

SECTION A - INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

I. PREPARATION GUIDELINES

1. Points of Contact:

Shafique Nazim, A&A Specialist
USAID/Bangladesh
E-mail: snazim@usaid.gov

M. Sirajam Munir, A&A Specialist
USAID/Bangladesh
E-mail: smunir@usaid.gov

2. Questions & Answers:

Any questions regarding this RFA should be submitted in writing to Shafique Nazim, A&A Specialist, and M. Sirajam Munir, A&A Specialist, via e-mail to the addresses above.

Questions regarding this RFA should be submitted **no later than 11:00 a.m. Dhaka local time on April 9, 2010** to provide sufficient time to address the questions and incorporate the questions and answers as an amendment to this solicitation. Verbal explanations or instructions given before award will not be binding. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this RFA will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to this RFA, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

3. Preparation of Applications:

a. Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant's risk.

b. Each applicant shall furnish the information required by this RFA. The applicant must sign the application form (SF 424) and print or type its name on the Cover Page of the technical and cost applications. Erasures or other changes must be initialed by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent shall be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

c. Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, should:

i. Mark the title page with the following legend:

"This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed - in whole or in part - for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this applicant as a result of - or in connection with - the submission of this data, the U.S. Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting grant. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets_____". and,

ii. Mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following legend:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

d. Applicants should retain for their records one copy of the application and all enclosures which accompany it.

II. TECHNICAL APPLICATION FORMAT

Technical applications should be specific, complete and presented concisely. Applications should demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. Applications shall take into account the technical evaluation criteria found in Section B.

Applicants are invited to present 1) an innovative technical approach and an effective implementation strategy to achieve the DPR objectives set forth in Section C; 2) a well thought-out implementation plan with sound rationale for the proposed level of effort and scheduling of work; 3) a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) that identifies appropriate milestones, gender sensitive indicators and targets (including sex disaggregated targets), as well as plans to gather and utilize baseline data, The PMP is expected to reflect concern for results and include proper impact indicators; and 4) an exit strategy and approach to ensure that the program results can be independently sustained after completion of the DPR program.

Technical Application shall be written in English and shall not **exceed 25 single-spaced typed pages**. Page limitations include the following requirements: single-spaced text printed on one side of the page only, one-inch (1") margins, **12-point (minimum) Arial font**. It shall include an executive summary, not to exceed 2 pages. The executive summary shall provide a clear overview of the results to be achieved, milestone or benchmark measures of progress and a brief summary of applicant's experience implementing similar activities.

Past performance references, the performance monitoring plan, the letters of intent and personnel resumes are excluded from the 25-page limitation and may be included as annexes to the technical application. Elaborate art work, expensive paper and bindings, and expensive visual and other presentation aids are neither necessary nor wanted. 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 prospective recipient's lack of cost consciousness.

1. Technical Approach

The technical approach must demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the development challenge in promoting political party reform in Bangladesh, a realistic assessment of opportunities to link policy development to research and democratic debate, and a focus on results. The approach should outline specific activities, especially at the grassroots level, and explain how the proposed activities would help achieve the DPR objectives. Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative yet realistic approaches that are most appropriate in the context of Bangladesh. Letters of endorsement from political parties are neither necessary nor desirable. The technical approach must clearly address the factors outlined in the evaluation criteria in Section B of this RFA.

As part of the technical approach, the applicant shall also include an illustrative Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and Mobilization Plan as annexes to the application. The mobilization plan must provide a step-by-step outline of how the applicant will get the activity underway and include a clear timeline.

2. Management Plan

- a. The applicants should propose a management plan and describe how the proposed plan will contribute towards achieving the objectives and results described in the program description. The proposed plan should specifically state and justify the composition and organizational structure of the entire project team. It should also describe how the technical expertise and experience of all staff members is most conducive to achieving expected results of the DPR program. The plan should specify the role and estimated amount of time each staff member will devote to the project and/or specific components within the project. Delineation of roles, responsibilities, authority, and processes for decision making within applicant's in-country team and between the home office and the field must be spelled out clearly.
- b. Potential partners in the implementation of the award and the services to be provided by each partner institution or organization shall be described. Applicants shall describe the process of identifying and supporting subgrantees, if any. Applicants must also specify the technical resources and expertise of proposed subcontract/subrecipient organizations, if any.
- c. The management plan should also describe how the applicant would coordinate its activities with other programs of USAID/Bangladesh and other donors.

