



USAID
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PACIFIC ISLANDS

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

RFI NUMBER: 72088724-PACIFIC/RFI-00001
ISSUANCE DATE: July 03, 2024
RESPONSE DUE DATE & TIME: July 24, 2024, 12:00nn Manila Time

Dear Potential Offeror/Applicant,

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Mission to the Pacific Islands is developing a new program entitled **Pacific Economic Growth Activity (PEG)**.

The Regional Office of Acquisition and Assistance (ROAA)/USAID Pacific Islands has drafted preliminary technical requirements for the purpose of market research and also to provide industry implementers and stakeholders an opportunity to review, comment, suggest and enhance areas of the draft document. It also provides an advance opportunity for interested parties to establish teaming arrangements and identify key personnel in the event a solicitation is issued. It is anticipated that this technical requirements draft will result in a final Statement of Objectives or Program Description that may lead to a formal solicitation issued for response. It is anticipated that this requirement will result in two separate awards with an expected period of performance of five years within an award range of \$15-\$18 million for Papua New Guinea/Solomons Islands/Vanuatu (PNG/SI/VAN) and \$18-\$22 million for Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

The draft document is provided in the following pages. The instrument type has not yet been determined as it may be acquisition or assistance (i.e. contract or cooperative agreement). This RFI will be posted on grants.gov as well as sam.gov,

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ONLY. This is not a Request for Proposal, a Request for Quotation, an Invitation for Bids, a Solicitation, nor an indication ROAA will procure the items contained in the Special Notices. The RFI is an attempt to reach out to the market in an effort to determine the scope of industry capabilities and interest and will be treated as information only. In accordance with FAR 15.201(e), responses to this notice are not offers/applications and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract/agreement. Responses to this RFI are strictly voluntary and USAID will not pay for information provided in response to this RFI. Responses to this RFI will not be returned and respondents will not be notified of the result of the review. If a solicitation is issued, it will be announced on the Federal Business Opportunities website sam.gov or grants.gov at a later date. All interested parties must respond to that solicitation announcement separately from any response to this announcement. This RFI does not restrict the Government's procurement approach on a future solicitation.

Responses (comments, suggestions, and enhancements) to this RFI are due to the procurement office identified below by **July 24, 2024**. Please e-mail responses to **manila-roaa-rfp@usaid.gov**. Please include the subject title “Response to PEG RFI” in the e-mail subject line to ensure the response is directed appropriately.

Thank you for your assistance and interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Contracting/Agreements Officer
Regional Office of Acquisition and Assistance

Pacific Economic Growth Activity

Technical Requirements Draft

1. Purpose

This technical requirements draft is issued for the purpose of allowing the industry the opportunity to provide comment and make suggestions on the technical services and training support to implement **Pacific Economic Growth (PEG)** activities in two places of performance: (1) covering Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; and (2) covering Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu. These two activities will engage a Contractor/Recipient that can effectively and efficiently provide technical advisory services to promote resilient and inclusive economic growth in these two geographical areas.

These activities are in line with President Biden's [Indo-Pacific Strategy](#) and [Pacific Partnership Strategy](#), which seek to promote a prosperous, secure and resilient Pacific region. The activity also supports the [U.S. Global Women's Economic Security Strategy](#). At the multilateral level, PEG aligns with the Pacific Islands Forum's [Framework for Pacific Regionalism](#), [Boe Declaration Action Plan](#), and the [2050 Blue Pacific Framework](#).

2. Background

Collectively, the Pacific Island countries (PICs)¹ are a diverse group of island countries characterized by insularity, geographic remoteness, and smallness of economies, populations, and area. These structural features make it difficult to achieve the economies of scale needed to attract foreign investment and expand trade. Trade patterns among the Pacific Island countries are characterized by narrow export sectors and a high dependence on imports. The remoteness and geographical dispersion of the countries put a high cost on the movement of goods, services and people. Employment opportunities in the PICs are limited by the narrow industrial base, weak private sector, and small domestic market. About 80% of the population in the region depend on the agricultural and fisheries sector for livelihoods. The small populations and markets limit the ability to generate own source revenues needed to fund public services and leads to a high dependency on external assistance and debt. These countries depend heavily on budgetary support from various donors, to fund their public expenditure programs, particularly loans, which can lead to higher debt, unsustainable deficits, and, over the long-term, macroeconomic instability.

