

1. Can USAID please provide the missing reference for the graduation approach that is referred to on Page 9: “Please see Appendix III for more information on the graduation approach”, as there are no references to the graduation approach in Appendix III.

**Response:** The documents in Appendix III are not an exhaustive list and include:

TOPS Uganda RCT Associate Award. (October 2022). *Endline Report of the RFSA Graduating to Resilience in Uganda, Cohort 1: Summary Report*. Innovations for Poverty Action. USAID.  
<https://www.fsnnetwork.org/resource/endline-report-rfsa-graduating-resilience-uganda-cohort-1-summary-report>

World Bank Group. (April 2018). *From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: a Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach*. World Bank Group.  
<https://www.peiglobal.org/resources/extreme-poverty-sustainable-livelihoods-technical-guide-graduation-approach>

BHA added this additional resource:

IDEAL. (October 2022). *Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach into Resilience Food Security Activities*. Save the Children.  
[https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/IDEAL\\_UPGReport.pdf](https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/IDEAL_UPGReport.pdf)

2. Does USAID anticipate releasing a document answering the Draft RFA questions (or a document answering the Final RFA questions)?

**Response:** BHA will not release responses to the questions received during the 30-day comment period. These questions were taken into consideration and the RFA was updated accordingly.

3. Does USAID anticipate releasing a document answering the Draft RFA questions (or a document answering the Final RFA questions)?

**Response:** BHA will not release responses to the questions received during the 30-day comment period. These questions were taken into consideration and the RFA was updated accordingly.

4. Would USAID be open to approve exceptions to FAAs (More than \$500k and more than 12 months duration)? This will help applicants to have a more extended relationship with local organizations that are developing their compliance systems but can be instrumental in delivering value to local communities.

**Response:** USAID is seeking applications for cooperative agreements under this RFA. USAID does not intend to issue other types of awards under this RFA. Applicants choosing to include local

partners as subawardees may do so. USAID expects applicants to propose subaward arrangements that they deem appropriate to meeting the goals and objectives of this RFA.

5. Can USAID please confirm whether the items referenced below the Supply Chain Annex (i.e., Procurement Plan, Procurement Policy, Transport Plan, Storage Plan, Warehouse Management Policy, Fleet Management Plan, and Fleet Management Policy) are only required for Apparently Successful Applicants or are due at initial submission?

**Response:** Requests for restricted goods must be noted in the initial application, as listed in the other budget notes on page 52. Elements listed in the Supply Chain Annex must be provided by Apparently Successful Applicants only.

6. Thank you for the release of the DRC RFS final RFA. While we are compiling our questions on this draft, we just wanted to appeal for an extension of the 17th of April deadline as the 6 weeks given for proposal preparation is extremely challenging for such a large and complex bid as the RFS. If the last 2 RFAs for Haiti and Mozambique are to serve as any benchmark, could we kindly request at least 9 weeks for this bid.

**Response:** BHA will not be extending the timeline.

7. The IDEAL-led stakeholder consultation on RFS RFA Design and Process (April 2021) was an excellent dialogue between BHA, IDEAL and RFS implementers on the procurement process. Of the many recommendations that came out of that consultation, BHA presented three at the June 2021 Food Aid Consultative Group meeting as priorities that had been retained. Among those was a recommendation to allow 60-90 days between final RFA and the submission deadline. CRS appreciates the time constraints around the FY end and the need to place call-forwards for food commodities. However, in consideration of the above as well as the change to permissible commodities noted in question 1 – which necessitates significant revisions to initial plans developed in alignment with the draft RFA – and the guidance on the Participant Financial Analysis requirement, which was only made available on 2/23.

**Response:** BHA will not be extending the timeline.

8. Given the complexity of RFSAs, and the challenges of programming in complex contexts such as the DRC, would USAID consider extending the date of application submission to April 28, 2023?

**Response:** BHA will not be extending the timeline.

9. The drop-down menus on the ration calculator table on the AER-EST posted on the BHA website do not work when we download this tool; also, the country drop-down menu does not work on the “commodity pipeline” tab. Would USAID be able to update this tool and tab, please?

