

RFA No. SOL-668-12-000003; HSSP Project; Amendment No. 1



# USAID | SOUTH SUDAN

April 20, 2012

Reference: Request for Applications (RFA) No. SOL-668-12-000003  
Health Systems Strengthening Project (HSSP)

Subject: Amendment no. 1

The purpose of Amendment no. 1 is to provide clarification on the following questions raised by potential offerors to ensure that all offerors are treated fairly.

The questions are answered herein so that all offerors receive the same information.

Offerors are cautioned that the RFA is changed only by this amendment and that any answers to questions in this amendment are not to be considered changes to the RFA unless specifically stated.

Please note that no further questions will be answered.

The deadline for applications remains unchanged.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "MPS".

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1. On page 25 of the RFP, under the illustrative indicators, the 10th indicator “Number and percent of CHDs with functional referral systems” is unclear. Health facilities, not CHDs, are expected to have referral systems. Since one would not be working at health facility level, it is unclear how this can be effected and how one can effectively monitor that referral systems are, in fact, functional. For these reasons, we respectfully request that this indicator be expunged. Please advise.

Please note that the indicators included in the RFA are illustrative. If the applicant feels that any are not reasonable or that others should be added, the applicant is free to make those changes.

2. May the **Cost Application**, including the budgets, be submitted in pdf format, in addition to budgets being submitted in Microsoft Excel format?

Yes, USAID prefers cost applications be submitted in excel format.

3. May the **Technical Application**, including the annexes, be submitted in pdf format, with main body of the Technical Application also being submitted in MS Word?

Yes, USAID prefers the main body of the technical applications be submitted in word format. Annexes may be submitted in pdf or Word format.

4. On page 54, under section ii Cost/Business Application Evaluation Criterion, the first bullet states that, “Indirect costs of this award for both the prime partner, as well as any sub-partners (including sub-grantees) should not exceed 30% of the total award or sub-grant.” Does this also apply to indirect costs of any/all subcontractors?

Yes, this restriction applies to all indirect costs to be proposed in this application.

5. On p. 24-25 of the RFA illustrative activities and illustrative indicators are noted for Component 3, yet none are noted for Components 1 and 2; it would be helpful to have those noted as well to clarify USAID’s range of preferred focus and reporting priorities.

The illustrative activities and indicators noted in the RFA are inclusive of all three project components. USAID expects the applicant to provide more detail regarding activities and indicators they would deem important to project success.

6. To what extent will there be overlap between the ongoing HMIS roll-out of IT hardware and software at the state and county health departments? This is a project managed by HISP and it is unclear how far along that project is in terms of implementation over this HSSP project period.

The successful applicant will coordinate with all on-going activities occurring in Western Equatoria State and Central Equatoria State, including the HISP project.

7. The use of HMIS from PHCC to county health department to state has been described on p. 20, yet there is no mention of how information for decision making is utilized at all levels and then is looped back to the Village Health Committee level for further advocacy and facility management functions. Can you clarify USAID expectations for this aspect?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate.

8. The Health Sector Development Plan (2012-2016) listed multiple areas of health financing issues to be addressed, including the severe shortfall of budget to support basic health service at the county level health facilities. Would USAID consider it appropriate to be providing technical assistance to the federal MOH through HSSP on crucial health financing issues such as projections of program cost, revenue enhancement, and rational allocation of resources to states?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish activities such as this if they deem them critical and appropriate.

9. From all reports, it appears there will be a gap between current national projects such as SHTP 2 and MDTF that will come to an end in June and April, respectively. If this is indeed the outcome of reprogramming in the two target states, how will USAID or other donors seek to avoid a disruption in services for the surrounding catchment areas of the affected facilities at all levels, county and state health departments and village health committees? The government with its latest budget austerity measures does not seem positioned to take over full financial and management responsibility at this time.

Health services delivery activities will not be implemented through this system strengthening project.

