollars, (\$11 million for Maldives and \$8 million for Sri Lanka) subject to the availability of funds. The government is in no way obligated to make any award within the maximum estimated cost identified. Offerors should not strive to meet the maximum amount; rather Offerors should propose costs that are appropriate, realistic, and reasonable, and in accordance with the proposal approach for achieving results. Technical proposals together with cost proposals will be evaluated as part of a best value determination.

Please refer to Section L of the RFP for information regarding proposal requirements. Offerors should take into account the expected delivery time required by the proposal transmission, and they are responsible for ensuring proposals are received at USAID by the due date and time stipulated above. Failure to comply with the submission date will deem any submission unacceptable and it will not be reviewed or evaluated. Fixed proposals are not acceptable, nor will they be reviewed or evaluated.

Section L sets forth all instructions for the preparation and submission of required proposal contents. Offerors will develop a proposal in response to the RFP requirements, and propose results to be achieved. Section M states the technical evaluation criteria by which proposals will be evaluated.

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ASK QUESTIONS

Submit questions about a solicitation to USAID during the “open question period” by:

- Reaching out to *only* the contact person identified in the solicitation; and
- Sending all questions in writing per the directions on the opportunity.

Responses to submitted questions will be made public through an addendum to the solicitation and posted on the site hosting the solicitation (such as Grants.gov or SAM.gov).



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

SUMMARY

- Read and understand regulations and policies.
- Funding opportunities are posted on different platforms.
- Search for the most relevant opportunities.
- Read solicitations carefully.
- Submit written questions.
- Make a compelling case for selection.





KEY ELEMENTS

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS



The requirements for a solicitation response include:

- Cover letter;
- Table of contents;
- Acronyms list;
- Technical proposal, with an executive summary and appendices; and
- Cost proposal, budget narrative, and appendices.

The majority of your response will focus on the technical and cost proposals.

COVER LETTER

The cover letter introduces your organization and your response to the solicitation.

Follow all instructions in the solicitation. An example is shown on this slide.

Your Organization's Logo/Letterhead

Date

Name and Title of RFA Contact
USAID/Zambia
351 Independence Avenue
Lusaka, Zambia

Subject: RFA #
"RFA Title"

Dear Mr/s. Name of RFA Contact,

[Name of Organization] is pleased to submit our response to work on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on the USAID RFA [RFA #], "[RFA Title]."

[Organization Name] respectfully submits our proposal along with our partners: [insert partner names if relevant]. Since our founding as a private, nonprofit organization in 1961, AED has successfully designed and implemented projects with support from federal government agencies and private charitable foundations. Currently, AED is involved in more than 250 active projects in more than 150 countries worldwide. AED has an extensive history of work with USAID, including a wide range of technical assistance, training, information dissemination, health communications, and other projects related to HIV/AIDS prevention services.

In Zambia, [insert language about the organization's specific experience in the country of interest].

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me

Sincerely,

[Name of organization President or Designee]
[Title of above]
[Organization name]

Comment [ST1]: Insert your own organization's background information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Instructions will detail the required format, including the number of pages allowed.

Your response’s numbering system and section titles should match the instructions.

Example:

Section 1	3
Section 1.1	4
Section 2	6
Section 2.1	9

ACRONYMS LIST

AAA	<input type="text"/>
BBB	<input type="text"/>
CCC	<input type="text"/>
DDD	<input type="text"/>
EEE	<input type="text"/>

Be sure to include a list of all acronyms you use in your submission and explain what each acronym means.

For example, an entry on your list might be
GOA: Government of Angola.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL



Describe your approach and rationale to addressing the challenge or opportunity outlined in the solicitation.