**Response:** The excel spreadsheet is corrected and was reposted on the BHA RFSA page on 3/14/2023. Here is the link: <https://www.usaid.gov/document/bha-executive-summary-table-annual-estimate-requirements-commodity-pipeline-cp-and-ration-calculator-templates>

10. We are not able to fill in the drop-down menu in the Ration Calculator spreadsheet provided by USAID. Could USAID please provide updated commodity spreadsheets (BHA Executive Summary Table, Annual Estimate of Requirements, Commodity Pipeline, and Ration Calculator) that can be filled in?

**Response:** The excel spreadsheet is corrected and was reposted on the BHA RFSA page on 3/14/2023. Here is the link: <https://www.usaid.gov/document/bha-executive-summary-table-annual-estimate-requirements-commodity-pipeline-cp-and-ration-calculator-templates>

11. Thank you for posting the Laser Pulse Desk Review and Market Study on the BHA website. We kindly request that future Bellmon reports contain additional information in the food assistance section. This section does not contain any information on the Title II commodities that currently, or previously, have been provided within BHA-funded programs, or the ration sizes, or any comment on whether such ration sizes were effective. There is no recommendation of which Title II commodities are best suited for the market and product context of Tanganyika. Making such judgments has been a core element of Bellmon studies of the past. The absence of this information makes designing a food assistance program especially challenging for potential new entrants

**Response:** BHA appreciates this thoughtful feedback and will take it into consideration for the next DRMS.

12. When does USAID expect to release a Bellmon analysis for the region targeted by the RFSA?

**Response:** The Bellmon Analysis will be conducted after the apparently successful applicant is selected.

13. On Page 44 of the RFA, USAID states: "Applicants are not permitted to propose local, regional, or international food procurement under this RFA," whereas page 12 states, "Applicants should examine a range of approaches and modalities to improve the access, availability, and utilization of diverse, NRF, and locally available fortified foods". I. Could USAID please clarify if the procurement of any locally produced food is prohibited? Does this include items such as salt, which are included as part of the DRC Food Security Cluster approved ration?

**Response:** Applicants may not propose the local, regional, or international procurement of food commodities for direct distribution to participants. Additionally, applicants are not expected to propose emergency food distributions. If applicants wish to include activities such as cooking demonstrations, materials for demonstrations are not considered LRIP and should be included

as activity costs or project supplies. Applicants may only propose commodities on the TII commodity list.

14. Under sub-purpose 1.1, 'Providing financial support from the RFSA as a bridge to more sustainable opportunities' - could USAID indicate what activities this might involve?

**Response:** Information is provided on page 9: "If proposing to provide financial support as part of the RFSA, applicants must include specific, tangible strategies for how activities supported with direct grants will become self-sustaining." Applicants are expected to propose specific activities to achieve the sub-purposes, purposes, and goal of the RFA.

15. May applicants use their own discretion when electing to use footnotes, endnotes, parentheticals, or hyperlinks for citing data/evidence within the technical application? May applicants include a list of references/bibliography as an additional annex or appendix?

**Response:** Applicants may use footnotes, endnotes, and parentheticals to discuss evidence. These must be incorporated within the designated page limits. All evidence must be presented directly in the technical application. USAID will not review any supplemental materials presented via hyperlink or in bibliographies.

16. Is it possible to have crosscutting intermediate outcomes related to the program's cross-cutting themes?

**Response:** Applicants are expected to adhere to the Theory of Change (TOC) and propose activities, outputs, and outcomes that directly contribute to the sub-purposes, purposes, and goal of this RFA.

17. Can USAID please clarify which of the SF-424 forms are required at submission, and which are required only for Apparently Successful Applicants?

- i. Page 54 says, "The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. . . . Failure to complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application."
- ii. Page 91 says Apparently Successful Applicants must complete the Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B) and submit "upon request by the AO."

**Response:** All applicants are required to submit SF424 series i.e. SF424, SF424A, and SF424B with their initial applications. The information on page 91 was updated.

18. On page 16 of the RFA, USAID states: "Applicants must request Title II commodities" as well as "However, applicants may not propose using SNP or SNF".

- i. Does this include typically accepted items such as CSB/CSB+?
- ii. Is procurement of other commodities that are not SNF or SNP permissible for prevention of malnutrition for specific vulnerable groups.

