

Questions and Answers – 9/23/2014

Funding Opportunity Announcement CDC-RFA-GH15-1543

Enhancing Strategic Information Capacity for HIV/AIDS Programs in Kenya through Surveillance and Epidemiology, Monitoring and Evaluation and Mobile Health Solutions under the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

Questions and Answers by email

Q:

Indirect Cost guidance is provided in various sections of the solicitation (Pgs. 26, 34, 36). Can CDC please clarify if a non-US based organization with an approved USG NICRA (through its cognizant agency USAID) is eligible for indirect cost reimbursement under this award?

R:

As stated on page 26, "Indirect costs will not be reimbursed under grants to foreign organizations, international organizations, and foreign components of grants." Per 45 CFR, Part 74, App E (V) Indirect Cost and OMB 2 CFR Part 230 foreign organizations are not allowed Indirect Cost. However, this will not prohibit any domestic organizations from subcontracting with foreign organizations.

Q:

We are interested in submitting a research proposal on using "smart phones for testing and screening HIV patients". In the past few years, we have developed a device using System-on-chip technology for HIV testing and the work performed with a company specialized with HIV testing using rapid HIV kits. Please inform us if such a smart phone based HIV device will be an interesting project for your award.

R:

Please note that this is a non-research FOA as stated in Part I, section C (page 1 of the FOA). Since you are interested in smartphone solutions, you may want to consider the mHealth component. Please note that you can submit a proposal for one, two or all of the three components following the instructions on page 15 of the FOA in the Funding Strategy Section.

Q:

Can you please clarify whether or not the CV's and job descriptions must be for the same people?

R:

The CV's and the job descriptions should be for the same positions.

Q:

Is it an option to include a capacity statement as one of the appendices?

R:

Applicants must address their capacity to execute the approach in their project narrative as stated on pages 31-33 of the FOA. The CVs/Resumes, Job Descriptions, and Organizational Charts should be submitted as part of the appendix.

Q:

Is it allowable to have Co-PIs on the proposal? If not initially, is it possible to list Co-PIs at the time of the award?

R:

Co-PIs are allowable.

Q:

The FOA specifies a limit of "five key technical staff involved in the project as well as detailed job descriptions of key positions to be created for at most five key technical staff involved in the project necessary for program development and implementation."

The FOA specifies that the appendix must include "Resumes/CVs of current key staff who will work on the activity, including, but not limited to: Principal Investigator, Business Official, Project Manager." (#4, pg 33)

The FOA specifies that two epidemiologists must be hired to be stationed at the MOH for the surveillance component.

Does this mean that we are limited to five key technical staff including a business official and project manager, or are the business official and project manager in addition to the programmatic technical staff.

Does this mean that we are limited to five key existing staff and we need to create new positions for at most five additional key technical staff?

R: The FOA will be amended. The business official and project manager are in addition to the five technical staff. Applicants are reminded of the page limit of the appendices. This FOA is a new award and there is no reference to existing or new staff.

Q:

Who should we list as the business official? The signing official for our organization is the director of an Office that oversees all sponsored programs. The person in this role has final approval and signatory authority for all agreements throughout the organization. However, the person who will be managing the administrative and budgetary components of this project and liaising most often with sponsors and subrecipients is a staff member in the another department. Whose CV and job description should we include?

R:

This decision is solely that of the applicant and CDC must not influence such selection.

The only caveat is that the PI may not be selected as the Business Official.

Q:

#5 pg 40 Should we include Workers compensation insurance/security as part of our budget justification. Does this only apply to a "host government partner" entering into a contract/subcontract?

R:

Yes, insurance is an allowable cost.

Q:

#6 pg 42 Environmental Impact Statement is this required at time of submission? Where does this get uploaded on the form? Appendix?

R:

The environmental impact statement does not need to be submitted with the application.

Q:

The appendix is limited to 90 pages, including resumes/CVs for the five key personnel. Is it allowable to submit PHS/NIH biosketches?

R:

The total amount of appendices must not exceed 90 pages. Any pages after page 90 of the appendix will not be considered for review. The decision of what to include beyond the required documents is at the discretion of the applicant.

Q:

On page 48 of the FOA, one of the listed funding preferences is for organizations that demonstrate experience conducting similar work in Sub-Saharan Africa (10 points). The deliverable for this preference is “at least 1 annual report describing similar work in Sub-Saharan Africa and the outcomes of that work”. If the applicant has relevant experience, but that experience is not well captured in an annual report, is it possible for the application organization to submit another form of evidence? – for example a donor report, or a case study, or any other documentation?