You might be asked to provide:

- Programmatic interventions;
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach;
- Organizational experience and capability;
- Examples of previous work for USAID or other organizations;
- Management and staffing plans; and
- Summary work plan.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

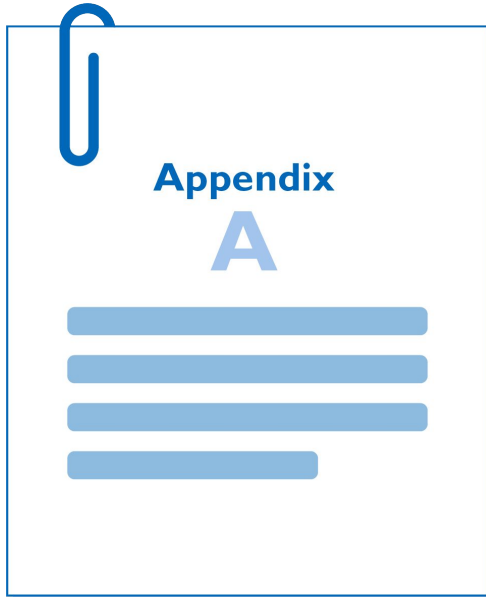
- [Redacted]

- [Redacted]

Write an executive summary that is:

- Clear and complete;
- A summary of what is covered in the technical proposal; and
- Within the page limits allowed.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL: APPENDICES



Appendices provide the reviewers with a more detailed explanation of your proposed technical approach.

Materials may include:

- Staff CVs and resumes;
- Letters of support;
- Skills matrices of staff, consultants, and partners; and
- An organizational chart.

The solicitation instructions will indicate what to include in appendices—which may be scored—versus what to include in the main body of your technical response.

COST PROPOSAL



A cost proposal is a separate section of your overall response to a solicitation or funding opportunity.

It may include:

- Budget and budget narrative that explains categories and descriptions and justifications for line items;
- Supporting materials; and
- Certifications and standard forms (as detailed in ADS Chapter 303).

The budget and budget narrative must align and be in U.S. dollars.

A cost-share plan, which will detail the resources you would contribute, may be required.

For details, see the “[Preparing Budgets for Assistance Awards](#)” and “[Preparing Budgets for Acquisition Awards](#)” modules.

KEY ELEMENTS



SUMMARY

- Read and follow the instructions for every section.
- Describe what you plan to do and how you will do it in your technical proposal.
- Include all major themes in the executive summary.
- Budget information—your cost proposal—may be required as a separate component. The solicitation may specify forms and formats to use.



TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

FOUR SECTIONS WILL BE EVALUATED

As you prepare your technical proposal, consider the criteria USAID will use to assess it. These criteria are provided in each solicitation, including a note on how important each section is. The sections, in typical order of importance, include:

1. The **technical approach**, which indicates an understanding of the programming context and how expected results will be achieved;
2. The **management approach**, which describes your plan for ensuring coordination among partners and how your organization will monitor, evaluate, and learn throughout the program;
3. The **staffing plan**, which outlines how you will identify and use skilled and experienced personnel to implement the activity; and
4. The **organizational capability, experience, and past performance** section, which includes details on your previous, similar work.

TECHNICAL APPROACH

In the technical approach, you will provide details on how you will achieve results.

The technical approach is the largest section of your technical proposal—and the one that carries the most weight when USAID is scoring submissions to select a partner.

Be sure that it:

- Demonstrates your understanding of the programming context and stakeholders;
- Describes how you will achieve objectives;
- Includes a plan for monitoring, evaluating, and learning (MEL);
- Provides specific interventions to achieve the overall Activity goal; and
- Outlines how you will test, document, and share best practices and lessons learned.

For details on MEL, see the “Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning” module.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING PLAN

The management and staffing plan describes how you will:

- Identify and work with partners or subrecipients;
- Assign staff to key roles and obtain additional technical expertise as needed;
- Establish lines of authority, communication, and reporting; and
- Transition technical support or key functions to local partners before the project closes.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY AND EXPERIENCE

Experience and Capability	Past Performance
<p>The applicant demonstrates the ability to perform the work requested by describing past experience and current capacities. Include descriptions of current and ongoing programs that have a direct relationship to the proposed activities under the solicitation.</p>	<p>The applicant describes the degree to which they have previously completed work successfully, satisfied stakeholders and partners, and complied with relevant laws, regulations, and award terms and conditions.</p>

PREVIOUS WORK



You may present previous work in a variety of formats:

- Narrative writing;
- Charts; or
- Bulleted lists.

Instructions may specify a format or template.

**Questions on formats or templates?
Ask your USAID point of contact!**

WORK PLAN ELEMENTS



- Include realistic timelines.
- Plan concurrent events to demonstrate you can manage time and resources effectively.
- Show that you understand the local context when scheduling activities.
- Ensure that your plan aligns with other aspects of the technical proposal.

