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**Deadline for Questions:** Friday, February 12, 2021 by 5:00 p.m. EST

**Closing Date:** Monday, March 8, 2021

**Closing Time:** 5:00p.m. EST

**Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: 7200AA21RFA00007**

**Program Title: Feed the Future (FtF) Innovation Lab for Food Systems for Nutrition**

**Federal Assistance Listing Number: 98.001**

Dear Applicants:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking Concept Notes (CNs) from qualified entities to implement the FtF Innovation Lab for Food Systems for Nutrition program. Eligibility for this award is restricted to U.S. colleges and universities as defined under Section 296(d) of Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA).

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this NOFO and subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting a CN are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, CN submission requirements, and the selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D. The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section D. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity 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 comments/suggestions or an 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,

Matthew Case  
Agreement Officer

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## **SECTION A - PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Authority**

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting Cooperative Agreement will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID’s supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F.

#### **2. Congressional Legislation**

The U.S. Congress granted USAID the authority to direct and fund programs of international agriculture research under the Foreign Assistance Act. Now referred to as Title XII Legislation (FAA Sect. 296a), USAID is directed to provide support for the benefit of both developing countries and the United States to mobilize the capacities of the United States land-grant universities, other eligible universities, and public and private partners of universities in the United States and other countries, consistent with sections 103 and 103A of this Act, for: 1) Global research on problems affecting food, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; and 2) Improved human capacity and institutional resource development for the global application of agriculture and related environmental sciences, ; (3) agricultural development and trade research and extension services in the United States and other countries to support the entry of rural industries into world markets; and (4) providing for the application of agricultural sciences to solving food, health, nutrition, rural income, and environmental problems, especially such problems in low-income, food deficit countries.

Demonstrating the continued importance of American leadership in international food security efforts, including agriculture research and development, the U.S. Congress and the president passed into law the Global Food Security Act (GFSA)<sup>1</sup> with strong bipartisan support in 2016. Under the GFSA, the U.S. Congress calls for a comprehensive strategic approach and authorizes assistance to “promote global food security, resilience, and nutrition, consistent with national food security investment plans, which is reinforced through programs, activities, and initiatives that— ... (8) “continue to strengthen partnerships between United States-based universities, including land-grant colleges, and universities and institutions in target countries and communities that build agricultural capacity.” Under the Strategy of the Act, U.S. assistance should “... (13) leverage resources and expertise through partnerships with the private sector, farm organizations, cooperatives, civil society, faith-based organizations, and agricultural research and academic institutions; (14) strengthen and expand collaboration between United States universities, including public, private, and land-grant universities, with higher education institutions in target countries to increase their effectiveness and relevance to promote agricultural development and innovation through the creation of human capital, innovation, and cutting edge science in the agricultural sector...”

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<sup>1</sup> Pub. L. 114-195, July 20, 2016, 130 Stat. 675 (<https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ195/PLAW-114publ195.pdf>); 22 U.S.C., Chapter 100 (<http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title22/chapter100&edition=prelim>)

To address this mandate, the USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) manages a portfolio of research activities collectively known as the Feed the Future Innovation Labs. These Innovation Labs support the GFSS to reduce global hunger, increase global food security, and increase nutritional security. The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will be part of this portfolio of Feed the Future Innovation Labs.

### **3. NOFO Award Process**

The selection process under this NOFO will be conducted in three phases:

- **Phase I Concept Note:** Each applicant shall initially provide USAID with one Concept Note (CN). All CNs received and determined responsible will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria in Section E of this NOFO.
- **Phase II Co-Creation:** USAID may invite the most highly rated CNs from Phase I to individual co-creation sessions. The co-creation session will be used to discuss the proposed research topics and any weaknesses or concerns identified during the evaluation of the CNs. The co-creation sessions will be carried out and evaluated based on the evaluation factors described in Section E. If USAID determines not to utilize co-creation, then the most highly rated CNs in Phase I will go straight to phase III.
- **Phase III Full Application:** Applicants will be notified to submit Full Applications through individual Request for Applications (RFAs). The evaluation criteria and format for the Full Application(s) will be stated in the individual RFA(s) issued to the applicants.