R:

The applicant may submit another form of evidence that is similar to an annual report such as a donor report.

Q:

On page 25 of the FOA there is a paragraph that states: “Note: Applicants must only apply for the first budget period funding, taking into consideration the floor of the individual award range and the ceiling of the individual award range. The proposed budget for the first budget period must not exceed the ceiling of the individual award range. If a funding amount greater than the ceiling of the individual award range is requested, the application will be considered non-responsive and will not be entered in the review process.”

Does that mean that the Year 1 budget for EACH Program Area has a ceiling of \$9.8M, or that the total funds available across all three Program Areas is \$9.8M?

Framed another way, can the Year 1 budget for ANY of the Program Areas exceed the ‘Approximate Average Award’ listed?

R:

The combined total is listed because it is possible for one applicant applying separately to each program area according to instructions in the Funding Strategy section to be awarded each program area and receive an individual award of \$9,800,000 (contingent on the availability of funds).

Applicants proposed budgets should not exceed the ceiling for the program area in which it is applying. For example, an applicant applying to Program Area C:mHealth, should not exceed the ceiling of \$2,100,000 for that program area.

Q:

On page 8, under the Activities column, the FOA lists “Provide training to HCWs in implementation of RDQA plans during and after the award period at the national, county, sub-county and facility level.” Please clarify the total period during which the training is to be provided

R:

The FOA will be amended to remove the text “and after the.” The intention is so for training to occur during the award period.

Questions and Answers from workshop

Q:

Please Let me know from whom does my Organization get a cover letter?

R:
Your program director should provide the cover letter.

Q:
What are the requirements if an organization hopes to make sub- award for parts of the FOA in case they are successful?

R:
The budget and narrative structures include a section for Consultancy. This can be used to engage other organizations with expertise in selected areas. The prime applicant is responsible for meeting all submittal requirements.

Q:
Is it an Award requirement to include the CV of the senior project leader in the application? If not, would this approach add strength to the application during review, or it would be equally acceptable to just include the job description for the role?

R:
Yes. The CVs of the key personnel are required as stated on page 33 and 61. These include but are not limited to the project lead and a business lead. These should be included in the Appendices.

Q:
Please elaborate on letter from PI on “funding preference”

R:
This is a letter signed by the PI and on letterhead stating how the organization meets the criteria of being termed as ‘local and indigenous’ as stated in section C.1 on page 27

Q:
Clarification on eligibility of private research organizations i.e. profit making organizations

R:
The eligibility criteria for organizations are included in the FOA on page 26 (section C).

Q:
After this meeting, Can consultations with facilitators who presented continue when need arises?

R:
All potential applicants have a 15 day window from the date of the publication of this FOA (i.e. from Sept. 3rd). Q&A closes on September 18th for this FOA.

Q:
Can Kenyan organization also include experts from outside Kenya?

R:
Yes, experts from outside Kenya can be part of the application but they must be available to spend substantial time on the project if their proposal is successful.

Q:
Registering with CDC do you need registration Fee?

R:
No fee is needed for registration or submission of proposals in response to the FOA.

Q:

Is it applicable to register online or only on hard copy?

R:

All applications/proposals should be submitted online through www.grants.gov detailed on pages 43-45 of the FOA. Paper submission is permitted in limited circumstances and requires advance approval as detailed on pages 44-45 of the FOA under Paper Submission

Q:

Can organization that deals with enhancing quality of information exchange between crisis affected population and the AID Agency (IES) apply in the category of Monitoring and Evaluation?

R:

The eligibility criteria for organizations are available on page 26 of the FOA and all eligible organizations are welcome to submit their proposals.

Q:

Can the organization outsource or subcontract other partners especially in the development of M Health Solutions?

R:

The budget and narrative structures include a section for Consultancy. This can be used to engage other organizations with expertise in selected areas. The prime applicant is responsible for meeting all submittal requirements.

Q:

Does the bid dictate the number and the type of capacity to be involved in the bids and if so which are these capacities and capabilities?

R:

All capacity requirements are included in the FOA on page 26 (section C).

Q:

Can a number of organizations prime in different geographical regions? Case of USAID, APHIA plus?

R:

No. This FOA supports the strengthening strategic information capacity at a national level. No awards will be made at sub-national or regional level.

Q:

Table on page 8; Awardee will provide training to HCWS in implementation of RDQA plans during and after the award period at National, county and sub-county and at facility level. Does CDC expect the implementing partner agency to continue with RDQA training after the award period?

