



USAID | SENEGAL

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Subject: Questions and Answers (Q&A)
Reference: Notice of Funding Opportunity No. 72068520RFA00003
Program Title: Resilient Governance in Niger (RGN) Activity
Date: January 2, 2020.

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) wants to thank you for submitting questions in response to the referenced Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Your questions were reviewed, and we hereby provide answers/clarifications enclosed herewith as **ATTACHMENT A**.

The deadline for submission of technical and cost application is hereby extended from **January 10, 2020 to January 27, 2020 at 16:30PM (GMT) Local Dakar, Senegal Time**.

Issuance of this Q&A does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Chadwick Mills
Regional Agreement Officer

Enclosed:

- **ATTACHMENT A – Question & Answers**
- **ATTACHMENT B – SOW (Breakthrough-ACTION)**

ATTACHMENT A

NOFO #72068520RFA00003: Resilient Governance in Niger (RGN) Activity

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

GENERAL

1. We respectfully request USAID to consider extending the submission to Friday, January 24. As noted in the most recent Forecast Q&A, the M/OAA stated the need for flexibility during the holiday season. A two-week extension would ensure that all applicants would have enough time to coordinate with local partners and stakeholders who may be unavailable during the New Year holiday. The extension would ensure a higher quality of submission to USAID overall.
USAID Response: Application submission deadline is hereby extended from January 10, 2020 to January 27, 2020 at 16:30PM (GMT) Local Dakar, Senegal Time.
2. Given the winter Holidays, would USAID please consider extending the deadline for submission?
USAID Response: See response to question #1 above.
3. The cover letter indicates that proposals are due on January 10, 2020 at 17:30 Local Dakar, Senegal time. To allow Applicants to provide the most complete and responsive applications and due to staff travel schedules for the U.S. holidays, we respectfully request that USAID consider extending the due date for receipt of proposal submissions to January 17, 2020.
USAID Response: See response to question #1 above.
4. Clarification of email address of one of the recipients, RFA p. 30: Mr. Chadwick Mills is cited as one of the two official recipients of the bid (as well as these Qs), yet the address provided is aasante@usaid.gov . Could you please confirm that the correct address for Mr. Mills is cmills@usaid.gov or are bidders to submit to aasante@usaid.gov?
USAID Response: That was a typo. The correct email address for Mr. Chadwick Mills is cmills@usaid.gov. Applicants are required to note this email address as one of the two official recipients of applications for this NOFO. **Please do not submit applications through the Grants.gov website.**
5. Which organizations have been USAID partners for the RGN in the past? My company would like to approach them about serving as a sub-contractor for the new NOFO. Any points of contact would be appreciated.
USAID Response: None. RGN is a new activity.

SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

6. In section A, USAID discusses a six-month “refine and implement” period. Given that the “refine and implement” period will occur in the run up to the elections:

- a. How confident is USAID that the “refine and implement” period will be possible (for example, will key stakeholders have time to engage with the RGN team and will security situation allow assessment activities to take place?)
- b. How confident is USAID that the APEA, social network analysis, and other assessments that are part of the “refine and implement” period, will be valid after the elections? Will USAID be open to reevaluating the program implementation strategy once the elections have occurred to ensure strategies are still relevant?

USAID Response: The project will not stop or be delayed because of the election schedule and will have to adapt to realities on the ground during implementation. Assessments could become less relevant after the elections, or not, but this will have to be determined. Applicants should propose how they will deal with these potential changing conditions, not just with respect to the elections, but with all aspects of the activity. Complex operating environments require adaptive management, which is already strongly emphasized in the design, and election outcomes are just an example of complexity. As the design states, PEAs should be done throughout the activity implementation to ensure that programming stays relevant. In addition, complexity-aware M&E will provide further information on changes to the operating environment, including changes that result from implementation of the activity itself. USAID will be open to reevaluating the implementation strategy throughout the life of the activity as this is the very spirit of the design.

7. Regarding objectives: In the Introduction, on page 7, “Objective 1: Communal authorities, traditional leaders, and regional representatives of the GON understand their respective roles and responsibilities in local governance, and engage in more effective intergovernmental communications and collaboration to address community needs, especially those of women, youth, and other marginalized populations.”

Question: Should applicants include attending to the needs of “marginalized groups” in their programming and MEL, and if so, how does USAID define this demographic in the context of Niger?

USAID Response: USAID will not define them as it is diverse and could change. It is incumbent on the applicant to propose how the activity will identify marginalized groups and then address their needs.

8. In the Introduction, on page 7, “Objective 3: Citizens and local civil actors know their rights, have greater agency to engage in communal governance processes, and actively exercise these rights through institutionalized and ad-hoc mechanisms.”

Question: Are these rights human rights, civil/political rights, or both?

USAID Response: Civil/political rights

9. Regarding Contingency Planning and Crisis Modifier, on P. 8 in the Introduction section, “More information is contained in the Staffing and Management section.” and again on page 22, “More information on contingency planning and the crisis modifier is in the Staffing and Management section.” The only reference to a staffing and management section is on page 48, “Evaluation Criteria #3, Staffing and Management Plan.”

- a. Question: Can USAID please update the NOFO to include the missing information on the Staffing and Management section of the proposal?

- b. Question: If the crisis modifier is not used in a project year, can a quarter of the total funds be returned to the program budget each year?
- c. Question: Does the \$2M set aside include overhead?
- d. Question: Can a portion of the \$2M crisis modifier set aside be used for contingency planning, or is the set aside only for response?

USAID Response:

- a. No information is missing from the Staffing and Management section of the NOFO. P.36 has relevant information under, “Contingency Planning and Crisis Modifier” within the Staffing and Management section.
- b. No. The funds will only be used when there is a need.
- c. Yes. However, the overhead will only be charged when the funds are drawn.
- d. No, this is only for response.

10. Given the emphasis on coordinating with other RISE II implementers, can USAID please provide an update on the Sahel Coordination and Communication Mechanism; is there an expected award date?

USAID Response: The SCC was awarded on August 16, 2019 to Mercy Corps with a period of performance from September 01, 2019 to August 31, 2024.

11. Can USAID please confirm focus communes for RGN? The RFI lists 21 communes in Annex 5, while the RFA mentions 19 communes in footnote 6 on page 7.

USAID Response: 19 communes of Maradi and Zinder. Annex 5 is the SAM quick start guide for new grantee registration and has no reference to target communes

12. Does USAID have any guidance on total funding amounts for Windows of Opportunity Grants or the Rapid Response Fund?

USAID Response: No

13. While USAID provides a specific amount to set aside for the Crisis Modifier (\$2M), analogous figures are not provided for the Civic Engagement Window of Opportunity Grants and the Rapid Response Emergency Funds mechanisms (page 21). Could USAID clarify the expected budget to be allocated for these mechanisms and caps for each grant awarded so that all respondents’ proposals can be judged equally?

USAID Response: See response to question #12.

14. Can USAID clarify how it differentiates between the Emergency Fund, rapid response for unforeseen opportunities and challenges, and the Crisis modifier? How does USAID foresee the activities and targeted populations for each set of activities should differ or interact?

USAID Response: The emergency fund IS the rapid response fund. This is for unforeseen opportunities or challenges related to the security environment. The crisis modifier is slightly different but could entail overlap with the RRF. The crisis modifier is for periodic shocks and crises, usually with a cyclical nature, as seen in the Sahel for decades and not related to the security environment. That said, the recipient could include security changes for consideration in the contingency plan.