### **4. Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS)**

RFS is responsible for the implementation of the [Water for the World Act of 2014](#) and the [Global Food Security Act of 2016](#). The bureau uses the [USAID's Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy](#), and [USAID Building Resilience to Recurrent Crises Policy and Program Guidance](#) to guide implementation for these two key pieces of development assistance legislation. Given these mandates, the RFS vision statement articulates our aspiration and our goal and mission statement summarize how RFS will contribute to this vision.

Additionally, USAID is undertaking a major cultural and operational transformation to expand our engagement with the private sector to achieve outcomes of shared interest and shared value. The Private-Sector Engagement Policy is an Agency-wide call to action, and a mandate to work hand-in-hand with the private sector to design and deliver our development and humanitarian programs across all sectors, and to harness our resources to open markets and other opportunities for U.S. businesses. This policy signals an intentional shift to pursue market-based approaches and investment as a means to accelerate countries' progress on the Journey to Self-Reliance.

### **5. The Global Food Security Act, Global Food Security Research Strategy, and the Feed the Future Initiative**

Started in 2010, the [Feed the Future Initiative](http://www.feedthefuture.gov/)<sup>2</sup> works to sustainably reduce global poverty and hunger, recognizing the need to increase global agricultural production significantly by the year 2050 to provide sufficient nutritious food for the world's growing population. The Global Food Security Act (GFSA) builds on what we've learned through Feed the Future and reflects changes in the global context since its launch. The signature, top-line goal of the GFSA is to sustainably reduce global hunger, malnutrition and poverty. On September 30, 2016, USAID submitted to Congress a new whole-of-government strategy for global food security, the [Global Food Security Strategy](https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy) (GFSS)<sup>3</sup>, on behalf of the 11 USG agencies responsible for carrying out the GFSA. The GFSS sets out how to achieve this goal through the primary objectives of inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and a well-nourished population. GFSS recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment and youth empowerment and livelihoods as imperative to reaching these primary objectives. Technical guidance as to how the U.S. Government approaches global food security in its development activities can be found at <http://feedthefuture.gov/lp/guidance-and-tools-global-food-security-programs>.

To meet the challenge of producing more safe, nutritious food with fewer natural resources while also adapting to increasingly erratic weather patterns and market price swings, the international community will need to fully harness the benefits of agricultural science and technology. The U.S. Government's Global Food Security Research Strategy<sup>4</sup> directs research investments to toward three major themes:

- Technologies and practices that advance the productivity frontier to drive income growth, improve diets and promote natural resource conservation;
- Technologies and practices that reduce, manage and mitigate risk to support resilient, prosperous, well-nourished individuals, households and communities; and
- Improved knowledge of how to achieve human outcomes: generating evidence on how to sustainably and equitably improve economic opportunity, nutrition and resilience

To achieve the goals of this research strategy, centrally-funded research programs link global, regional, and national research partners to identify and adapt promising methodologies and technologies for local farming systems, and to intensify and diversify major production & food systems where the poor and undernourished are concentrated. Achieving the desired human nutrition and health outcomes requires a human-centric approach where food and agriculture production systems transform in a way that integrates advances in soil fertility, agronomy, genetics, animal science, water management, market access, policies, and animal & plant health to achieve sustainability & deliver safe, nutritious diets for everyone.

Nutrient dense foods such as animal source foods, vegetables and fruits provide important protein and other macronutrients, and micronutrients can create multiple benefits towards food

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy>

security goals, but also carry a higher risk of contamination with biological and chemical contaminants that could cause severe health (acute or chronic) problems that can have negative impacts on nutrition specially for the most vulnerable groups (children under 5, pregnant and lactating women and older persons). Investments in food systems can contribute to gains in incomes and nutrition of small-scale producers and low-income consumer households through consumption of safe and nutritious foods. Food systems are changing rapidly due to globalization, urbanization, demographic shifts and climatic conditions. These changes pose emerging threats to the food system that point to an urgent need for rigorous research on cost-effective strategies to ensure adequate, safe and sufficient nutritious foods for all. Since many low and middle-income countries are now faced with a triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition coupled with obesity and micronutrient deficiencies), understanding the role of food systems in determining population health has never been more important. Food systems and nutrition outcomes are linked through several food and time-use pathways, involving agricultural supply chains that bring foods from production to consumption through processing, distribution, and marketing, as well as through the drivers of physical and economic access to different types of foods. African governments, for example, the African Union (through CAADP and the Malabo Declaration) and the United Nations (through the Sustainable Development Goals) have all recognized the central role that market-driven agriculture and value added agri-businesses must play in Africa's development and in the struggle to achieve food security for all its people. To address these issues, transforming and improving food systems is a priority for Feed the Future in the GFSS.