10. Does USAID envision the establishment of some kind of formal coordinating mechanism for the four new projects (Infrastructure, RH/FP, Health Services and HSS) that are so interrelated and intertwined? Or is there an existing mechanism that can be utilized for that purpose? Perhaps some kind of Steering Committee of senior staff that can meet quarterly, with technical working groups as needed more frequently, could be an appropriate body. Moreover, an annual work planning session to synchronize the four projects might also make sense.

The successful applicant will coordinate with all on-going activities occurring in Western Equatoria State and Central Equatoria State, including all USAID projects. Specific plans for that coordination will evolve as the projects begin their work.

11. To what extent, if any, is this project expected to pay salaries of MOH officials at the county and state levels? This is critical to know in light of the budget austerity measures related to the current oil crisis that is expected to impact the initial years of HSSP.

USAID cannot supplement or assume responsibility for MOH salaries.

12. Do charts, tables, and other similar types of graphic displays count in the page limit?

Yes.

13. Part three of the technical application is the "Performance Management Plan." However the evaluation criteria refer to this section as "Monitoring and Evaluation (10 points)." Would USAID like to make these headings consistent? If not, are they distinct from one another? Please clarify this point.

The evaluation criteria have been changed See Appendix 1

14. The RFA requires that proposals be prepared using a font type of 12 characters per inch. Since pitch and point size do not directly convert, may we assume that Times New Roman font in 11 point type will suffice?

12 point type face is required.

15. Can USAID please clarify the font size that is requested for the technical proposal? Is it 12 point or 10 point?

12 point type face is required.

16. On page 45, in relation to the cost proposal, it states, "Applicants must submit a detailed budget for Year One not exceeding the Year One program total, corresponds to the Year One work plan and is directly linked to activities and objectives. (no page limit)." And on page 57, in reference to work planning after award, "The annual work plan will outline activities and outputs to be achieved in the coming year, the associated levels of effort, timelines, and any changes in the detailed first year work plan submitted in the technical application." Can USAID please confirm whether a draft work plan is required as part of the proposal, which is distinct from the Year 1 workplan that is due 90 days after submission?

A draft year one work plan is not required with the application. In Appendix 1, USAID has changed the above reference so that it reflects this change. A work plan will be submitted by the successful applicant 90 days after award.

17. On page 57, in reference to work planning after award, it states, "The annual work plan will outline activities and outputs to be achieved in the coming year, the associated levels of effort, timelines, and any changes in the detailed first year work plan submitted in the technical application." The RFA does not reference elsewhere to submit a budget presented by activities and objectives. Can USAID please confirm that it would suffice to include references in our budget and budget notes to specific activities, but that we do not have to present costs by activity/objective?

The RFA does not require a budget by activity/objective. That may be requested in association with the first year work plan that will be submitted following award.

18. On page 45 of the RFA, Section B.2 it states, "four program years." Can USAID please confirm whether it should be corrected to say "five program years" instead?

Please see correction in Appendix 1. USAID will require a budget for all five program years.

19. On page 45 of the RFA, Section B.2. says that “all budgets shall include a sheet relating to the entire 60 month period and separate sheets for each of the [four] program years.” Section B.4 states that “Applicants must submit a detailed budget for Year One not exceeding the Year One program total, corresponds to the Year One work plan and is directly linked to activities and objectives.”

Can USAID please clarify that for this RFA USAID South Sudan cost proposal requirements include:

- i. Summary budget for Years 1 - 5
- ii. Detailed budget for Years 1 – 5 and
- iii. Separate detailed budgets for each program year.

Please see revisions in Appendix 1. The applicant is expected to present a summary budget, as well as annual budgets for each program year.

20. In a number of places, the RFA states that the project will not focus its support at the central MOH level. However, to enhance country ownership, will USAID consider including a project element that would promote policy development linkages between the national and sub – national level?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate.