15. Partnerships: To ensure that programming remains locally owned, locally led, and locally sustained and in the spirit of developing collaborative activities and synergistic results with local Nigerien partners, would USAID please confirm that all partnership arrangements between Applicants and any local Nigerien organizations be non-exclusive?
USAID Response: Yes, that is our preference. Applicants should note that USAID will not respect, consider or be bound by any exclusive commitments made by any local Nigerien organizations, and/or key personnel to competing applications.
16. Clarification on geographic locales for implementation, RFA p. 12-13: Can USAID please confirm that RGN will focus on Zinder and Maradi (as the RFA states that RISE partners are focusing in Zinder and Maradi)?
USAID Response: See response to question #11.
17. Clarification on beneficiaries: Does USAID envisage the program benefiting certain current new stressors, such as displaced people from Nigeria or herds/herders with animals, also from the south?
USAID Response: New stressors will be considered within the framework of achieving the activity's goals. New stressors are the purpose of the contingency planning/shock responsive mechanism as well as the RRF, which are already built into the activity design.
18. Clarification on capacity development activities in Objectives 2 and 3: Does USAID envisage implementors designing and delivering training events in program and financial management topics for municipal governments and/or CSOs?
USAID Response: No. USAID envisions implementers working with municipal authorities/CSOs to collaboratively identify the unique problems present in a given geography/institution/time and creatively and collaboratively designing interventions/solutions identified by those stakeholders. These should be done through an in-depth consultative process, an understanding of the local political economy, and an acceptance that best practice solutions rarely work for strengthening institutions.
19. Can USAID clarify the current coordination mechanism used by its governance partners and how what is expected from the RGN awardee with respect to these processes. Will RGN also be considered as a part of the RISE consortium of partners?
USAID Response: RGN is an activity under the RISE 2 project and therefore is a RISE 2 partner. Coordination with other awards in RISE 2 will largely occur under the SCC activity.
20. Page 12: The following anticipated result appears under Objective 2: "Municipal governments have greater capacity and cooperate more effectively with to provide essential services and respond to locally-determined community needs." Can USAID clarify with whom municipal governments are expected to more effectively cooperate?
USAID Response: "Citizens"
21. On page 21, USAID states the activity will set aside three types of funds, but the description only shows civic engagement/window of opportunity grants and emergency funds. There is a mention of a rapid response fund in the emergency funds description — are these funds the same? Are civic engagement grants and windows of opportunity grants considered two

different types of grants? Can USAID clarify which are the three types of funds and how they differ? For example, are the civic engagement/window of opportunity grants meant to be for longer-term activities versus the emergency for short-term? Would USAID consider one pool of funds of which grants could be a tool to address any and all of these needs to allow for maximum flexibility?

[USAID Response:](#) See response to question #14.

22. Can USAID share detailed information about all current RISE II and BRIDGE awarded programs, including implementing partners, scopes, and work plans, if available?

[USAID Response:](#) Yes. USAID can share any publicly available information.

23. Can USAID provide a list of the communes where DFSA implementers are currently, or plan to be, engaged in Zinder and Maradi?

[USAID Response:](#) The list of communes is in the NOFO in the footnote on p.7

24. On page 11, RGN's theory of change mentions local and regional government, yet the scope makes few if any references to Regional Councils. Could USAID clarify to what extent it expects RGN to work directly with Regional Councils?

[USAID Response:](#) USAID expects the implementing partner to work with region-level administration to the extent that authorities granted to Regional Councils and/or Governors are relevant to activity success at the commune level.

25. On page 12, under the Objective 2 Anticipated Results, a word is missing in the second result. It currently reads, "...have greater capacity and cooperate more effectively with to provide essential services...". Could USAID clarify the missing word in this statement, and who the applicant should be working with to provide essential services under this result?

[USAID Response:](#) See response to question #20.

26. On pages 21 and 26, USAID requires the development and submission of annual work plans, while on pages 37 and 51, USAID references "six monthly" work plans. Can USAID clarify whether RGN work plans will be developed for six- or 12-month periods?

[USAID Response:](#) The six (06) months work plan is for the refinement phase, and the annual work plan is for subsequent years. See also the response to #88.

27. Could USAID elaborate on the difference between the Contingency Planning and Crisis Modifier (page 22) versus the Rapid Response Emergency Funds (page 21)? For example, under Emergency funds, USAID mentions the "fluid security environment", and under the Crisis Modifier, USAID also mentions "shocks and crises in the form of drought, floods, price spikes, exchange rate fluctuations, and conflict, etc.". How will USAID and the implementing partner determine which mechanism is appropriate for unpredictable events?

[USAID Response:](#) See responses to questions #9, #14 and #17.

28. Pg. 7, Introduction and Overview: USAID states, "RGN will be managed by the DRG team in the USAID/Senegal Sahel Regional Office (USAID/SRO) ..." How will the USAID/Niger Mission be involved in the management of the RGN activity?

USAID Response: The Activity Manager or Alternate AOR will work out of USAID's office in Niger, while the AOR will be in Dakar.

29. Pg. 11, Program Description: Throughout this section, USAID uses the terms Communes and Municipal government. Please clarify that these terms reflect the same unit of local government. If not, what is USAID's understanding of the difference?

USAID Response: Commune refers to geographic units of administration that lie below the region and above the village units. In principle, the state authorities in these units consist of municipal council and mayors, as political actors, as well as non-political administrative employees. All these actors have the remit of the geography within the commune boundaries.

30. Pg. 22, Leveraging Collaboration and Partnerships: USAID describes collaboration with the new Sahel Collaboration and Communication mechanism (SCC). Will SCC or another mechanism be used to conduct third party monitoring and external evaluation?

USAID Response: No.

31. Annex 5 of the Request for Information issued on December 6, 2018 included a list of focus communes for the RGN activity. Please confirm that these are still the communes of focus for the activity. If USAID has modified this list, will USAID please provide an updated list of focus communes?

USAID Response: These are still the communes of focus for RGN.

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

32. Clarification on Period of Performance, RFA p. 26: The RFA gives a general start-up period of April 2020. For purposes of planning specific technical and cost elements (such as potential hiring of key staff), may bidders assume a start-up date of April 1, 2020 (as per the current USAID Forecast's awarding date) and an end date of March 31, 2025?

USAID Response: Yes.

33. Clarification on duration of the Activity (project), RFA p. 26: Section B.1 states a five-year period, yet the attached budget (RFA Annex 1) is for a 3-year activity. Which is correct?

USAID Response: The Activity duration is 5 years. Applicants should note that the budget template is only illustrative.

34. What is the budget limit for one application?

USAID Response: Consistent with Section B.1 of the NOFO, the budget limit is \$19,800,000.00.

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

35. Which are the US Government standards, laws, and regulations that CIDEAL Foundation needs to comply?

USAID Response: These are contained under SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION beginning on page 50 of the NOFO.

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

36. Regarding Annexes (please reference page 33 of NOFO) Annex 4, Staffing Matrix. Question: Can USAID please provide guidance on expected content and format of this annex?
USAID Response: Applicants must provide a staffing Matrix that includes, at a minimum, the position title, position description, required skills and qualifications, and geographic location.
37. Annex 5, CVs: Page 33 states: “5. Technical Application Format, Annex 5: CVs/Resumes of Key Personnel (must not exceed 3 pages each).” Page 35 contradicts that limit: “Staffing & Management Plan states: “Annex 5: CVs/Resumes of Key Personnel (must not exceed 3 pages each)”
Question: What is the page limit for CVs?
USAID Response: Three pages.
38. Annex 6: Statement of Qualification (maximum 1 page per person)
Question: Are the statements of qualification regarding key personnel only, or should organizations include statements of qualification for senior staff positions (non-key personnel), as well?
USAID Response: Key personnel only.
39. General Content and Form of Application: On page 31, "Applications must comply with the following: b) If applications contain text boxes, they must be in no less than 10-point font, as to not unduly interfere with readability”
Question: Can formatting for tables also use no less than 10-point font?
Question: Can graphics, text boxes and tables use a sans serif font, or must these be designed using Times New Roman?
USAID Response: Formatting for tables can use no less than 10-point font. All fonts must be Times New Roman.
40. Section C.5-Technical Application: On page 33 the instructions state CVs/Resumes of Key Personnel must not exceed 3 pages. On page 35 under Staffing and Management plan the instructions state "CVs of proposed key personnel (not to exceed two pages) should be included, but do not count towards the technical approach page count." Please confirm it is correct that:
a. All key personnel CVs should be limited to no more than three pages?
b. All key personnel CVs should be included in Annex 5 and not in the Technical narrative?
USAID Response:
a. See response to question #37.
b. CVs in annex 5, as per instructions.
41. Would USAID please consider increasing the page limit for CVs to 4 pages? This would allow applicants to effectively present our candidates' qualifications. If not, could USAID please clarify the page limit for CVs? Page 33 of the RFA states that the CVs “must not exceed 3 pages each” while page 35 states “CVs of proposed key personnel (not to exceed two pages)”.

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #37.

42. Can USAID please provide more information on what they would like to see in the Statement of Qualification to be included in the proposal (Annex 6).

[USAID Response](#): This should explain why the candidates are qualified to lead an activity such as RGN, which will rely heavily on adaptive management, creative problem solving, working closely with other RISE 2 activity staff, experience with iterative adaptation and testing interventions to know if they are working, etc.