## **6. Leveraging Science to Benefit U.S. and Developing Country Stakeholders**

Feed the Future Innovation Labs<sup>5</sup>, are led by U.S. Title XII Universities and are intended to be collaborative research programs between U.S. universities and host-country universities or national research institutions. The Innovation Labs are an integral component of USAID's implementation of the Global Food Security Research Strategy through their leadership and implementation of research and capacity building.

Feed the Future Innovation Labs are designed to bring benefits to both US and developing country stakeholders. Through the establishment of strong relationships with national agricultural research institutions and other public and private partners overseas, U.S. researchers gain access to international knowledge and expertise, raise awareness of the global investment landscape, and appreciate the challenges and technologies used in those countries. Improved strategies for food systems for improved nutrition outcomes approach have broad implications for producers and consumers in both the U.S. and abroad. Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Systems for Nutrition (or The Food Systems For Nutrition Innovation Lab) will be responsible for informing both U.S. and developing country stakeholders of new technologies, approaches, interventions and benefits arising from food systems for nutrition research.

## **7. The Landscape of Global Food Systems Research-for-Development Programming**

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<sup>5</sup> List of current Feed the Future Innovation Labs can be found at <https://feedthefuture.gov/lp/feed-future-innovation-labs>.

The Food System Innovation Lab will design, lead and implement a program of nutrition-sensitive food system research and capacity building aimed at addressing the opportunities and challenges, and will additionally serve as a resource to RFS, missions and their partners confronting on the role of food systems in inclusive economic growth, nutrition, food safety, and a nutrition-sensitive approaches, gender-sensitive and youth inclusive development, and resilience. The Food System for Nutrition Innovation Lab is broadly expected to help implement and communicate impact pathways from nutrition sensitive food systems research to development outcomes through partnerships with USAID mission-supported value chain programs, national partners, private companies and associations, community-based organizations and other donors and their programs. The Innovation Lab will deliver on this vision by a) strengthening the capacities of select country and regional research institutions to undertake research that is relevant and sound, to communicate findings in ways that are more likely to influence government partners, policy makers, and practitioners, while b) implementing an integrated country, regional and global research agenda. The Food System for Nutrition Innovation Lab research will be complementary to other existing & previous research investment under Feed the Future such as the Nutrition Innovation, The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab, The Post-harvest Loss Reduction Innovation Lab (PHLIL), Food Processing Innovation Lab (FPL), the Horticulture Innovation Lab, the Fish Innovation Lab (FIL), Livestock Systems Innovation Lab (LSIL) to mention few.

USAID seeks the expertise of the nutrition, food systems, food processing and agricultural research community to identify: what challenges are the most pressing to overcome, what opportunities hold the best promise to advance the goals of the GFSA especially to deliver on nutrition goals and support resilience and journey to self-reliance, and how those challenges and opportunities must be addressed in the context of the Priority Research Areas described under section A.II.2.2.(a) in and the Cross-Cutting Themes under section A.II.5. The Applicant is encouraged to raise and justify other technical issues that may not be mentioned in this NOFO but are related and must be considered for inclusion in the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab. The following program description must not be interpreted as prescriptive. As the Feed the Future Innovation Labs are mandated to benefit both partner countries and the U.S the Food Systems Innovation Lab program must consider food systems research priorities among U.S. stakeholders and propose how U.S. stakeholder perspectives and priorities are reflected in the program.