21. Component 2 (Strengthened health systems at the state and county levels, with particular attention to health information systems, financial management, and human resources for health) of the RFA calls for the applicant to support “... planning and management of human resources for health (HRH) to ensure effective and efficient health system leadership and management and health service delivery at the county and state levels.” As progress on planning and management of HRH at national and state levels is contingent upon central-level agreement and collaboration, can USAID clarify ways in which it is going to enhance linkages between the county, state and national levels on issues associated with HRH? Or can you please suggest some illustrative activities for doing so like you did for Component 3?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate. As noted in question 5, the illustrative activities and indicators noted in the RFA are inclusive of all three project components.

22. Similarly, Component 2 includes health financing as a major area of focus, and the planning and management of financial resources for health is inherently contingent on engagement with the central level, as well as state and county levels. Can USAID clarify ways in which it is going to enhance linkages between the county, state and national levels on issues associated with health financing? Or can you please suggest some illustrative activities for doing so like you did for Component 3?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate. As noted in question 5, the illustrative activities and indicators noted in the RFA are inclusive of all three project components.

23. In a number of instances, the RFA states that the project will not work directly with facility-based staff and service providers. Would an applicant be expected to develop a strategy that would promote increased village-level input to improve the quality of service delivery even though the project is not to work directly with facility-based staff and service providers?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate.

24. Should job descriptions of key personnel be included in the annex?

Roles and responsibilities should be made clear in the management section of the application, and not be included in the annex. CVs may be included in the annex, rather than in the application itself.

25. Can letters of support be included in the annex?

Yes

26. On page 45 USAID indicates "All budgets shall include a sheet relating to the entire 60 month period and separate sheets for each of the four program years".

Please see question 18 above. USAID will require a budget for all five program years.

27. Did USAID mean to state “for each of the five program years” instead of four?

Please see question 18.

28. Cost sharing is encouraged but not required. Is there a particular level or type of cost sharing envisioned that would strengthen our application?

It is up to the applicant to propose the level and type cost sharing if they choose to do so.

29. Where in the technical application should we include the bibliography/references cited? Are they included within the 30-page limit?

Please include as footnotes. Yes, they are included in the page limit.

30. Please confirm whether this proposal is subject to any salary cap.

No this RFA is not subject to salary caps. However please ensure that all proposed salaries are allowable and reasonable.

31. The RFA states that the project will support the harmonization of parallel State level HIS and build capacity for the collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of health information. Are we correct to assume that support includes rollout and implementation of DHIS to 16 county health departments? Additionally, should we consider adaptations to DHIS (such as development of reports) to support subnational data use for program improvement as appropriate for this scope of work or will support be limited to building capacity using DHIS as is?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate.

32. A major component of the project is centered on capacity building as part of health systems strengthening, that includes training. What is the expected link between in-service trainings with pre-service capacity building in the area of HSS, given the current human resources shortage in South Sudan?

Pre-service training will not be included in this project.

33. Since there is limited computer capacity in the South Sudan MOH, does USAID plan to support an increase in this capacity in order to achieve more effectiveness and efficiency in health systems? Should this project consider improving computer capacity for the HMIS at the SMOH and CHD levels?

Please see page 22 of the RFA.

34. On Page 21, the RFA cites that “The project will support the CHD to conduct regular, effective facilitative supervision visits to health facilities within the county, and support the utilization of data derived from those visits for decisions about health programming staffing and resource allocation. This support may include the provision of equipment such as motorcycles to enable consistent monitoring to all facilities within the catchment area.” Is the support to be provided here and elsewhere to be only in the form of STTA, motorcycles and systems design, etc., or is it envisioned that the recipient and/or the MOH would consider some kind of direct health granting mechanism to the CHD and/or SMOH, eg, contracting in for improved services?

The applicant is expected to propose activities and methodologies to accomplish this work if they deem it appropriate. However, please note that this project focuses on systems, rather than services provided at health facilities.

35. As per the guidance in the USAID Evaluation Policy, is it an expectation that HSSP will devote 3% of total program dollars towards external performance and impact evaluation? We understand that this funding should be distinct from resources dedicated to monitoring.

USAID will conduct external performance and impact evaluations as needed; it is not an expectation that the project will devote 3% of project funding to this activity.