43. Can USAID please provide more information on what they would like to see in the staffing matrix to be included in the proposal (Annex 4)?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #36.

44. Can USAID confirm whether key personnel CVs should be a maximum of two pages (RFA, page 35) or three pages (RFA, page 33) each?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #37.

45. Can USAID clarify if it requires only the NICRA of the prime applicant, or if it requires the NICRA of the prime applicant and all proposed major sub-recipients who have approved NICRAs?

[USAID Response](#): Yes. Provide NICRA for Prime applicant, and NICRAs for all proposed major sub-recipients who have approved NICRAs.

46. Can USAID clarify how many past performance references should be submitted? Additionally, would USAID consider accepting History of Performance from major sub-awardees in accordance with the same criteria outlined for the Applicant's History of Performance? If USAID will accept History of Performance from major sub-awardees, can USAID confirm the total number of past performance references for the proposal, inclusive of both the prime applicant and major sub-awardees' past performance references?

[USAID Response](#): See answer to question #78 below.

47. The notice states on page 35 that CVs of proposed key personnel should not exceed two pages but page 33 in the illustrative format says they must not exceed three pages. Can USAID confirm that CVs/Resumes of key personnel may be up to three pages?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #37.

48. Can USAID clarify whether the staffing plan is evaluated as part of evaluation criteria #2 key personnel or evaluation criteria #4 Management Plan and therefore there is a Staffing Plan and a separate Management Plan? The evaluation criteria speak of it being grouped with the discussion of key personnel, but the instructions on page 35 group the staffing and management plan together into one.

[USAID Response](#): Staffing and management plan will be submitted as one document as they are related, but merit review will take staffing and management into consideration, as relevant, for both criteria #2 and #4.

49. Page: 36, Section: Contingency planning and crisis modifier, relevant RFA language: “However, in the event of a crisis or shock, the Implementer should not assume that this additional funding will be made available, rather their default should be to respond within the core budget envelope by adjusting activities and requesting USAID permission for adjustments that exceed a 10 percent line item change.” Can USAID clarify that, therefore, if the \$2M is ultimately unavailable that the awarded project would be expected to decrease other activities to ensure crisis activities are fully resourced?
[USAID Response: Yes.](#)
50. Instructions on Fonts, RFA p. 31: Will USAID consider allowing bidders to use 10-point font to tables, graphics and figures, in addition to the specified Text Boxes?
[USAID Response: Yes.](#)
51. Is the acronyms list required? It is not included in the Technical Volume outline on p. 33, yet is mentioned in item (d) on page 31.
[USAID Response: Yes.](#)
52. Annex 9 clarification, p. 34: May bidders include Letters of Commitment from non-costed Resource Group partners in Annex 9, in addition to the requested LOCs from Sub-awardees?
[USAID Response: No.](#)
53. In addition to the items listed on RFA p. 33-34, can bidders also include a short Transmittal Letter, on organizational letterhead, in each volume, after the cover and before the Table of Contents? Is a short Transmittal Letter also allowed after the cover of the Cost Volume? If allowed, can these letters not count against the page restrictions?
[USAID Response: No.](#)
54. Clarification on number of Past Performance Information forms to be included by organization (prime and costed subs) - RFA p. 43 (“History of Performance”) cites that the number of forms presented should not exceed 5. Is this five in totality or five per costed organization (“prime” and each costed sub)?
[USAID Response: See response to question #78.](#)
55. Page 33: Can USAID provide further guidance on the desired format and structure for the Six-month Refinement Work Plan?
[USAID Response: It should be in the format and structure of a work plan.](#)
56. Page 33: Can USAID provide further guidance on 1) the desired format for the Staffing Matrix, and 2) what qualities of the staffing plan should be illustrated by the matrix?
[USAID Response: See response to question #36.](#)
57. Page 33 and 35: There is a discrepancy in the stated page limit for Key Personnel CVs. Can USAID confirm that CVs are limited to three pages each?
[USAID Response: See response to question #37.](#)

58. Page 33: Can USAID provide further guidance on the information that should be included in a Statement of Qualification (Annex 6)?
[USAID Response](#): See response to question #42.
59. Page 33: Can USAID please confirm that the Six-month Refinement Work Plan, Staffing Matrix, and Senior Staff Biographies Annexes do not have page limits?
[USAID Response](#): Yes, but USAID expects a modest submission. An excessively long submission may not be reviewed.
60. Page 40: Can USAID confirm that offerors may use their own summary and detail budget template provided it aligns with the illustrative template provided in Annex #1 and the major cost categories described in Section D.6.e.
[USAID Response](#): Yes. The budget template is illustrative, and organizations may use their own budget template as long as they adhere to the SF424A, Section B budget categories.
61. Page 39: Part D.6.e states “The Applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking.” Since Section F does not reference Branding and Marking, kindly confirm this reference is to Section D.6.j (Page 44).
[USAID Response](#): Yes.
62. Page 44: Can USAID please confirm that a Branding and Marking Plan is not required to be submitted with the cost application?
[USAID Response](#): Confirmed.
63. Can USAID confirm that on page 44, Section j) Branding and Marking Plan that the Branding and Marking Plan should not be included in the submission? Section j) appears to be part of the list of requirements for the business cost application, but the instructions later state, “After technical evaluation of applications for USAID funding, USAID Agreement Officers will request Apparently Successful Applicants to submit a Marking Plan.” Similarly, can USAID confirm Section h) Dun and Bradstreet, and Sam Requirements on page 42 and Section k) Funding Restrictions on page 46 are also not meant to be specific sections of the business cost application and are meant simply for guidance purposes?
[USAID Response](#): Branding and marking plans are not required with the application.
64. As stipulated on page 31, text boxes should be no less than 10-point font. Will USAID allow applicants to use size 10 font for tables as well?
[USAID Response](#): Yes.
65. On page 33, under the illustrative format for the technical approach, the NOFO states that CVs/resumes of key personnel must not exceed 3 pages each. On page 35, under the instructions for the Staffing and Management Plan, the NOFO states that the CVs of proposed key personnel must not exceed 2 pages each. Can USAID clarify whether the page limit for key personnel CVs is 2 pages or 3 pages?
[USAID Response](#): Three pages.

66. On page 40 of the NOFO, under the Detailed Budget Instructions, 4) Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property is listed as a budget category. However, USAID's Budget Template (Annex #1 of the NOFO) does not have this budget category. Given the latter, could USAID clarify how some field procurement costs (e.g. office rental, security services, cleaning services, etc.), that should otherwise go under the Other Direct Costs budget category, be budgeted?
[USAID Response:](#) Please use the budget categories under Section B of SF424A.
67. On page 44, under instructions for History of Performance, it is stated that the completed history of performance forms should be included in the application's appendix/annexes, but History of Performance is included as a sub-section of the cost application format. Could USAID clarify whether Applicants' History of Performance should be submitted as part of the Cost Application or as an annex to the Technical Application?
[USAID Response:](#) See response to question #78 below.
68. Pg. 31, General Content and Form of Application: The NOFO states: "The technical application must be in a searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate." Please confirm that signed PDF documents such as the Key Personnel Letters of Commitment and Letters of Commitment from Sub-Awardees in the technical annexes do not need to be submitted in searchable and editable format and can be submitted as standard PDF image files.
[USAID Response:](#) Confirmed.
69. Pg. 33, Annex 3: Organizational Chart: Would USAID allow applications to submit Annex 3: Organizational Chart on 11x17 paper to maximize space and readability?
[USAID Response:](#) If necessary.
70. Pg. 33, Annex 4: Staffing Matrix: Would USAID please elaborate on the specific information requested to be submitted for Annex 4: Staffing Matrix? There is only reference to this Annex in the required annexes list with no specific instructions given anywhere else in the NOFO.
[USAID Response:](#) See response to question #36.
71. Pg. 33, Annex 5: CVs/Resumes of Key Personnel: The NOFO states on page 33 that CVs "must not exceed 3 pages each." However, on page 35, the NOFO states that "CVs of proposed key personnel (not to exceed two pages) should be included, but do not count towards the technical approach page count." Please confirm that CVs do not count toward the 25-page limit for the technical application and that they must not exceed 3 pages each.
[USAID Response:](#) Three pages. They do not count toward the 25 page limit.
72. Pg. 33, Annex 6: Statement of Qualification: Would USAID please elaborate on the specific information requested to be submitted for Annex 6: Statement of Qualification? There is only reference to this Annex in the required annexes list with no specific instructions given anywhere else in the NOFO.
[USAID Response:](#) See response to question #42.
73. Pg. 35, Staffing and Management Plan: The NOFO states that "A management and preliminary staffing plan must describe the applicant's financial and administrative management systems."