Include all interventions and deliverables described in the technical approach.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

SUMMARY

- Focus on technical approach, management plan, past performance, and ability to accomplish the work.
- Information should be concise, compelling, and connected to the proposed activity.
- Include proposed interventions and deliverables in the work plan.





SUBMITTING YOUR RESPONSE



DRAFT, REVIEW, AND SUBMIT



An effective response requires collaboration within your organization.

- **Schedule enough time** for your team to draft a response and review all the components of your submission.
- **Ensure that you tailor your response** to achieve the stated objectives and have complied with all of the solicitation instructions.
- **Record the submission** of your response, either with an email to acknowledge receipt or with a legible postmark and mail certification.

LEARN AND IMPROVE

- **Debrief with your team** and discuss how you might improve the process for the next time you apply for an award.
- If you do *not* get funded, **request in writing** a debriefing or a copy of USAID's evaluation of your response.
- **Use this feedback** to build expertise, enhance systems, and reassess alignment with Agency priorities.



PARTNER WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Partnering with a larger or more experienced organization may be a great way for smaller or newer organizations to learn about USAID programming.

To explore working as a subpartner with a lead, or “prime,” organization:

- Identify your organization’s value, or niche, within the funding opportunity;
- Research organizations likely to be prime partners and contact them to discuss a possible partnership; and
- Negotiate a role within the consortium, then sign a “teaming agreement.”

Learn more in USAID's “[Building Strong Sub-Partnerships](#)” training module

COMPLIANCE

Evaluators will check your response to ensure that it:

- 1** Adheres to the submission deadline;
- 2** Meets eligibility requirements; and
- 3** Complies with instructions, including page limitations.
Pages that run beyond the limit will *not* be evaluated.

Learn more about compliance in this [quick reference guide](#).

REVIEW OF RESPONSES

After a response has passed the compliance check, USAID reviewers consider three key factors to determine whether the response is complete and the organization meets Agency expectations.

- 1 Past performance:** Experience can help predict success in future efforts.
- 2 Cost:** USAID aims to fund the best value for high-quality programming.
- 3 Responsibility:** The Agency will consider financial soundness and business integrity.

Learn more about contractor performance and integrity in the [ADS Chapter 302](#).

SUBMITTING YOUR RESPONSE

SUMMARY

- Develop and submit a response that follows instructions in the solicitation.
- Know how USAID will review and evaluate responses from potential partners.
- Schedule time to debrief with your team to learn from the experience.





SUMMARY

KEY POINTS

- **Check the USAID Business Forecast** regularly. As you consider opportunities, prioritize those that align well with your organization’s mission and capabilities.
- **Read the entire solicitation** carefully. Align your technical response with the stated requirements.
- **Ask questions** and submit them to the listed point of contact during the “open question period.”
- **Follow the instructions** outlined in the solicitation. Submit your response as instructed.
- **Create a strong response.**
 - Focus on demonstrating your technical expertise, past performance, and ability to accomplish the work.
 - Be specific—do not force USAID to make assumptions.
- **Consider partnering** with an organization that has experience working with USAID.

RESOURCES

- Search Opportunities:
 - [USAID Business Forecast](#)
 - [SAM.gov](#) (acquisition awards)
 - [Grants.gov](#) (assistance awards)
- ADS Chapter 303 (assistance awards), “[Grants and Cooperative Agreements](#)” and ADS Chapter 302 (acquisition awards), “[Direct Contracting](#)”
- Concept Note [Tips](#) and [Example Template](#)
- Compliance [Quick Reference Guide](#)
- ADS, Chapter 303, reference: [Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements](#)
- [Learning Lab: Understanding CLA](#)
- Training modules at WorkwithUSAID.org:
 - [“Understanding USAID Awards”](#)
 - [“Exploring USAID Funding Opportunities”](#)
 - [“Preparing Budgets for Assistance Awards”](#)
 - [“Preparing Budgets for Acquisition Awards”](#)
 - [“Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning”](#)
 - [“Building Strong Sub-Partnerships”](#)

Thank You



This module was produced by the United States Agency for International Development. The presentation team includes staff from both USAID and the Partnerships Incubator.

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