3. Personnel

Applicants must propose which positions should be designated as Key Personnel and specify the qualifications and abilities of proposed key personnel that are suited to successfully implement the proposed technical approach. The applicant shall also include, in an annex, resumes for all key personnel candidates and any other personnel proposed for significant positions. Resumes may not exceed three pages in length and shall be in chronological order starting with most recent experience. Each resume shall be accompanied by a **signed Letter of Commitment** from each candidate indicating his/her: (a) availability to serve in the stated position, in terms of days after award; (b) intention to serve for a stated term of the service; and (c) agreement to the compensation levels which correspond to the levels set forth in the cost application.

4. Institutional Capacity and Experience

Applicants must demonstrate technical and managerial expertise that would directly benefit DPR implementation and reflect comparative advantages in implementing the proposed activities. Applicants are advised to articulate their capacity to engage in the following programming areas: engaging with political party membership base, conducting research and utilizing data to promote policy development and internal debate, working with youth to promote civic engagement and political leadership, creating more space for women within political parties, and management of development activities at the grassroots level. Information in this section should include (but is not limited to) the following:

- (1) Brief description of organizational history/expertise;

- (2) Relevant experience with proposed approaches;
- (3) Institutional strength as represented by experience in managing successful programs of similar scope and complexity;
- (4) Sub-awardee or subcontractor capabilities and expertise;
- (5) Proposed field management structure and financial controls; and
- (6) Home office backstopping and its purpose.

5. Past Performance

Applicants must provide evidence of pertinent past performance and clearly describe examples of successful development and implementation of programs similar to what is required under this RFA. Applicants must submit a list of the five most recent U.S. Government or other donor-funded contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, etc. Include the following for each award:

- Name of awarding organization or agency;
- Address of awarding organization or agency;
- Place of performance of services or program;
- Award number;
- Amount of award;
- Period of Performance (begin and end dates of services/program);
- Name, current telephone number, current fax number, and email address (if one is available) of a responsible technical representative (project officer, activity manager or other contact person) of that organization or agency; and
- Brief description of the program.

Similar information should be provided for every partner organization that would represent 10% or more of the total proposed project cost.

6. The suggested outline for the technical application is:

- I. Table of Contents, listing all page numbers and attachments
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Technical Approach
- IV. Management Plan
- V. Personnel
- V. Institutional Capacity and Experience
- VI. Past Performance
- VII. Annexes:
 - a. Mobilization Plan
 - b. Implementation Plan; Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)
 - c. Relevant Past Performance Information (Recipient and Key Partner Organizations);
 - d. Curriculum Vitae for Key Personnel;

7. Marking Plan and Branding Strategy under Assistance Instruments

USAID's mandatory branding/marketing requirements became effective on January 2, 2006. The applicant may review and download the regulations, guidance, and graphics at www.usaid.gov/branding. Applicants selected for award will be required to provide a "Branding Strategy" and a "Marking Plan" for review and inclusion in the final award by the Agreement

Officer. See Section E for the full text of the Branding and Marking provisions under Assistance Instruments.

III. COST APPLICATION FORMAT

The Cost or Business Application is to be submitted under separate cover from the technical application. Certain documents are required to be submitted by an applicant in order for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. However, it is USAID policy not to burden applicants with undue reporting requirements if that information is readily available through other sources. There is no page limitation on the Cost Application.

The following sections describe the documentation that applicants for an assistance award must submit to USAID/Bangladesh prior to award. While there is no page limit for this portion, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary detail to address the following:

1. The budget must have an accompanying detailed budget narrative and justification that provides in detail the total program amount for implementation of the program your organization is proposing. The budget narrative should provide information regarding the basis of estimate for each line item, including reference to sources used to substantiate the cost estimate (e.g. organization's policy, payroll document, vendor quotes, etc.).