The rest of this paragraph and section has requirements that are specific to a staffing plan and key personnel. Please confirm that a description of “the applicant’s financial and administrative management systems” should be included in the Management Plan and not the Staffing Plan.

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #74.

74. Pg. 35, Staffing and Management Plan: The NOFO states in this section that “A management and preliminary staffing plan must describe the applicant’s financial and administrative management systems.” However, page 33 of the NOFO includes e) Key Personnel as a required Annex and not a Staffing Plan. Evaluation Criteria #2 also states that “Key Personnel will be evaluated based on the extent to which the staffing plan and proposed personnel complement each other and are appropriate for achieving the objectives of RGN.” Please confirm that a Staffing Plan must be submitted as a required annex and that Key Personnel should be a section within the Staffing Plan annex.

[USAID Response](#): The Staffing plan could be part of the Management Plan, or a separate section, and should be a brief introduction of the key personnel and why they were chosen to lead the activity. The annex requirement related to key personnel indicated on p.33 is for CVs/resumes only. Please also note that the format indicated on p.33 is *illustrative* and does not constitute a requirement of content, sections, components, etc. The format of the application should articulate how the applicant plans to carry out the work of the activity.

75. Pg. 35, Staffing and Management Plan: The NOFO states that “A management and preliminary staffing plan must describe the applicant’s financial and administrative management systems.” The rest of this paragraph and section has requirements that are specific to a staffing plan and key personnel. However, page 33 of the NOFO includes g) Management Plan as a required Annex. Evaluation Criteria #4 states that “The management plan will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant convincingly demonstrates how its management approach and institutional capability will lead to successful and effective implementation of the proposed technical approach.” Please provide more detail as to the information Applicants are required to submit as the Management Plan annex.

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #74.

76. Pg. 39, c) Required Certifications and Assurances: The NOFO lists item 2 as “Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B) in this section.” However, the SF-424B Form is also listed as a requirement under Section b) SF 424 Form(s) on page 38. Please confirm that Applicants only need to include the SF-424B Form, along with the other SF-424 Forms, listed on page 38 and that we do not need to provide a duplicate copy of the form in the Required Certifications and Assurances section of the Business (Cost) Application.

[USAID Response](#): Please fill and sign all the required SF 424 forms only once and submit in the Business (Cost) Application package.

77. Pg. 39, Pre-Award Terms Incorporated by Reference: Please confirm that these items: a Branding Strategy, a Marking Plan, and any Conflict of Interest Pre-Award Term documentation are not required to be submitted as part of the Business (Cost) Application.

[USAID Response](#): Confirmed.

78. Pg. 43, History of Performance and NOFO Annex #6: Past Performance Information. The NOFO states: “The Applicant must provide information regarding its recent (not to exceed 3 years) history of performance on any cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements (not to exceed 5) involving similar or related programs...” Please confirm that applicants may submit partner past performance information as long as applicants don’t exceed 5 past performance information forms for the entire team.

USAID Response: No. Past Performance Information (Annex #6) is only required for Prime Recipients and is to be submitted as part of the Business (cost) application package. However, applicants must utilize the technical narrative to explain the complementarity of their organizational capacity and experiences amongst the group to facilitate assessment of their technical application.

79. Pg. 44, History of Performance and NOFO Annex #6: Past Performance Information. The NOFO states: “Applicants should use the format provided in Annex #6: Past Performance Information of the NOFO to document the detailed information as requested. The completed forms should be included in the application’s appendix/annex.” Please confirm that Applicants may use their own past performance information form template as long as it includes the same information as that of the format provided in Annex #6.

USAID Response: See answer to question #78.

80. Pg. 44, History of Performance and NOFO Annex #6: Past Performance Information. The NOFO states: “The completed [Past Performance Information] forms should be included in the application’s appendix/annex.” Please confirm that Applicants should include the past performance information forms as part of the annexes for the technical application, not as an annex to the business (cost) application.

USAID Response: See answer to question #78.

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

81. USAID mentions that top applicants may be asked to make an oral presentation. To ensure applicants can accommodate this requirement can USAID please provide additional details on:

- a. Timing: After submission of the technical application, when does USAID anticipate notifying top applicants that they will need to participate in an oral presentation? From the time of notification to presentation, how long will the applicant have to prepare their presentation and travel to the presentation location?
- b. Location: Can USAID confirm the location for the oral presentation will be it's offices in Senegal?
- c. Oral Presentation Structure: Can USAID provide additional details on how long the applicant will have to present? Will there be a question and answer segment?

USAID Response:

a: If asked for an interview, USAID will provide further guidance in advance.

b: Interviews may be in Niamey, Niger; Dakar, Senegal; or Washington, DC. USAID will provide further guidance as appropriate.

c: Further guidance will be provided. USAID may ask and expect responses in both English and French.

82. Questions about the Oral Presentations by Key Candidates and Project Manager, RFA pp. 47-48: Can USAID please confirm that the locale for the Oral Presentation will be either Dakar or Niamey, or is Washington, DC, (or another locale) being considered? Can USAID please provide an approximate date for the Oral Presentation (such as early March 2020)? Lastly, can USAID please provide the anticipated (approximate) duration of each Oral Presentation, e.g., one hour?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #81.

83. “Proposed key personnel must be present for the Oral Presentation. Participation from the designated home office Project Manager is also encouraged.”

Question: In the event that USAID chooses to proceed with oral presentations, will the presentations be in French, English or both?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #81.

84. Page 47: Can USAID please provide an estimated timeline for inviting top Applicants to the Oral Presentation process?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #81.

85. Pg. 47, Review and Selection Process. The NOFO states: “Committee members will examine the logic, feasibility and appropriateness of the technical approach, including responsiveness to cross-cutting themes ...”. However the cross-cutting themes to which USAID refers do not seem to appear anywhere else in the NOFO. Would USAID please provide the cross-cutting themes to which Applicants need to respond?

[USAID Response](#): See RISE 2 Objective 5: p.7 of NOFO; p.14;

86. Pg. 47-48, Merit Review, STEP II – Oral Presentation. On page 47, the NOFO states, “USAID will conduct the first round of application reviews to identify top Applicants for an oral presentation to USAID. Proposed key personnel must be present for the Oral Presentation. Participation from the designated home office Project Manager is also encouraged.” and that “USAID reserves the right to make award without Oral Presentation.” On page 48, the NOFO states “in the event of oral presentations in Niger or Dakar.” Would USAID please provide more information on the anticipated timeline and any specific requirements for the oral presentations?

[USAID Response](#): See response to question #81.

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

87. Clarification on period covered by subsequent Work Plans. RFA p. 51 cites “Six-monthly Work Plans.” We understand that a draft Six-month Work Plan for the Refinement Phase is to be included as Annex 2 of the Application. Could USAID clarify if subsequent Work Plans should also be for six months or if Annual Work Plans are to be developed following the Refinement period.

[USAID Response](#): Annual Work Plans are to be developed for subsequent years.

88. Page 51 states “USAID reserves the right to review and re-approve work plans quarterly or on an as-needed basis.” At the same time, page 26 refers to approval of annual work plans and

life of project exit strategies; ADS303.3.11 states “USAID must not require approval of implementation plans more often than annually;” and 2 CFR 200.308 “Revision of budget and program plans” “(c)(2) states “No other prior approval requirements for specific items may be imposed unless an exception has been approved by OMB.” Recognizing the need for adaptive management and to conform with the regulations, can USAID confirm that it will be approving a work plan for the inception period and then one work plan a year starting after the inception period — while providing the recipient with the option to submit revised workplans for approval more frequently, as required by the context?

USAID Response: Beyond the refinement phase, approval of work plans will be on an annual basis. USAID appreciates an applicant’s desire to reduce its work load, but also sees work plans as living documents, where frequent and regular reviews of the work environment and how the activity will respond to it, are critical to adaptive management and to success in implementing programs in complex environments. While USAID cannot require approval of work plans more frequently than annually, it will view applications that show an appreciation of complexity-aware M&E and adaptive management, and that propose ways to build in flexibility, as outlined in the NOFO, more positively than those that do not. As such, USAID and the recipient will meet at the mid-year point to review where things stand within the approved work plan and determine whether or not there is a need to pivot or proceed in accordance with the objectives of the activity.