R:

All activities including RDQA training must be conducted within the award period.

Q:

Table on page 8; Awardee will provide training to HCWS in implementation of RDQA plans during and after the award period at National, county and sub-county and at facility level. How broad will the M & E area focus of when the various information needs in DHIS – HIV only? Or full Health Program in Kenya

R:

PEPFAR resources should be used to support HIV programs. It is anticipated that strengthening HIV program will have an overall positive impact on the health systems.

Q:

Both surveillance and M & E section speak of TA and implementation. In other words who implements the surveillance activity (GOK or Partner)

R:

It is expected that the successful applicant will provide TA while the MOH (NASCO) through a separate CoAg will do the implementation. In some cases, the successful applicant may be called upon to support specific cases of implementation.

Q:

How much/little should other STIs feature in both the Surveillance and M & E sections? Especially in Surveillance / Surveys

R:

The primary focus of the FOA is to support strengthening of capacity for HIV surveillance. Some STIs with known associations to HIV may be included in some surveys and surveillance activities.

Q:

Page 32 4th Bullet States: other information as determined by CDC Program must be included; Question: how can we develop measures and describe them in our proposal if they will be determined by CDC.

R:

The “other information as determined by CDC program” is detailed in Part II.A.2.b Evaluation and Performance Measurement on pages 18-22 of the FOA.

Q:

In order to have impact all organization need funding. How many Organizations are required to be funded by CDC?

R:

A maximum of 3 awards will be made from this FOA (i.e. a maximum of 3 organizations or consortia will receive funds as a result of this FOA).

Q:

On page 15, title must include which area to be applied for but can it also be descriptive? (i.e. use our title as well)

R:

Applicants must use the program area from the FOA.

Q:

It is stated “no clinical care except as allowed by law” what does this mean?

R:

Partners are expected to provide technical assistance to the Government of Kenya and not be directly involved in the clinical care for patients. Applicants responding to this FOA are not expected to provide clinical care.

Q:

Regarding the environmental impact statement on page 42, is this required at time of submission? Where does this get uploaded - on form, in the Appendix?

R:

Applicants are not required to submit the environmental impact statement or mitigation plan as part of the proposal.

Q:

What does "Business Official "mean as a key staff?

R:

A business official is the person authorized to act on behalf of an organization, including signing and submitting the grant application and agreeing to abide by all federal rules and conditions pertaining to the grant.

Q:

Is there a recommended format of the CV(s)?

R:

There is no recommended format for CVs but they should be of reasonable length so that the page limit for the appendices is not exceeded.

Q:

In the application evaluation, there are marks for the monitoring and Evaluation component. What if the applicant is interested in "program C "(M Health) that does not have significant M & E? if not please elaborate on the M & E

R:

Monitoring and evaluation is applicable to all components, including mHealth. Applicants are expected to indicate how they intend to monitor the progress of the implementation of their projects to ensure the deliverables are achieved in a timely manner.

Q:

Is the budget ceiling indicated for each program areas an annual or the entire 5 years project ceiling?

R:

The budget ceiling indicated is for the first 12 months of the award.

Q:

After the budget period of one year is there a probability of terminating the contract before 5 years project period i.e. is it renewed yearly?

R:

The continuation of the project is subject to satisfactory performance of the partner and availability of funds.

Q:

Can we access all the information that you have been reading in the website?

R:

The FOA is available on Grants.gov. The responses to questions will be posted on the DGHA website.

Q:

Does an org need to meet all the criteria?

R:

The eligibility criteria for organizations are included in the FOA on page 26 (section C).

Q:

Why is an organization required to have a PI in a non -research project?

R:

A U.S. federal grant/cooperative agreement must have a Program Director/Principal Investigator assigned to the grant before an award can be administered.

The Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) is defined as the individual(s) judged by the applicant organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant. The applicant organization may designate multiple individuals as PD/PIs who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the project, intellectually and logistically. Each PD/PI is responsible and accountable to the applicant organization, or, as appropriate, to a collaborating organization, for the proper conduct of the project or program including the submission of all required reports. The presence of more than one identified PD/PI on an application or award diminishes neither the responsibility nor the accountability of any individual PD/PI.

Q:

Is there separate funding for GOK in this FOA?

R:

No. this FOA does not include separate funding for the Government of Kenya.

Q:

Is the grant renewed annually?

R:

Yes, the grant may be renewed annually for a total project period length of 5 years.

Q:

Can we access the information online?

R:

Yes, information can be accessed online at www.grants.gov