Applicants may wish to consider these sources (Annex 3, 4 and 5) during the development of their applications in response to this NOFO. These sources provide an intellectual basis for the technical program description of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab NOFO, as well as important opportunities for partnership, leveraging, and coordination during design and implementation of the awarded program. In addition, applicants should consult with other mandatory strategies such as the USAID-Multi-sectoral nutrition strategy, GFSS, USAID youth in development policy (Annex 6)

In order to overcome the many challenges to improving the food systems as a whole to deliver on safe, nutritious diets for all, support resilient communities and economic development to support beneficiaries and countries toward the journey of self-reliance, the Food Systems

Innovation for Nutrition Lab is expected to consider a nutrition-sensitive food systems, directing research projects to utilize outputs of concurrent or previous research. Given the research-for-development orientation of this program, a collaborative and facilitative systems approach must be applied across projects to improve the relevance of program outputs. The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will capitalize on previous and existing investments in research and discovery through outreach and training programs and accelerate development outcomes with regional and global collaborators. The new lab must consider ways to leverage research activities across the program, complement other donor-funded projects where possible, collaborate and build partnerships with local and international private sector, support and consult with regional and national efforts on improving food systems where possible, and support youth and women led enterprise development that advance the food systems & nutrition outcomes.

## **II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **1. Program Overview**

Undernutrition of mothers, infants and children is the attributable cause of 45% of deaths of children under 5 years old, and for those children who survive undernutrition have sub-optimal cognitive and physical development, undermining their future potential. A major contributor to this situation is a food system that does not ensure safe, affordable, nutritious food year round, particularly for the most marginalized populations and the groups with the highest nutrient needs - pregnant and lactating women and infants and young children. The Lancet 2013 nutrition series estimates that over 800,000 infants die within the first month due to fetal growth restriction, due in large part to very poor maternal diets. A review of low- and middle-income countries indicates that only 18% of infants and young children in the 6 through 23 months age group, when nutrient-dense foods are required to complement breastmilk, consume a minimum acceptable diet.

The burden of deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals remains large, although the quantification is more difficult. It is estimated that 2 billion people worldwide suffer deficiencies in one or more micronutrients and that upwards of 800,000 deaths of children in the under 5 age range due to micronutrient malnutrition.

Food safety is of a growing concern, firstly because of its direct contribution to mortality, with over 400,000 deaths per year attributable to unsafe food. Secondly, as many of the most nutrient-dense components of diets (fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and other animal source foods) are perishable, food safety is a constraint in increasing their consumption and therefore the nutritional benefits of the food system. Thirdly, food safety constrains economic growth through the increases in mortality and morbidity and losses along the value chain.

While USAID continues to focus primarily on undernutrition, we recognize the growing burden of overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases and the contribution of unhealthy diets. The 2018 Global Burden of Disease summarizes “... among all forms of malnutrition, poor dietary habits, particularly low intake of healthy foods, is the leading risk factor for mortality”.

There is an emerging body of evidence of unhealthy, processed foods displacing more nutritious foods in the diets of infants and young children.

Private sector actors, from small holder farmers, to traders, to small and medium enterprises, to the largest multinational food and beverage companies are critical in shaping food systems. However, the evidence for what actions and policies work best to optimize the private sector's contributions to achieving nutrition and food safety outcomes is weak.

The susceptibility of food systems to shocks, particularly on their ability to deliver safe, affordable, nutritious foods, has been put into stark relief by the current pandemic. Decreased livelihoods result in households, particularly poorer households prioritizing staples and reducing consumption of more nutritious food items, since they are usually more expensive. Producers and sellers of nutritious foods have faced challenges resulting in both reduced availability of nutritious foods and loss of jobs. Access to fresh food markets has been constrained resulting in less consumption and fewer sales.

In recognition of the central role of food systems in delivering positive development outcomes, USAID's Bureau for Resilience and Food Security has adopted a Food Systems Conceptual Framework (figure 1) with diets; income, health and nutrition; and environmental sustainability as central outcomes. The Food Systems Conceptual Framework positions and informs RFS's programming. All the "Feed the Future" Innovation Labs contribute to these food systems outcomes. However, there is a specific need for an Innovation Lab that hone in on the evidence and actions required to drive improved food systems performance for nutrition outcomes.

While the understanding of the importance of food systems for delivering nutrition outcomes has grown rapidly, tools for assessing food systems performance of food systems for nutrition are improving, and there is an increasing set of solutions; translation of this evidence and this solution set into transforming food systems at the national level is lagging.