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

89. On page 73, it states that the draft SOW for Breakthrough-ACTION is annexed, but it does not appear to be in the annexes. Could USAID please provide the annex?**USAID Response:** Attached as **ATTACHMENT B**.

COST:

90. Can USAID please provide the LCN Salary scale for Niger?

USAID Response: No. The requested document does not apply to this NOFO. Applicants’ are to use their established personnel compensation policy.

91. Clarification on public-private partnerships via cost-share, RFA pp. 18: Although cost-share is not a requirement for this activity, can bidders propose any pre-identified partnerships and report on any potential donations planned by the private sector? Can these be reflected in the budget and the 424forms?

USAID Response: Cost share is not a requirement for this award, and USAID will not evaluate cost share. USAID confirms that applicants need not include cost share in their budget.

92. Clarification on Form SF-424B: Should this be included with the other SF-424 forms (part 1 of the Cost Volume) or, as mentioned on page 39 of the RFA, in the “Required Certifications and Assurances” section?

USAID Response: See response to question #76.

ATTACHMENT B

Scope of Work Breakthrough- ACTION/RISE Period of Performance July 2018 – July 2022

I. Background

Regional Context

The countries of the Sahel are characterized by chronic food insecurity, persistent poverty, corrupt governance, high population growth rates, and recurrent climate shocks, which together may drive vulnerable communities into crisis, conflict, and violent extremism. USAID has formulated a regional approach, the Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) initiative, designed to address these intertwined development challenges. RISE is premised upon strategic layering and sequencing of health and development activities and life-saving humanitarian assistance, together with complementary efforts to reduce vulnerability to conflict and extremism. The RISE I program was conceived in 2012 as a response to a historical pattern of severe droughts in Burkina Faso and Niger, and included support to preexisting USAID/Food for Peace Development Food Assistance Program (DFAP) mechanisms implemented by Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, and ACDI/VOCA, as well as USAID/Sahel's Regis-ER, Regis-AG, and SAREL mechanisms. USAID is currently designing a series of new activities to continue the work undertaken through RISE I, here referred to as RISE II.

USAID and the wider development community recognize that a pattern of repeated crises over decades has occurred in Burkina Faso and Niger because local populations lack the means to manage the risks they face and recover when a shock occurs. Their vulnerability is multidimensional, encompassing poor health and nutrition status; extreme poverty; illiteracy; extended annual lean seasons; indebtedness; gender inequality; degraded natural resources and low agricultural productivity; and governance failures. Shocks and stressors in the Sahel will become even more severe in the future. Climate projections indicate that rainfall will become more intense, unpredictable, and infrequent; that changes to global weather patterns will have large impacts on the frequency and intensity of major droughts; and that average temperatures in the region will increase. The effects of these environmental changes are compounded by rapid population growth, a youth bulge, and increased conflict and instability.

In the absence of a sustained and coordinated effort to address the underlying causes of chronic vulnerability and to build resilience in the face of shocks and stressors, health outcomes in the Sahel remain poor even in non-crisis years. Burkina Faso and Niger are among the countries with the highest fertility and lowest contraceptive prevalence rates in the world. The total fertility rate is 6 in Burkina Faso, and nearly a quarter of women of reproductive age have unmet need for family planning.¹ In Niger, the total fertility rate is 6 and 16.6% of women have unmet need for family planning, underlining the need for both supply- and

Defining resilience: USAID's 2012 Policy and Programming Guidance on Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis defines resilience as "the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth." In short, resilience is the ability to manage adversity and change without compromising future well-being. As this suggests, resilience is a necessary condition—or set of capacities—for reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and humanitarian assistance needs in the complex risk environments in which USAID works and in which poor and chronically vulnerable people live. For more information on USAID's resilience work, visit: <https://www.usaid.gov/resilience>.

¹ Burkina Faso DHS 2010

demand-side interventions.² Sub-optimal timing and spacing of pregnancy contributes to high rates of maternal mortality in both countries; in Niger, in particular, the combination of early childbearing; extremely high parity; and pregnancy at advanced maternal age pose deep-seated public health challenges. Child health and nutrition outcomes are similarly poor. In Burkina Faso, 15.5% of children are wasted, and 34.6% are stunted, while in Niger, 15.3% of children are wasted and 45.4% stunted. Mortality of children under five is high in both Burkina Faso and in Niger (129 and 95 per 1,000 live births, respectively).³

SBC Landscape

The SBC landscapes of Burkina Faso and Niger differ significantly, with clear variation in both systems-level capacity and reach, quality, and impact of programming. Anecdotal evidence suggests that capacity to design, implement, evaluate or coordinate effective SBC is limited in Niger; lack of leadership and funding within the public sector, together with limited access to global best practices, appear to have impeded the evolution and impact of demand-side activities. Niger's Ministry of Health has developed national SBC strategies for maternal and child health, immunization, and malaria with the support of various donors in recent years, but has not fully operationalized them. A *National Communication Strategy for SBC to Promote Demographic Transition* funded through the SWEDD initiative in 2017 was produced despite failure to secure formal clearance across engaged Ministries; activities described in this strategy have not been implemented to any meaningful extent. In contrast, Burkina Faso's Ministry of Health has historically provided active leadership of SBC efforts in-country. Given the recent introduction of the Ministry's "transformational vision" and related reorganization, however, it is unclear how the Ministry's priorities and engagement may shift in the near term. The Ministry recently developed a health sector-wide SBC strategy, but it has not yet been operationalized.

Development donors and implementing partners have long been active in health promotion and SBC in the Sahel. USAID/Food for Peace (FFP) Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) partners, the World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF, in particular, have engaged extensively in behavior-centered programming for nutrition and other aspects of maternal and child health, with special emphasis on community mobilization and engagement approaches. Given the limited reach of television outside urban areas, mass media-based SBC programming in Burkina Faso and Niger is largely limited to radio. Many programs also include community care groups and other community engagement approaches and advocacy with husbands, traditional leaders, and religious leaders. The utility of print materials is limited both by challenges of distribution and stocking, and by low literacy levels among priority audiences. In recent years, both development partners and (in Burkina Faso) the government have begun to explore newer SBC channels, including community video and social media, with some apparent success. An SBC landscaping conducted by the SPRING project in 2014 indicated that both countries "[had] a large number of nutrition- and hygiene-related SBCC print, radio, video, and other materials, many of which [required] adaptation and updating." A large proportion of these resources appeared to focus primarily on awareness-raising, and fail to sufficiently address audience-specific determinants of behaviors of interest, including social and gender norms pertaining to reproductive intention, family formation, and women's decision-making.⁴ In Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Health intends to systematically review and

² Niger DHS 2017 preliminary results - not yet disseminated.

³ In general, most indicators suggest better population-level health status in Burkina Faso than Niger; the higher recorded rate of child mortality in Burkina Faso than Niger may be a function of the timing of each country's most recent DHS survey and/or regional differences.

⁴ SPRING:SBCC in the Sahel. Retrieved from: https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/reports/spring_sbcc_in_the_sahel_0.pdf

standardize or streamline these resources as part of its broader efforts to improve the quality of primary healthcare.

II. Summary Program Description

USAID/Sahel intends to invest in Breakthrough-ACTION over four years, to achieve improved health, family planning, and nutrition outcomes among populations in select regions of Burkina Faso and Niger. The resulting program will comprise an important element of RISE II, a new suite of USAID development and humanitarian assistance projects and activities to be managed collectively by USAID/Sahel, USAID/Food for Peace, USAID/West Africa, and the USAID field offices in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Rationale for Mechanism

Many of the development challenges that prevail in the Sahel are driven in large part by behaviors pertaining to health and nutrition; sanitation; agriculture and other livelihoods; and civic engagement, and the underlying normative drivers of these behaviors. While USAID has long invested in demand-side activities to address these challenges, assessments of RISE I projects indicated that activities were fragmented and failed to consistently reflect proven practices in design and implementation. USAID/Sahel expects that investing in a single, specialized mechanism will shape and streamline SBC activities across RISE II, reducing redundancy and enhancing impact.