In addition to the detailed budget, a summary of the budget must be submitted using Standard Form 424 and 424A which can be downloaded from the following web site:

http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp#1

2. The cost/business application should contain the following budget categories:
 - a. Direct Labor – Direct salaries, wages and annual increases for all personnel proposed under the application shall be in accordance with the applicant's established personnel policies. To be considered adequate, the policies must be in writing, applicable to all employees of the organization, is subject to review and approval at a high enough organizational level to assure its uniform enforcement, and result in costs which are reasonable and allowable in accordance with applicable cost principles. The narrative should include a level of effort analysis specifying personnel, rate of compensation, and amount of time proposed. Anticipated salary increases during the period of the agreement should be included.
 - b. Fringe Benefits - If accounted for as a separate item of cost, fringe benefits should be based on the applicant's audited fringe benefit rate, supported by a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or historical cost data. If the latter is used, the budget narrative should include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g. unemployment insurance, workers compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, FICA, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries.
 - c. Supplies and Equipment - Differentiate between expendable supplies and nonexpendable equipment (NOTE: Equipment is defined as tangible nonexpendable personal property including exempt property charged directly to the award having a

useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit, unless the applicant's established policy establishes nonexpendable equipment anticipated to be required to implement the program, specifying quantities and unit cost.)

- d. Allowances- Allowances must be broken down by specific type and by person and must be in accordance with the applicant's established policies.
 - e. Travel and Per Diem - The narrative should indicate number of trips, domestic and international, and the estimated unit cost of each travel in accordance with the technical application. Proposed per diem rates must be in accordance with the applicant's established policies and practices that are uniformly applied to federally-financed and other activities of the applicant.
 - f. Other Direct Costs - This could include any miscellaneous costs such as office rents, communications, transportations, supplies and utilities, report preparation costs, passports, visas, medical exams and inoculations, insurance (other than the applicant's normal coverage), etc. The narrative, or supporting schedule, should provide a complete breakdown and support for each item of other direct costs.
 - g. Proposed Sub-contracts/agreements - Applicants who intend to utilize sub contractors or sub recipients should indicate the extent intended and a complete cost breakdown, as well as all the information required herein for the applicant. **Sub-contract/agreement cost applications should follow the same cost format as submitted by the applicant.**
3. A current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) if your organization has such an agreement with an agency or department of the U.S. Government.
 4. Applicants who do not currently have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from their cognizant agency shall submit the following information:
 - a. copies of the applicant's financial reports for the previous 3-year period, which have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID;
 - b. projected budget, cash flow and an organizational chart for the applicant; and
 - c. a copy of the organization's accounting manual.
 5. Required assurances, certifications and representations as indicated in 424 B entitled Assurances-Non Construction Programs and the certifications identified in Section D.
 6. Applicants should submit any additional evidence of responsibility deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. The information submitted should substantiate that the applicant:
 - a. has adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the award;
 - b. has the ability to comply with the award conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, nongovernmental and governmental;

c. has a satisfactory record of performance. Past relevant unsatisfactory performance is ordinarily sufficient to justify a finding of non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance.

d. has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics; and

e. is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive a grant under applicable laws and regulations (e.g., EEO).

7. Applicants that have never received a grant, cooperative agreement or contract from the U.S. Government are required to submit a copy of their accounting manual. If a copy has already been submitted to the U.S. Government, the applicant should advise which Federal office has a copy.

8. Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA, formerly known as M/OP).

9. Cost-Share: Cost sharing is encouraged but not required under this solicitation. However, if cost share is proposed, the applicants should estimate the amount of cost-sharing resources to be mobilized over the life of the agreement and specify the sources of such resources, and the basis of calculation in the budget narrative.

IV. APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Applicants may upload applications to <http://www.grants.gov>. Additionally, a separate electronic (e-mail) **AND** a hard copy submission are still required by USAID/Bangladesh. All applications received by the submission deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. No addition or modifications will be accepted after the submission date.

1. Submission of Hard Copy Applications

Hard copies of applications and modifications thereof shall be submitted in **sealed envelopes or packages** (1) addressed to the office specified below, and (2) showing the date and time specified for receipt (i.e., the due date and time), the RFA number, and the name and address of the applicant.