**Response:**

i. Given other actors in the DRC provide specialized nutritious food products (SNFPs), applicants are not permitted to request SNFPs, including CSB+ and CSB++. CSB is not on the approved Title II commodity list.

ii. Given other actors in the DRC provide SNFPs to address MAM/SAM prevention and treatment, USAID does not expect applicants to this RFA to propose activities that include the utilization of commodities for the prevention and treatment of MAM and SAM. Applicants may only propose commodities on the TII commodity list.

19. Page 12 of the RFA states “Applicants should not propose the prevention or treatment of individuals with moderate or severe acute malnutrition using specialized nutritious food (SNF) or specialized nutrition products (SNP).” Given recent meta-analysis (Aguayo, Baker, Dewey et al, 2023) showing that lipid nutrient supplements (LNS), when used at scale, can reduce child mortality by 27% while improving nutritional outcomes (in line with the overall project goal):  
Question 1: Can USAID/BHA clarify whether SNF/SNP could be proposed as a nutritional supplement, without promoting their use in cases of MAM/SAM; and  
Question 2: does USAID/BHA anticipate making LNS available in future RFSAs?

**Response:**

1. Given other actors in the DRC provide specialized nutritious food products (SNFPs), applicants are not permitted to request SNFPs.

2. USAID is not able to answer questions about possible future funding opportunities.

20. Are Fortified Blended Food (FBF) formulations, such as Super Cereal and Super Cereal plus, permitted as part of the commodity request, or should the prospective recipient restrict the request to staple foods such as beans, oil and cereals?

**Response:** Given other actors in the DRC provide specialized nutritious food products (SNFPs), applicants are not permitted to request SNFPs, including CSB+ and CSB++. Super Cereal and Super Cereal plus are not on the approved Title II commodity list.

21. Given the RFA's focus on credit and usage of capital: are USAID funds allowable to be used as loan capital strictly for the accomplishment of Sub-purpose 1.1 and 1.2?

**Response:** RFSAs funds may not be used as loan capital; applicants should play a facilitation role to help participants access loans from external sources. RFSAs partners may propose use of RFSAs funds to provide grants to participants.

22. Under sub-purpose 1.1, the 'facilitating linkages to commercial finance through existing donor-supported loan guarantee programs in the DRC': can USAID provide details of these loan guarantee programs that operate in Kasai and indicate whether there are expected to be new programs during the course of the RFSA? Can USAID provide guidance as to how implementing partners would engage with these programs and what role they should play?

**Response:** USAID supports financial institutions with a guarantee instrument in order to de-risk their investments. USAID is not able to provide additional details on the existing program or comment on potential new programs. "Facilitating linkages to commercial finance through existing donor-supported loan guarantee programs in the DRC" is one of several illustrative activities mentioned in the RFA. USAID expects partners to research relevant actors in their proposed implementation areas and propose those activities most appropriate to achieving the goal of the RFA.

23. Can USAID please share details about the Access to Finance activity mentioned on page 36 of the RFA - where it operates, who is/are the implementing partner(s), when is the end date, where to find activity reports, etc?

**Response:** BHA revised the language on page 36 to clarify that some access to finance activities are active while others are forthcoming. BHA recognizes the lack of public information available, and encourages partners to use their context analysis to determine who works in their intended target zones.

24. Can USAID please clarify whether all proposed subawardees on an application must have a valid UEI and SAM registration at submission of the application? During the stakeholder briefing, USAID indicated that only the prime applicant would be required to provide a valid UEI and SAM registration, whereas proposed subawardees would need to have a valid UEI and SAM registration at the start of implementation (on or about September 29, 2023).

**Response:** Per RFA section D (5), "Approval of Subawards," applicants must submit information for all sub-awards that they would like approved at the time of award. Sub-awards not included in the original application may only be added later with the prior approval of the Agreement Officer (AO). Please note that a full SAM registration is not required for subrecipients, only a UEI number.

If an applicant identifies a subrecipient that does not yet have a UEI, the applicant must provide an explanation of why the UEI number is not included. Please note that the UEI will be required in order for the AO to approve the subrecipient at the time of the award. In addition, USAID has provided exemptions per ADS 303maz that the AO may consider on a case-by-case basis.