SBC Stakeholders

In order to achieve its objectives, Breakthrough-ACTION/RISE must collaborate closely with a range of stakeholders active in health programming in Burkina Faso and Niger. These include the Ministries of Health in both countries, including central units dedicated to health promotion and communication; national vertical programs; and regional, district, and commune authorities charged with health promotion and behavior change. All Breakthrough-ACTION activities must be designed and implemented in concert with the forthcoming USAID/Sahel Regional Office (SRO) service delivery and DFSA activities, with engagement of other USAID SBC and media development partners active in the region (including PSI, Development Media International, and Equal Access) on a regular basis. Non-USG donors and multilateral agencies active in the RISE II zones, such as the World Bank; the Global Fund for TB, HIV/AIDS, and Malaria; UNICEF; and UNFPA, comprise a third critical stakeholder group. Finally, local organizations active in behavioral programming, including indigenous SBC and social marketing organizations such as Animas Sutura (Niger) and Promaco (Burkina Faso); research firms; organizations specialized in gender or women's issues; and youth-serving organizations should be considered as subcontractors and/or capacity strengthening partners.

Pending the results of initial landscaping activities, private sector actors such as developers and vendors of pharmaceutical, sanitation, and agricultural products may also be engaged as stakeholders in the activities of Breakthrough-ACTION/RISE and other RISE II implementing partners.

Relationship to Mission Objectives and Investments

USAID's RISE II initiative seeks to ensure that chronically vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso and Niger, supported by resilient systems, effectively manage shocks and stresses and pursue sustainable pathways out of poverty. USAID expects that this goal will be achieved through four complementary objectives: 1) Enhanced social and ecological risk management systems; 2) Increased and sustained economic well-being; 3) Improved health, family planning, and nutrition outcomes; and 4) Enhanced governance of institutions and organizations. Together with a forthcoming USAID/Sahel service delivery mechanism, Breakthrough-ACTION will contribute primarily to Objective 3 (Improved health, family

planning, and nutrition outcomes); USAID DFSA, economic growth, and democracy and governance partners will collectively contribute to Outcomes 1-4.

Guiding Principles: RISE II

USAID/Sahel, like many USAID Missions, employs a collaboration, learning, and adaptation (CLA) approach to ensure the continued relevance and impact of its investments. Such a model is particularly relevant in the countries of the Sahel, given the dearth of available data and rapidly shifting socio-political environment. USAID and its partners will establish a joint learning agenda to ensure adaptive and comparable results. Across all activity IRs, Breakthrough-ACTION should collaborate with USAID and RISE II partners to agree on strategic approaches that support transparency; regular reflection and analysis; and **adaptation of strategies and tools to new information and changes in context**.

Breakthrough-ACTION activities should reflect the RISE initiative's emphasis upon **cross-sectoral integration**, as articulated in the RISE results framework and Technical Approach Working Paper. To the greatest extent possible, Breakthrough-ACTION should enable integration by working with other development partners to identify co-occurring behaviors; audiences that may be primed to adopt multiple health and development behaviors; and underlying norms influencing multiple behaviors. Assessments of RISE I suggest that closer integration between nutrition SBC activities implemented by DFSA partners and broader health and nutrition behavior change investments is an area of critical need, as well as focused integration between activities addressing nutrition and prevention of open defecation. USAID expects that Breakthrough-ACTION will build upon core-funded learning activities implemented by Breakthrough-RESEARCH in this area, including a forthcoming evaluation of integrated SBC programs and a review of behavioral typologies.

Reinforcement of gender equity and the effective engagement of women and youth offers transformative potential for Breakthrough-ACTION and other RISE II partners. In order to sustainably address the development challenges in the RISE zones, governments, implementing partners, and communities must work to understand, address, and (when appropriate) shift social norms to support adoption and practice of healthy behaviors. Deeply inequitable gender norms in Niger and Burkina Faso limit the ability of women, men, and couples to protect the health of their families and achieve economic security. Child, early, and forced marriage ("child marriage"), which remains prevalent in the RISE zones, contributes to long-term ill-health in women and children, which is compounded by norms supporting early childbearing and large family size. Social norms impeding couples' communication and shared decision-making further undermine the active participation of women in improving household well-being and the engagement of men in supporting health behaviors. Young people, and especially young women, may be marginalized, with access to resources and health services limited; given the tremendous youth bulge in Niger and Burkina Faso, this exclusion of young people from community decision-making and planning has far-reaching implications.⁵ USAID expects that RISE II partners, including Breakthrough-ACTION will employ approaches trialed in the region, as well as global best practices, to support the full engagement of women, men, and couples of all ages in community-led development solutions.

USAID recognizes that Breakthrough-ACTION and other RISE II partners will be pursuing a challenging goal in a difficult operational environment. Making progress toward this goal requires a **collaborative approach among development partners**, guided by the overarching RISE II results framework and

5

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/USAID_Sahel_Youth_Analysis_2017_Final.pdf

operational principles. Breakthrough-ACTION will actively collaborate with other RISE II implementing partners, host country governments, community leaders, the private sector, civil society, USG agencies and partners, international agencies, and donors to collectively benefit chronically vulnerable populations. USAID expects that RISE II partners will engage with these stakeholders closely and proactively to ensure effective coverage and sequencing of activities; avoid duplication of efforts; and enable continued improvement of program quality. To this end, partners must prioritize collaborative planning and continued sharing of both program data and (as appropriate) resources through multi-partner working groups, nutrition and health cluster meetings, and the like.

This activity must contribute to the **three transformative outcomes of the RISE II program**. This will require innovative programming that emphasizes local participation and ownership at all steps of SBC development, testing, and scaling, including emphasizing SBC tools and methodologies that contribute to these outcomes while achieving other behavioral goals. The RISE II transformative outcomes are:

- Enhanced community leadership of local development
- Enhanced social capital through strengthened ties of mutual assistance among people
- Enhanced capacity to learn and adapt among beneficiaries, local partners, and partner governments

Project Results Framework

The **goal** of Breakthrough-ACTION/RISE is improved health, family planning, and nutrition outcomes among those in the RISE II zones of Burkina Faso and Niger. The **purpose** is improved health; family planning; hygiene and community-led sanitation; and nutrition-related practices among priority populations in RISE II zones. The desired **result** is Improved scale, cost-efficiency, and impact of USAID-supported SBC investments in RISE II zones. All activities will support this result by contributing to one or both of Breakthrough-ACTION's two **intermediate results (IRs)**:

IR 1: Reduced barriers to adoption of priority behaviors

IR 2: Improved capacity to implement social and behavior change programs

USAID/Sahel expects that Breakthrough-ACTION will propose an appropriate level of effort for each of its intermediate results based on the findings of initial scoping and landscaping activities.

Behavioral Objectives

Breakthrough-ACTION/RISE should maintain a clear focus on achieving measurable change in a manageable number of priority behaviors. In health, these behaviors will include those posited to offer the greatest impact upon health outcomes, such as the eighteen Preventing Child and Maternal Death (PCMD) “accelerator behaviors.”⁶ While priority behaviors may vary between the RISE II regions in Niger and Burkina, they should include a subset of the following:

- pregnant women attend the recommended number of antenatal care visits
- pregnant women attend a health facility for delivery
- caregivers provide essential newborn care immediately after birth
- mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour after delivery
- mothers breastfeed exclusively for six months after birth

⁶ <https://www.acceleratorbehaviors.org>

- caregivers provide adequate amounts of nutritious, age-appropriate foods to children from ages 6-24 months, while continuing to breastfeed⁷
- caregivers seek prompt and appropriate care for signs and symptoms of newborn illness
- caregivers seek full course of timely vaccinations for infants and children under two years
- caregivers seek prompt and appropriate treatment for children with signs of acute respiratory infection
- caregivers provide appropriate treatment for children with diarrhea at onset of symptoms
- providers integrate FP/RH messages in other counseling and health service delivery activities (ANC, immunization, nutrition)
- women or their partners use modern contraceptive methods to avoid pregnancy until age 18
- women or their partners use modern contraceptive methods to avoid pregnancy for at least 24 months after a live birth
- providers communicate the risks of pregnancy after age 34 and at parity 4 or higher to clients
- family members wash hands with soap at four critical times (after defecation, after changing diapers, before food preparation, and before eating)
- family members safely dispose of human feces
- family members drink safe water
- family members install and use a latrine

Priority behaviors should be identified in consultation with RISE II partners and country stakeholders using current data and based upon processes such as that piloted by the Accelerate project;⁸ USAID expects that Breakthrough-ACTION will address one or more priority behaviors in each of its funding areas (maternal and child health, family planning, nutrition, and WASH).