Applications submitted via courier service or mail, shall be submitted in two separate parts and delivered in two separate envelopes: (a) technical and (b) cost or business application. The hard copy technical application shall consist of one original and four copies. The cost or business application shall consist of one original and two copies. Applications shall be submitted with the name and address of the applicant and RFA number (referenced above) inscribed thereon, to:

By Courier Service/Hand Delivery

Agreement Officer
Office of the Acquisition and Assistance
U.S. Agency for International Development

C/o American Embassy
Madani Avenue, Baridhara
Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh
Telephone: (880 2) 885-5500

By Mail

Agreement Officer
Office of the Acquisition and Assistance
U.S. Agency for International Development
C/o American Embassy
Madani Avenue, Baridhara
Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

Hard copies of submissions must arrive by the due date and time. It is recommended that applicants use courier service instead of international mail for the hard copy submission.

Faxed applications are not acceptable.

Please be advised that in the past, some firms have experienced delays with international air courier services. Applications received after the closing date and time will be processed as late. Also, if you utilize the services of an independent agent in Bangladesh to deliver your application, please be certain that he/she understands that additional time may be needed to allow for security review of any packages, and the closing date and time are firm.

Note: Delivery to the air courier representative does not constitute meeting the statutory requirement that applications are received on time at the designated office. For purposes of recording the official receipt of applications, the date/time stamp of the Office of the Acquisition and Assistance at USAID/Bangladesh will govern.

2. Submission of Electronic Applications:

Applications may be uploaded to <http://www.grants.gov>; however, separately submitted applications, e-mailed **AND** in hard copy, are still required by USAID/Bangladesh. USAID/Bangladesh bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions.

Applications shall be submitted with the name and address of the applicant and the RFA number (referenced above) inscribed thereon, to Shafique Nazim and M. Sirajam Munir, via e-mail to snazim@usaid.gov and smunir@usaid.gov respectively.

For electronic submissions, your organization must ensure that the applications are received at USAID/Bangladesh in its entirety. No addition or modifications will be accepted after the submission date. E-mail attachments should be formatted in Microsoft Word and/or Microsoft Excel format with **2 MB limit per e-mail**. Please convert your documents to one of these formats before sending them to USAID/Bangladesh, or provide scanned copies of pages if they include signatures or forms. **USAID/Bangladesh cannot accept .zip files, as they will be blocked by USAID's firewall.**

In addition to the aforementioned guidelines, the applicant is requested to take note of the following:

- i. Applications submitted electronically must be in either Microsoft Word (for narrative text) or Excel (for tables), unless you are providing scanned copies of pages that include signatures or forms.
- ii. After you have sent your applications electronically, please immediately check your own email to confirm that the attachments you intended to send were indeed sent. If you discover an error in your transmission, please send the material again and note in the subject line of the email or indicate in the file name if submitted via grants.gov that it is a "corrected" submission.
- iii. Please do not send the same email more than once unless there has been a change, and if so, please note that it is a "corrected" email.
- iv. If you send your application by multiple emails, please indicate in the subject line of the email whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of multiple emails (if more than one is sent) and of attachments (e.g. "no. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line which says: "[organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2".

Our preference is that the technical application and the cost application be submitted as single email attachments, e.g. that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending them. If this is not possible, please provide instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID/Bangladesh will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

3. Receipt of Applications:

Applications must be received at the place designated and by the date and time specified in the cover letter of this RFA. Applications which are submitted late or are incomplete run the risk of not being considered in the review process. Late applications will be considered for award if, in the sole discretion of the Agreement Officer, it is determined that it is in the U.S. Government's interest and if the evaluation process has not yet commenced.

The applicant must ensure that applications sent electronically are received at USAID/Bangladesh in their entirety. Applicants shall confirm with Shafique Nazim or M. Sirajam Munir that their electronic submissions (either via grants.gov or via email) were successfully received at USAID/Bangladesh by the required due date.

V. AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Award: The Government may award one or more Cooperative Agreement(s) resulting from this RFA to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meet(s) the requirements of this RFA (see also Section B of this RFA for evaluation criteria). The Government may (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept other than the lowest cost application, (c) accept more than one application, (d) accept alternate applications, and (e) waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received.

2. Authority to Obligate the Government: The Agreement Officer is the only individual authorized to commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Cooperative Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Cooperative Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

3. Award Administration: For U.S. organizations, the prospective award will be administered in accordance with [22 CFR 226](#), [OMB Circulars](#) and the Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients. For non-U.S. organizations, the prospective award will be administered in accordance with the Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients. Please refer to Section E of this RFA for more information on the standard provisions.

- END OF SECTION A -