The PICs are also highly vulnerable to shocks. The region is exposed to natural disasters which often lead to significant damage to property, infrastructure, and productive sectors. These natural disasters inhibit economic growth and lead to a rise in inflation as well as the deterioration of fiscal and current account balances. The region is particularly exposed to downside risks stemming from slower growth in its main trading partners that could impact tourism, remittances, export receipts and commodity prices. These risks often result in employment and income losses, affecting food production, coastal and marine resources and health. More recently, the PICs have been adversely impacted by the COVID pandemic, particularly from the ensuing economic downturn caused by this global health crisis.

Women and other marginalized groups are disproportionately impacted by these shocks. Despite differences in economic development, social and cultural norms, and political landscapes among PICs,

¹ Including Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

women and marginalized groups across the region continue to face gender-based violence, low levels of participation in political and leadership positions, poor economic standing and income-generating conditions, low access to customary land rights and legal literacy about rights and property, culturally-enforced discrimination and inequality, and low levels of literacy and access to education and health services.

3. Scope and place of performance

It is anticipated that two implementing mechanisms will result from this technical requirement. One focused on Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (PNG/SI/VAN); and the second focused on the Pacific regional program covering Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu. The solicitation will call for Offerors/Applicants to submit either one or two separate and distinct proposals/applications corresponding to the technical requirements applicable to the conditions in PNG/SI/VAN and the Pacific Islands region. The resulting awards will be two implementing mechanisms managed separately by the Pacific Islands Regional Mission and PNG Country Representative Office, each mechanism with their separately assigned USAID Technical Officer. The Offeror/Applicant will be expected to propose an inclusive staffing and management structure that independently operates and implements these two mechanisms.

Target beneficiaries include: PIC governments (e.g., Finance Ministries, Economic Planning Departments, and Trade and Commerce ministries); small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); financial institutions; and PIC populations, particularly marginalized groups, that will directly benefit from increased economic opportunities, improved public services in health, safety, and other investments enabled by better public financial management (PFM), domestic resource mobilization (DRM), and increased investments in climate-resilient infrastructure projects, including transport services. The implementing partner(s) will also work closely with regional organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum, South Pacific Community, and other regional entities.