In addition to the accelerator behaviors listed above, Breakthrough-ACTION may contribute to change in “gateway behaviors” that offer potential to impact outcomes in one or more health areas. Such behaviors include couples’ communication; healthcare provider behavior(s) in counseling and treating clients; parent-child communication; and health information-seeking.

Breakthrough-ACTION should also seek to address underlying social norms and normative practices that constrain practice of key health behaviors, including high desired fertility among both women and men; women’s decision-making power; men’s limited health knowledge and participation in care-giving; girls’ schooling; taboos around adolescent sex and sexuality; and interpersonal and sexual violence.

In future, Breakthrough-ACTION may be called upon to build upon its work with RISE II health sector partners and design or implement social and behavior change interventions in other sectors, including agriculture or democracy and governance. USAID expects that any such work will build directly upon prior Agency investments within the Sahel region, as well as USAID/Washington-supported activities addressing cross-sectoral integration in demand-side programming.

Geographic Coverage

Breakthrough-ACTION, like other RISE II partners, will implement activities in select areas of Niger and Burkina Faso. In Niger, the RISE II zone of influence encompasses the entire Maradi region and the Zinder region except the northernmost desert communes. In Burkina Faso, the zone of influence is a

⁷ Promotion of complementary feeding should focus on promotion of 1-3 small, doable actions, which should be locally appropriate and informed by current research.

⁸ <https://acceleratorbehaviors.org/tools>

selected group of communes of the northern Centre Nord region. USAID/Sahel anticipates investing in livelihoods and governance activities in regions such as Tillaberi (Niger), Sahel, and Est (Burkina Faso); it is possible that Breakthrough-ACTION may implement limited activities in these regions. Breakthrough-ACTION activities will focus largely at the regional, district, and commune levels, providing support to DFSA and USAID/Sahel's forthcoming service delivery mechanism for design and implementation of activities at the community and facility levels. In addition, Breakthrough-ACTION and other RISE II health partners must work at the national level to inform policy and strengthen the capacity of government counterparts, critical to the long-term sustainability of USAID investments and the promotion of self-reliance.

Target Populations

Breakthrough-ACTION will seek to improve the health, family planning, hygiene, and nutrition-related behaviors by targeting specific activities to the following populations, or sub-groups therein:

- Women of reproductive age, with special focus on periods of pregnancy, post-partum, and lactation;
- Young people; with attention to the varied needs of audience segments such as very young adolescents; young married people, and first-time parents; and
- Children under five, with special focus on the first 1000 days and newborn period.

In addition to these primary audiences, Breakthrough-ACTION will directly address key sources of social influence, including husbands; parents/in-laws; religious and traditional leaders; and administrative authorities, to ensure an enabling environment for individual-level behavior change.

Activities will primarily target rural populations, while recognizing that rural-urban linkages are vital to the development of rural communities and well-being of rural families.

IR 1: Reduced barriers to adoption of priority behaviors

USAID increasingly recognizes the importance of aligning the efforts of its health partners around a limited number of priority behaviors. Building upon the model developed by the Accelerate project,⁹ and in close collaboration with the Ministries of Health and other key development partners engaged in SBC, Breakthrough-ACTION should employ - and guide other USAID partners in employing - a defined process for 1) behavioral prioritization based on data, and 2) integration of priority behaviors across USAID-supported activities.

Breakthrough-ACTION should contribute to adoption and maintenance of positive behaviors by effectively reducing individual and social barriers to behavior change, while leveraging facilitators or incentives. While the determinants of many behaviors in the RISE II zones are poorly understood given lack of high-quality research, existing evidence suggests that limited knowledge; poor self-efficacy; inequitable gender norms and dynamics; and cost and quality of health and social services are important drivers of individual-level behavior. In all its work, Breakthrough-ACTION should employ a human-centered design process to explore barriers and facilitators to adoption of priority behaviors, and generate and trial a range of communication- and non-communication-based solutions based on audience insights.

⁹ The Behavioral Integration Guidance process developed by Accelerate, which is supported by a series of web- and paper-based tools, uses a wide range of data to quantify the potential impact of changes to various behaviors, and prioritizes a limited number of behaviors for intervention. Mechanisms - including both those that would traditionally be understood as SBC-focused and those that emphasize health systems strengthening and service delivery - are then designed or reoriented to enable achievement of this limited number of behavioral objectives. For more information, see: www.acceleratorbehaviors.org

Breakthrough-ACTION may design and implement “stand-alone” SBC interventions, or collaborate with other USAID partners to develop and produce activities and materials to be integrated within their existing programs. To the greatest extent possible, Breakthrough-ACTION should adapt, refine, or improve existing SBC resources available in Burkina Faso and Niger, building upon the work of behavior change-focused projects such as the RISE I DFAPs, SPRING, Phare, and Agir-PF, and considering the preferred resources of national governments in each country. Levels and modes of collaboration may vary between Breakthrough-ACTION and other USAID implementing partners; DFSA partners, in particular, may benefit from technical guidance regarding audience segmentation and targeting; identification of behavioral determinants; and messaging, but require the latitude to adapt strategic principles to local context in designing their activities.

Breakthrough-ACTION will develop, test, pilot, and demonstrate effective SBC approaches and tools within the RISE zone. This action research should be done such that other RISE partners are engaged in the design, may help to pilot and test approaches, and then scale up those which show the most promise. Testing and piloting may be done both in DFSA communes and in non-DFSA communes depending on partnerships developed with Breakthrough-ACTION. Testing and piloting should also be done in collaboration with USAID’s service delivery mechanism. As appropriate and feasible, Breakthrough-ACTION will work in partnership with local NGOs and state authorities, including commune authorities, on scaling up SBC interventions in alignment with locally-owned development plans. Approaches and tools should be low-cost and easy to implement to encourage local adoption without donor subsidy. Across all geographies, Breakthrough-ACTION must work closely with USAID service delivery and DFSA partners to ensure that product- and service-dependent behaviors are promoted only when those resources are available, so as to avoid creating unmet demand.

In view of the dynamic and unstable nature of the RISE II zones’ socio-political landscape, as well as the integrated and mutually reinforcing relationship between Breakthrough-ACTION and forthcoming service delivery and DFSA mechanisms, Breakthrough-ACTION must establish systems for near-real time monitoring of activities, allowing for rapid and ongoing revision of project strategy and programming. To the greatest extent possible, these systems should enable community learning and feedback.

The expected results under IR 1 will be:

- Improved use of data for strategic design and planning of SBC at the national, regional, and commune levels
- SBC activities of USAID service delivery and DFSA partners strengthened through tailored technical assistance, including design and production of materials
- High-impact, targeted SBC interventions implemented at scale in priority regions
- Real-time monitoring used to refine and improve the quality of USAID-supported SBC interventions

Illustrative activities under IR 1 include:

- Conduct rapid communication and behavior change research to inform design of SBC activities implemented by RISE II partners;
- Review existing DFSA SBC materials and revise/develop new resources in advance of award of new mechanisms;
- In collaboration with the Ministries of Health, convene USAID service delivery and DFSA partners at the national, regional, or sub-regional levels to develop or refine audience profiles and behavior change strategies;

- Assist GoN/GoBF and USAID service delivery and DFSA implementing partners in reviewing and refining existing SBC messages to ensure harmonization and alignment with shared behavioral strategy;
- Establish or refine knowledge management systems to support efficient dissemination and utilization of SBC research and programmatic tools across and beyond USAID implementing partners, including local, regional, and national government institutions;
- Design and implement multi-channel SBC programs including mass media, ICT/mobile, and community activation/experiential marketing, with particular attention to questions of normative and social influence and gender dynamics;
- Design community engagement and outreach activities for implementation by USAID service delivery partner (or public sector service delivery platforms as appropriate);
- Provide technical assistance to USAID service delivery partners for design of provider behavior change activities addressing motivational and normative barriers to performance, with attention to gender norms and needs of priority client groups such as youth;¹⁰
- Together with the USAID service delivery partner, design and produce radio distance learning program for frontline health workers;
- Identify strategic opportunities for partnership with the private sector; with an eye to improving reach and impact of SBC through financial support; endorsement and co-branding; donation of services, technical assistance, or airtime; or access to priority audiences.