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## Appendix 1

- A. Section D. Application Format Guidelines and Assumptions, Subpart B. Cost and Business Application is hereby deleted and replaced with the following:

The Cost/Business Application is to be submitted separately from the technical application. While there is no page limit for this portion, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary details. The Cost Application must be completely separate from the applicant's Technical Application. The application must include completed SF-424 forms as set forth in Subsection IV.2 above. The following documentation is required from the prime recipient and all consortium sub-recipients. Indirect costs shall not be included for local NGOs.

1. The cost application should be for a period of 60 months.
2. An overall budget should be included in the Cost/Business Application that provides, in detail to the individual line item, a breakdown of the types of costs anticipated. The types of costs should be organized based on the cost categories in the SF-424 budgets listed in Subsection IV.2 above. All budgets shall include a sheet relating to the entire 60 month period and separate sheets for each of the five program years. A summary budget for all 60 months of the project should be included, as well as annual budgets for each of the five years. It is strongly preferred that these budgets include a breakdown of the costs allocated to any sub-recipient involved in the program, as well as the breakdown of the financial and in-kind contributions of all such organizations (the applicant can also include separate subcontract budgets for the sake of clarity). The electronic version of the budgets should be provided in Microsoft Excel format.
3. Budget notes are required. These budget notes must provide an accompanying narrative by line item which explains in detail the basis for how the individual line item costs were derived.
4. Applicants must submit a detailed budget for Year One not exceeding the Year One program total and linked to Year 1 proposed activities, (no page limit)
5. The following Section provides guidance on line item costs.

**Salary and Wages** - Direct salaries and wages should be proposed in accordance with the organization's personnel policies.

**Fringe Benefits** - If the organization has a fringe benefit rate that has been approved by an agency of the Government, such rate should be used and evidence of its approval should be provided. If a fringe benefit rate has not been so approved, the application should propose a rate and explain how the rate was determined. If the latter is used, the narrative should include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (*e.g.*, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

**Travel and Transportation** - The application should indicate the number of trips, domestic and international, and the estimated costs. Specify the origin and destination for each proposed trip, duration of travel, and number of individuals traveling. *Per diem* should be based on the applicant's normal travel policies; applicants may choose to refer to the Federal Standardized Travel Regulations for cost estimates).

**Other Direct Costs** - This includes communications, report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, insurance (other than insurance included in the applicant's fringe benefits), equipment (procurement plan for commodities), office rent abroad, etc. The narrative should provide a breakdown and support for all and each other direct costs.

**Indirect Costs** -Local/ regional or other organizations that do not have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) letter with the US Government, these organizations should treat all indirect costs as direct costs and provide a fully-developed and supported rationale for allocating or estimating how much of the indirect costs should be allocated to the program.

**Seminars and Conferences** - The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs.

**Foreign Government Delegations to International Conferences:** Funds in this agreement may not be used to finance the travel, per diem, hotel expenses, meals, conference fees or other conference costs for any member of a foreign government's delegation to an international conference sponsored by a public international organization, except as provided in ADS Mandatory Reference "Guidance on Funding Foreign Government Delegations to International Conferences or as approved by the CTO [<http://www.info.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/300/refindx3.htm>].

Per PART 228--RULES FOR PROCUREMENT OF COMMODITIES AND SERVICES FINANCED BY USAID, The authorized principal geographic procurement code for this Agreement is 937.