4. Theory of Change and Results Framework

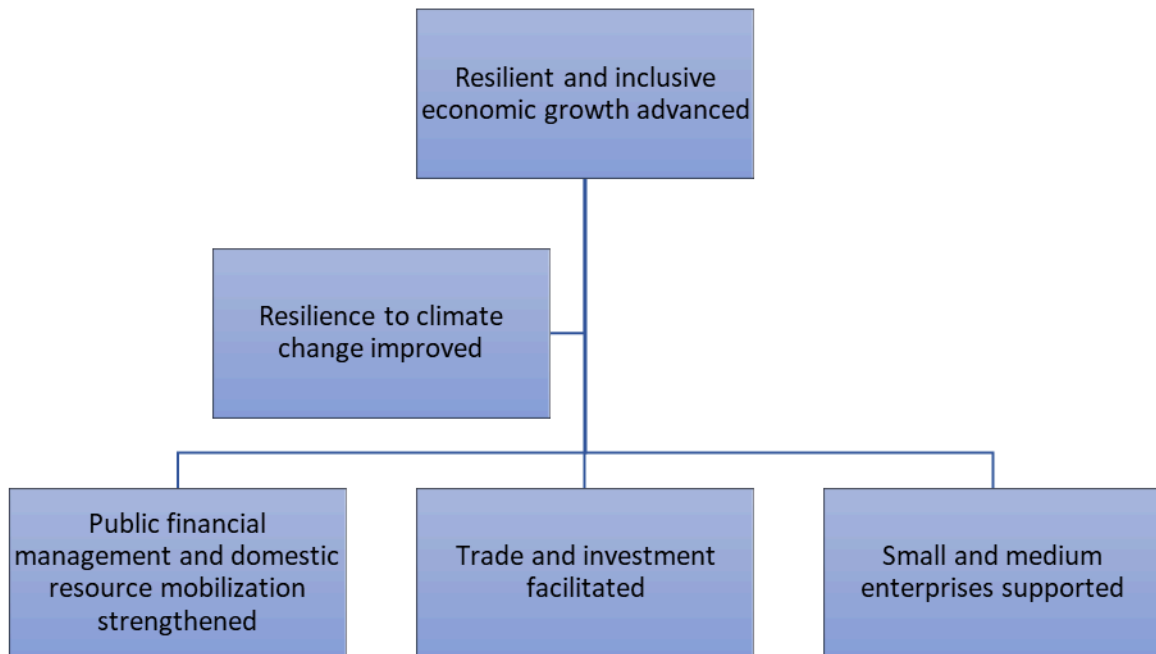
The activities' Theory of Change is that ***IF public financial management and domestic resource mobilization are strengthened; IF greater trade and investment is facilitated; IF local small and medium enterprises are supported; IF local enterprises and infrastructure are made more resilient to climate change; THEN Pacific Island countries' (PICs') economies will be able to generate more jobs, raise incomes and expand local businesses.***

The Pacific Economic Growth activity seeks to advance economic growth, climate resilience, and inclusive development by:

- Improving the climate resiliency of local enterprises and infrastructure (ref: DO1 IR 1.1)
- Supporting local small and medium enterprises to access markets and financing (ref: DO2 IR 2.1);
- Facilitating greater trade and private investment (ref: DO2 IR 2.1 and 2.3)
- Strengthening public financial management and domestic resource mobilization (ref: DO2 IR 2.2);

GOAL: DEMOCRATIC, PROSPEROUS, AND RESILIENT PACIFIC ISLAND REGION

DO 1: Community Resilience Strengthened	DO 2: Resilient Economic Growth Advanced	DO 3: Democratic Governance Strengthened
<p>IR 1.1 Capacity to adapt and respond to climate and disaster impacts strengthened</p> <p>1.1.1 Capacity to deliver humanitarian and recovery assistance improved</p> <p>1.1.2 Vulnerability to effects of climate stresses and disaster shocks reduced</p> <p>1.1.3 Financing to address disaster and climate risk mobilized</p>	<p>IR 2.1: Enterprise development strengthened</p> <p>2.1.1 Enabling environment improved</p> <p>2.1.2 Productivity increased</p> <p>2.1.3 Access to finance improved</p>	<p>IR 3.1: Civic engagement increased</p> <p>3.1.1 Citizen participation in democratic processes increased</p> <p>3.1.2 Civil society organizations as advocates and watchdogs strengthened</p>
<p>IR 1.2 Sustainable management of natural resources strengthened</p> <p>1.2.1 Environmental and social safeguards and standards advanced</p> <p>1.2.2 Governance of conservation areas advanced</p> <p>1.2.3 Protection of fisheries improved</p>	<p>IR 2.2: Macroeconomic stability strengthened</p> <p>2.2.1 Public financial management and domestic resource mobilization strengthened</p> <p>2.2.2 Trade and investment increased</p>	<p>IR 3.2: Government responsiveness to citizens improved</p> <p>3.2.1 Adherence of key institutions to democratic practices enhanced</p> <p>3.2.2 Rights protection of vulnerable and marginalized populations increased</p>
<p>IR 1.3 Access to sustainable energy services improved</p> <p>1.3.1 Performance of energy utilities enhanced</p> <p>1.3.2 Private sector investments in the energy sector increased</p> <p>1.3.3 Off-grid energy systems adopted</p>	<p>IR 2.3: Regional integration advanced</p> <p>2.3.1 Digital connectivity and security improved</p> <p>2.3.2 Transport linkages strengthened</p>	
<p>IR 1.4 Vulnerable health systems strengthened</p> <p>1.4.1 Health service delivery improved</p> <p>1.4.2 Practice of positive health behaviors increased</p>	<p>IR 2.4: Human capital development for resilient economic growth improved</p> <p>2.4.1 Workforce development for enterprise productivity strengthened</p> <p>2.4.2 Higher education capacity strengthened</p> <p>2.4.3 Enabling environment for human capital development improved</p>	