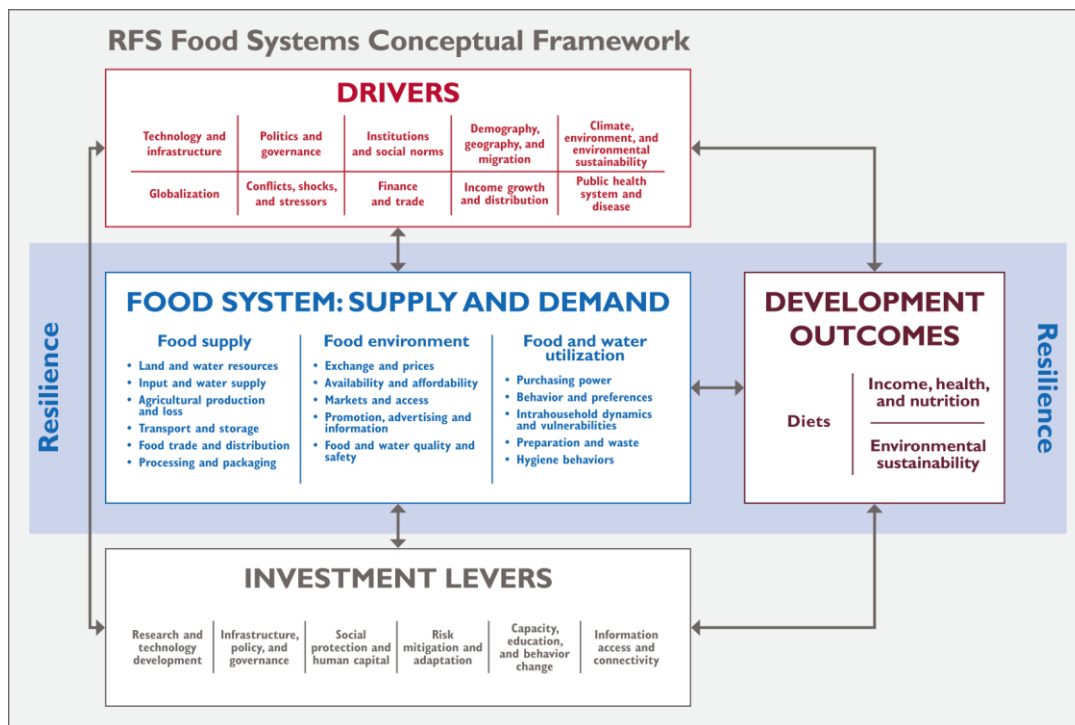
Therefore, USAID seeks to implement the "Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Systems for Nutrition," aiming to advance evidence and programming to improve diets and health through food systems via high quality, relevant research from credible and sound research institutions in partner countries and in the United States.

The Innovation Lab will deliver on this vision focusing on three strategic objectives i) conducting, and increasing the application of, nutrition-sensitive food systems research to guide programming and policy to improve diets and nutrition; ii) increasing partner-country capacity to generate and transfer knowledge, technologies, and practices for nutrition-sensitive food systems; and iii) generate empirical evidence of pro-resilience interventions in the food system that protect healthy diets and nutrition in the face of shocks and stresses.

This Innovation Lab is designed to advance the vision for development embedded in the following U.S. Government policies and strategies:

- The **Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS)**, reflecting the **Global Food Security Act of 2016**, promotes inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and a well-nourished population, especially among pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of two years. Specifically, research generated by the Innovation Lab will contribute to the following Objectives and Intermediate Results:
  - a. **Objective 1:** Inclusive sustainable agriculture-led economic growth
    - **IR2:** Strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade
  - b. **Objective 2:** Strengthened resilience among people and systems
    - **IR5:** Improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management
  - c. **Objective 3:** A well-nourished population, especially among women and children
    - **IR7:** Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets

**Figure 1: RFS Conceptual Framework**



- Management Entity responsibilities:
  - As the Management Entity of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab, the overarching responsibilities will:
    1. Ensure the scientific quality of the research portfolio
    2. Ensure the relevance of the research and program activities for U.S. and

- partner country stakeholders, and
3. Ensure accountability for program implementation, including financial oversight.