**Training Costs** - If there are any training costs to be charged to this Agreement, they must be clearly identified.

6. In the case of an application where the entity receiving the award is a joint venture, partnership or some other type of group where the proposed applicant is not a legal entity, the Cost Application must include a copy of the legal relationship between the prime applicant and its partners. The application document should include a full discussion of the relationship between the applicant and its partners, including identification of the applicant with which USAID will directly engage for purposes of Agreement administration, the identity of the applicant which will have accounting responsibility, how Agreement effort will be allocated and the express Agreement of the principals thereto to be held jointly and severally liable for the acts or omissions of the other.
7. The required Certifications, including the SF 424s, should be included with the Cost Application.
8. Applicants should discuss their efforts to minimize administrative and support costs for managing the project in order to maximize the funds available for project activities.
9. The cost/business portion of the application should describe headquarters and field procedures for financial reporting. Discuss the management information procedure you will employ to ensure accountability for the use of U.S. Government funds. Describe program budgeting, financial and related program reporting procedures.
10. Indicate if financial commitments were made among partners during the preparation of the application. Budgets shall indicate the amounts committed to each member of the team. Letters of commitments from partners should be included.
11. If requested by USAID after submission of applications, please provide information on the Applicant's financial status and management, or that of major subcontractors and sub-recipients, including:
  - (a) Audited financial statements for the past three years,
  - (b) Organization chart, by-laws, constitution, and articles of incorporation, if applicable,

- (c) If the applicant has made a certification to USAID that its personnel, procurement and travel policies are compliant with applicable OMB circular and other applicable USAID and Federal regulations, a copy of the certification should be included with the application. If the certification has not been made to USAID/Washington, the applicant should submit a copy of its personnel (especially regarding salary and wage scales, merit increases, promotions, leave, differentials, etc.), travel and procurement policies, and indicate whether personnel and travel policies and procedures have been reviewed and approved by any agency of the Federal Government. If so, provide the name, address, and phone number of the cognizant reviewing official.
- (d) If applicable, approval of the organization's accounting system by a U. S. Government agency including the name, addresses, and telephone number of the cognizant auditor.

12. The Cost/Business Application should also address the applicant's resources and capacity in the following areas in narrative form:

- (a) Have adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the Agreement;
- (b) Has the ability to comply with the agreement conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, non-governmental and governmental;
- (c) Has a satisfactory record of performance (only a brief discussion of this issue is required in the cost/business application since past performance is an evaluation factor – the applicant may wish to discuss any notable issues re its record of performance that were not discussed in the technical application);
- (d) Has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics; and
- (e) Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive a cooperative agreement under applicable laws and regulations (e.g., EEO).

If requested by USAID after submission of applications, please provide any additional evidence of responsibility considered necessary in order for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. Please note that a positive responsibility determination is a requirement for award, and all organization shall be subject to a pre-award survey to verify the information provided and substantiate the determination.

13. Unnecessarily elaborate applications: unnecessarily elaborate brochures or other presentations beyond those sufficient to present a complete and effective application in response to this RFA are not desired and may be construed as an indication of the applicant's lack of cost consciousness. Elaborate artwork, expensive paper and bindings, and expensive visual and other presentation aids are neither necessary nor wanted.

B. Section V- Application Review Information; A. Scored Evaluation Criteria is hereby revised as follows:

a) Technical Application Evaluation Criteria is revised as follows:

**Technical Application Evaluation Criteria:**

- Technical Approach (40 points)
- Staffing and Management (30 points)
- Performance Management Plan (10 points)
- Corporate Institutional Capability (10 points)
- Past Performance (10 points)

b) Under the aforementioned section, Subpart c. Management and Evaluation Plan is hereby revised to read Performance Management Plan.

C. Section VIII: Other Information: A. General Information on reporting requirements, Subpart A. Annual Work Plans is hereby revised as follows:

a) The first paragraph is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

Within 90 days of the award and annually thereafter, the Recipient will submit an annual work plan and a detailed budget, corresponding to the USG fiscal year, to the AOTR for USAID approval. The annual work plan will outline activities and outputs to be achieved in the coming year, the associated levels of effort and timelines. The annual work plan must include a core set of required indicators corresponding to each program area that will be tracked over the life of the program. Baseline data on these core indicators must be collected and presented in the first quarterly report. Annual targets must also be established for each indicator and presented to the USAID/South Sudan AOTR during the development of the annual Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), as well as the Country Operational Plan (COP), the PEPFAR budget planning document. Subsequent 12-month work plans should be prepared and submitted to the AOTR no later than 30 days before the close of each preceding operating year.

**All other terms and conditions remain the same and unchanged.**