Expected Results

These activities seek to advance inclusive and climate resilient economic growth for the countries in the Pacific Islands. The activities to be implemented will contribute to the achievement of the following results in each target country:

- Increase tax effort (revenues a percentage of GDP)

- Improved budget utilization (disbursements as percentage of programmed expenditures)
- Increase trade, particularly exports
- Increase investment, net inflows
- Increase new jobs created and employment increased
- Increase in new enterprises, particularly women-owned businesses
- Increase in climate-related financing

5. Other considerations

5.a USAID strategy and policy alignment

These activities will be guided by USAID policies and strategies as contained in the [USAID Policy Registry](#). This includes support for the goals and targets of the USAID [2022-2030 Climate Strategy](#) and USAID’s goal of mobilizing \$150 billion in public and private climate finance by 2030. These activities also seek to implement USAID’s [Private Sector Engagement Policy](#). The Offeror/Applicant will also be encouraged to align with USAID’s [Localization strategy](#) in implementing these activities.

These activities support the overall goal of the 2022–2027 [Strategic Framework for the Pacific Islands](#) to advance a more democratic, prosperous, and resilient Pacific Island region. In particular, these activities will work towards Development Objective (DO) 2: “Resilient Economic Growth Advanced” through IR 2.1: “Enterprise development strengthened” and Intermediate Result (IR) 2.2: “Macroeconomic stability strengthened.” These activities will also work towards DO1: “Community Resilience Strengthened” through IR1.1 “Capacity to adapt and respond to climate and disaster impacts strengthened”.

5.b Gender and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)

The USAID [2023 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment \(GEWE\) Policy](#) reaffirms that gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment are fundamental for the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. Similarly, USAID’s [Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (PRO-IP) promotes thoughtful and direct engagement of Indigenous Peoples in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects.

Given the high levels of gender inequality and majority indigenous communities in PICs, the Offeror/Applicant will be expected to take proactive steps to ensure that its technical assistance activities incorporate the principles and objectives in the GEWE and PRO-IP Policies to address gender-specific barriers and champion indigenous rights for each objective of the PEG activity. This involves prioritizing and adopting an intersectional gender lens in the staffing, development, and implementation of the activity and may require conducting additional gender and DEIA-focused analyses to inform regional and country-specific approaches.

5.c Private sector engagement

USAID recognizes that achieving sustainable solutions to development challenges requires collaboration across the public, private and philanthropic sectors. USAID seeks to collaborate with companies and business associations where there is strong alignment between business interests and development objectives. The Offeror/Applicant will undertake efforts to engage companies and investors to explore opportunities for collaboration and work with the private sector to create new solutions and approaches that achieve project outcomes in line with [USAID’s Private Sector Engagement \(PSE\) policy](#). The Offeror/Applicant must articulate a strategy that actively engages the private sector and develops partnerships with business firms and associations to leverage resources, bring solutions to scale, ensure sustainability, promote innovation, and achieve efficient outcomes.