**The portfolio of research and capacity-development activities must fulfill the following two strategic objectives:**

1. Generate and make available for transfer improved knowledge, technologies, policies, and practices that improve & enhance food systems for nutrition in Feed the Future countries
2. Build partner-country capacity to independently generate and transfer food systems for nutrition knowledge, policies, technologies, and practices to beneficiaries after the conclusion of USAID-funded activities.

In order to fulfill these objectives, the Management Entity must provide global technical leadership that shapes USAID's food systems research agenda, while also ensuring effective, efficient management and implementation of all activities within the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab portfolio. The successful applicant must therefore provide both a **Management Approach** that effectively and efficiently ensures that all activities meet USAID requirements for international research collaborations as well as a compelling **Technical Approach** to guide procurement of a portfolio of research and capacity-development activities that will achieve these three strategic objectives.

## **2. Research Portfolio Development, Selection, and Management**

“Research for development” is neither an abstract quest for fundamental knowledge and improvement of scientific theories, nor is it the straightforward delivery of goods and services associated with development work. Rather, research for development is a unique enterprise requiring the rigor, discipline, awareness of local context, and building of relationships associated with global development. Research for development generates knowledge, innovations, and technologies, but it does not stop there. Effective research for development puts information and innovations in the hands of stakeholders, where impacts may be achieved. Indeed, the agricultural research supported by USAID is designed using “impact pathways,” which map out the connections between research outputs and development outcomes. This thoughtful design is not only critical for success; it is also mandated by Congress.

The Management Entity must provide a compelling, technically outstanding strategic vision through (or a Technical Approach) to guide its procurement and management of a portfolio of nutrition-sensitive food systems and capacity development activities (not required in the Concept Note). Effective integration of nutrition-sensitive food systems components with agricultural production systems create opportunities to advance all three strategic objectives described under the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy: inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and a well-nourished population. For example, Emerging priority issues requiring deeper research-based understanding include: i) innovations and scale-up of productivity-enhancing technologies/practices in the food system relating specifically to nutrient-dense foods; ii) impacts of food systems interventions for adolescent girls’ diets, micronutrient status and energy expenditure, and those of women of

reproductive age; iii) drivers of consumption choice among low-income smallholder households close to markets (with access to safe, diverse and nutritious foods to purchase); iv) comparison of cost-effectiveness of alternative approaches and entry points in the food system for changing behaviors on adoption of new inputs, behaviors regarding food choices, and impetus to market farm outputs; and v) combined food safety threats in relation to health and nutrition. Research and associated capacity building in each of these areas can therefore contribute to transforming food systems globally through the application of improved technologies, practices, and knowledge to achieve the development objectives of the GFSS via a nutrition-sensitive food systems.

Within these broad parameters, the Management Entity will outline in the proposed Technical Approach identify the researchable challenges and opportunities with the greatest potential to achieve the two strategic objectives of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab (as set forth in A.II.1), and which will be addressed in the context of the proposed Technical Approach. The successful applicant's Technical Approach will select and prioritize focal geographies and food systems research themes that address key researchable challenges and opportunities in developing country nutrition-sensitive food systems and that maximize the program's potential to drive long-term food security impacts (i.e. improved nutrition, resilience, and agriculture-led economic growth) and support the Journey to Self-Reliance.

It is in this context that the Development, selection, and management of a high-quality portfolio of sub awards and/or subcontracts is the basic function of the Management Entity of an Innovation Lab. The successful applicant will implement a Management Approach that allows the Management Entity to successfully execute all the management functions in an efficient and streamlined fashion. The Management Approach will address the following three areas:

**(1) Development of the Research Portfolio: Impact Pathways, Theory of Change, and Results Framework**

Impacts denote change from one condition, status, or behavior to another because of using research results; they must not be confused with research program outputs. While broad scale-up of technologies and knowledge is not within the sphere of direct responsibilities the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab, the program is responsible for building the horizontal linkages across appropriate end-users, particularly in target countries, to enable a hand-off of relevant technologies and knowledge to those best positioned for its use to achieve Feed the Future goals and to track progress of such adoption throughout the life of the project. The Management Entity must ensure that there are quantifiable and verifiable indicators of each activity's impact on USAID's goals and strategic objectives. The **theory of change** for the program must specify how the monitoring plan and indicators will measure progress, and how gender and youth considerations are incorporated and measured throughout the impact pathways. Impact pathways must also consider knowledge sharing and transfer of research outputs to relevant scaling entities and end-users including local institutions to contribute to Feed the Future goals. Such end users may be farmers, government researchers, government decision-makers, development professionals, and the private sector.