IR 2: Improved capacity to implement social and behavior change programs

All Breakthrough-ACTION/RISE activities will reflect an appreciation of Niger and Burkina Faso’s SBC landscapes and the roles and functions of their component parts. Breakthrough-ACTION will work to strengthen both the supply for SBC services, originating primarily in local NGOs and private sector organizations, and the demand for those services within the public sector. Technical and operational competencies will be strengthened through targeted attention to the needs of individual learners and practitioners; organizations; and systems-level policies and processes. Across all areas of work, capacity strengthening activities will emphasize opportunities for applied practice through review and analysis of data; shared design and implementation; and provision of coaching and targeted feedback. Breakthrough-ACTION/RISE will foster and promote the role of the GoN and the GoBF as credible technical leaders in SBC research and programming nationally; to the greatest extent possible, activities will be undertaken under the leadership of public sector authorities.

Based on currently available information, it is not clear whether capacity strengthening activities should focus primarily on public sector structures or civil society and private sector groups. USAID/Sahel expects that Breakthrough-ACTION will propose priority areas of work and partners for its capacity strengthening activities based upon initial scoping and landscaping activities.

The expected results under IR2 will be:

- Increased investment in and support for SBC as an essential element of health programming by the GoN/GoBF
- Strengthened SBC technical competencies among selected GoN/GoBF operating units at regional and commune levels
- Improved coordination and joint planning of SBC programming among stakeholders at regional and commune levels

¹⁰ HRH2030 is currently implementing a core-funded activity on this topic; please review for potential synergies: https://www.hrh2030program.org/defining_a_gender-competent_health_workforce/

- Improved systems for ensuring quality of SBC interventions, products, and activities at regional and commune levels

Illustrative activities under IR2 include:

- Building upon the activities of the SPRING project, which included both a comprehensive SBC landscaping and GIS mapping of USAID-supported activities,¹¹ conduct mapping of SBC partners and organizations providing related services, their activities, and competencies;
- Conduct systematic, competency-based assessment of institutional-level SBC capacity within the GoN and GoBF, with attention to both technical and operational functions;
- Provide support to key GoN/GoBF operating units for development and application of SBC strategies, including adaptation of strategies from national to regional levels;
- Establish or revitalize topical or campaign-specific SBC working groups at the national and regional levels;
- Establish or revitalize structures and tools for monitoring and quality assurance of SBC, including development of key indicators to allow for consistent measurement across the GoN/GoBF and USAID implementing partners;
- Conduct targeted advocacy for investment in SBC, including development of business case scenarios based on cost-effectiveness data as appropriate;
- Provide support to a small number of Nigerien and Burkinabe SBC, marketing, research or youth organizations demonstrating potential to serve as technical leaders and partners to the GoN/GoBF, through implementation-focused sub-awards and provision of targeted, competency-based capacity strengthening services;
- Provide targeted, competency-based capacity strengthening to Nigerien and Burkinabe community mobilization and development organizations implementing SBC activities as part of DFSA projects;
- Provide technical assistance to national and community media outlets to ensure fidelity of health and social service messages and support expanded reach and impact of SBC activities, with particular consideration of community radio stations funded through USAID/Sahel's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) portfolio in Zinder and Maradi;¹²
- Establish program-sharing cooperatives for national distribution of radio content;
- Establish or revitalize sustainable sub-national structures for SBC training, with attention to opportunities for applied practice.

Technical Considerations - SBC

- **Fostering Localization:** In implementing sub-national activities across two countries, Breakthrough-ACTION and other RISE II partners must situate their regional efforts in the context of national policy and programming, while ensuring sufficient tailoring to varied local contexts. Partners must also consider the important differences that exist between Burkina Faso and Niger, both nationally and across the RISE zones.
- **Using Innovative and Data-Driven Approaches to Audience Segmentation and Targeting:** Assessments of RISE I suggest that many partners struggled to achieve sufficient targeting in their demand-side activities. Past investments by USAID and the Hewlett Foundation have produced a wealth of unusually rigorous audience segmentation research in Niger and Burkina

¹¹ <https://www.spring-nutrition.org/about-us/activities/developing-gis-mapping-tool-explore-and-coordinate-sbc-activities-sahel>, and <https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/reports/sbcc-sahel>

¹² See <http://www.sareliresilience.net/sareli/content/atelier-de-revue-d%E2%80%99une-recherche-formative-sur-%E2%80%99utilisation-des-radios-communautaires-par> for additional information.

Faso, which will provide a valuable foundation from which Breakthrough-ACTION may build. It will be important, however, for the project to consider how best to align existing audience segments for FP/RH-related behavior change with as-yet-unidentified segments for other key health and nutrition areas. It will also be essential to ensure that the segmentation approaches favored by SBC organizations, which emphasize potential for behavior change, account for questions of socio-economic vulnerability that are central to RISE.

- **Accounting for Migration as a Factor in Health Behavior:** Seasonal, labor-related migration is common in both Burkina Faso and Niger, a fact that has important implications for RISE II partners as they consider audience segmentation and targeting; determinants of health behavior; and channel/approach selection. Migration patterns vary significantly between the two countries and the RISE I baseline study indicated that this labor-related migration was considerably more common in Niger than Burkina. Migration from Burkina Faso’s Mossi plateau, which includes Centre Nord province, is typified by long-term or permanent movement to Cote d’Ivoire in search of work in the commercial agricultural sector. By contrast, migration in Niger tends to be of shorter duration. Within and across Burkina Faso and Niger, some ethnic groups (such as the Fulani) also have distinct migratory patterns – which may differ based on prevailing income generating activity or agricultural practice.¹³ Breakthrough-ACTION and other RISE partners must consider migration, and its effects on not only health outcomes, but gender norms and power dynamics; social networks; cohesion; and resiliency, as they design and implement activities.
- **Expanding Application of Proven Practices in Community-Centered SBC Interventions:** RISE prioritizes a community-led development model, which emphasizes the role of communities in identifying priorities, strategies, and resources to respond to locally-felt needs and aspirations in health, family planning and nutrition. Using processes of dialogue, women, youth, and men will explore their collective challenges and opportunities; identify and implement actions; evaluate their effectiveness; and iteratively adapt their approach as they search for greater effectiveness. RISE I partners have specifically highlighted the (perceived) successes of the “Husbands School” and the “Couples School” approaches. Under RISE II, this process should continue to build motivation and actions toward achieving a locally-owned, culturally- relevant vision of a moderate, peaceful, prosperous, and equitable society. In the current environment of the Sahel, it is especially important to emphasize, where possible, tolerance and moderation. In supporting RISE II partners to achieve this goal, Breakthrough-ACTION should consider how best to integrate global best practices from community engagement research and programming, with particular consideration to questions of localization and scale; cost-effectiveness; and measurement.¹⁴
- **Applying Lessons Learned in Risk Communication and Post-Epidemic Recovery:** West Africa’s Ebola epidemic of 2014-2015 and other, more recent outbreaks of infectious disease in the region have produced important learnings regarding the value of risk communication and preparedness; use of community engagement in responding to a crisis; and rebuilding trust

¹³ The Mitchell Group: Midterm Performance Assessment of USAID’s RISE Initiative in Burkina Faso and Niger. 2017.

¹⁴ See FP/RH High Impact Practice Brief: Community Group Engagement for additional information: <https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/briefs/community-group-engagement/>, as well as WASH Plus Behavior Change Briefs: <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/small-doable-actions-feasible-approach-behavior-change-learning-brief> and <http://www.washplus.org/sites/default/files/BC%20brief%20final%20508.pdf>

between communities and social services following a crisis. Breakthrough-ACTION should consider these lessons, and how best they may be applied in the Sahel, either in regard to an outbreak or other destabilizing event. Like all other RISE II partners, Breakthrough-ACTION will be required to prepare a contingency plan that identifies the types of shocks likely to occur, the activities it will implement to reduce the likelihood and impacts of those shocks, and the ways it will respond to protect life and livelihood, and help communities and households to recover.

III. Management

Staffing and Key Personnel

Given the challenges inherent in the region and the ambitious mandate of this buy-in, USAID strongly encourages Breakthrough-ACTION to staff its activities through project partners with demonstrated success implementing activities in the RISE II zones. When possible, project staff should co-locate with USAID service delivery and DFSA partners to support collaboration, security, and efficient use of resources; for this reason, Breakthrough-ACTION may consider securing temporary office space until such a time as other RISE II mechanisms are in place.