5.d Sustainability

Sustainability and scalability are central to the objectives and design of the activities. The Offeror/Applicant must identify the elements of sustainability and scalability considered essential to achieve the activities purpose and describe how sustainability objectives will be integrated and how benefits and results will continue and be scaled up beyond USAID funding. The Offeror/Applicant must identify key sustainability issues and considerations around a host of issues, as necessary, including economic, financial, social soundness, institutional capacity, political economy, technical/sectoral, and environmental (including climate change vulnerability). The Offeror/Applicant's Performance Work Statement/Program Description must propose interventions on these issues that will be considered to more sustainable outcomes for the activity as a whole and for specific country engagements.

The Offeror/Applicant will review the financial costs of the activity, its recurrent costs, and its maintenance capability and costs, as well as ensure that future revenues will be adequate. The Offeror/Applicant will also look into the institutional capacities that will need to be in place or developed, including systems, policies and skills. The Offeror/Applicant must identify and demonstrate an understanding of the key stakeholders in the activity in order to help ensure activity "buy-in" and the long-term sustainability of the effort. Stakeholders will include the concerned PIC governments, civil society and private sector organizations, other donors and universities.

5.e Evidence-driven development

The proposal/application is expected to be based on existing robust research evidence that indicates that the intervention(s) described in the proposal/application can be expected to achieve the intended results. Research evidence is defined as systematic and analytic methodologies designed to test hypotheses, and includes impact evaluations, systematic reviews, and academic studies. To operationalize this commitment, Offeror/Applicant must draw from the global evidence base to inform proposals/applications. This should be done in addition to any context specific evidence available.

Consistent with USAID's [Evaluation Policy](#), when research evidence is being used to support causal claims about whether an intervention is likely to achieve a specific result, USAID prefers impact evaluations (ideally including information on cost-effectiveness, and with a preference for experimental methods) to performance evaluations or other types of evidence. In addition, the proposal/application must also discuss why the intervention(s) described are likely to be a relatively more cost-effective approach to achieving the Activity's objectives than other potential approaches. Impact evaluations and syntheses of cost-effectiveness evidence can be found at the The [Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab's \(J-PAL\) library of randomized evaluations](#) and the [International Initiative for Impact Evaluation's \(3ie\) Development Evidence Portal](#), amongst other freely available public goods. All else equal, USAID encourages Offerors/Applicants to focus on evidence reported in peer-reviewed academic articles.

End of DRAFT TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

RESPONSE REQUIREMENTS

Responses to this RFI must be submitted as a Microsoft Word or Adobe document, formatted with one-inch margins and 11 pt. Calibri font, limited to not more than five (5) pages total, and include:

1. A **table** containing the following information, **not to exceed half a page**:
 - a. Organization name and address;
 - b. Organization point of contact, title/position, mobile and landline numbers, email address and website (if applicable);
 - c. A brief statement that indicates the organization's mission and past performance; and
 - d. A brief statement that indicates the organization's interest in this funding opportunity.
2. Responses to the following are appreciated:
 - a. Apart from the objectives stated in the draft technical requirements, are there any other objectives that should be included to advance the overall goal of promoting climate resilience as well as inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the Pacific Islands region? Format your response as a **bulleted list**, not to exceed **half a page**.
 - b. Where do the most pressing evidence gaps exist within the current scope of the draft technical requirements? Format your response as a **table or bulleted list**, not to exceed **half a page**.
 - c. Are the objectives of the technical requirements reasonable given the time-frame and anticipated funding? What other considerations should USAID incorporate into the RFP to strengthen the requirements of these activities in order to achieve the intended results? Format your response as a **table or bulleted list**, not to exceed **1 page**.
 - d. Expected results in the RFI are not anticipated for all countries. Feedback on which expected results and in which specific countries to prioritize given financial and time constraints are welcome. Format your response as a **table or bulleted list**, not to exceed **1 page**.
 - e. What logistical and operational issues do you foresee impacting activity implementation? Format your response as a **table or bulleted list**, not to exceed **1 page**.
 - f. Any other general comments on these technical requirements are welcome. Format your response as a **bulleted list**, not to exceed **half a page**.