After selection of the portfolio of activities, the ME must develop a strategy to document technology adoption and program impact. All research activities must be structured to address one or more of the two key objectives in section A.II.1 before, during, and after the development and dissemination of research outputs:

## (2) Selection of the Research Portfolio

A key premise of all the Feed the Future Innovation Labs is collaborative research through partnerships. In order to accomplish the goals of the Innovation Lab, the Management Entity (ME), in direct partnership with USAID, must craft and organize a five-year coherent program of high-quality research activities, focusing on areas where the Feed the Future Innovation Lab approach has a comparative advantage. The ME defines the research agenda and objectives in a five-year research plan designed in collaboration with USAID. The ME then issues its own RFA for collaborative sub-agreements with U.S., international and local research and educational institutions and other kinds of public and private partners that define, authorize, and fund the work to be done under the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab. The ME is responsible for overall program implementation, financial and administrative management, assurance of quality of results by its partners, and reporting of results.

### a. **Funding Priority Research Areas**

Given the above context, this Innovation Lab aims to advance evidence and programming to improve diets and health through food systems via high quality, relevant research from credible and sound research institutions in partner countries and in the United States. The RFS Food Systems Conceptual Framework articulates the Agency's contribution to stronger food systems, in line with our overall strategy to build more resilient communities and sustainably reduce hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The framework illustrates how key elements of the Agency's work come together as part of the food system, specifically: agriculture-led economic growth, water, nutrition, and resilience. The Innovation Lab's research will create and/or strengthen the evidence base to support the implementation of the RFS Food Systems Conceptual Framework.

As detailed below, priority issues requiring deeper research-based understanding include:

1. innovations and scale-up of technical and policy solutions to ensure micronutrient adequacy in food systems.
2. innovations and scale-up of technical and policy solutions to improve diets, particularly of pregnant and lactating women and infants and young children.
3. innovations and improved evidence on use of consumer voices and demand (including through associations) to drive improved access to and uptake of safe and nutritious foods.
4. improved evidence on food safety threats to nutrition, health and economic growth and tools and innovations to identify and address priority issues.
5. improved evidence of effective strategies and approaches (technical and policy) to optimize private sector contributions to improving access to and affordability of safe and nutritious foods.
6. innovations and uptake of methods to provide timely assessments of quality and timeliness of food systems and food systems-based interventions, including diets and

costs of safe and nutritious foods.

7. improve evidence of factors and approaches that contribute to uptake of new analytic tools and solutions to drive food systems transformation.

### **Funding Priority Research Area 1: Improving Human Outcomes: Improved knowledge and practices on how food systems contribute to improved nutrition.**

This Innovation Lab will contribute to research on increasing the access to and affordability and consumption of safe, nutritious, foods, especially marginalized populations and among pregnant and lactating women and children under five years of age. Illustrative activities include:

1. Research on fortification and biofortification
2. Research on the effects of markets, trade, and investment policies on nutrition-sensitive food systems
3. Research on metrics, analyses, and modeling to inform and assess policies and programs to support a nutrition-sensitive food system

### **Funding Priority Research Area 2: Reduce and mitigate risk: technologies, knowledge, and practices that reduce, manage, and mitigate increased food systems risks, strengthening and building resilient nutrition-sensitive food systems**

Food systems are stressed on many levels, and their ability to deliver safe, affordable, nutritious food year-round is particularly vulnerable. The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will contribute to understanding the major risks to food systems, as regards healthy diets, and identify and develop scalable technologies and knowledge to mitigate these risks. Illustrative activities include:

1. Research on resilience and sustainability of nutrition-sensitive food systems
2. Research on gender and marginalized groups and their participation in nutrition-sensitive food systems and access to safe, affordable, nutritious foods
3. Research to understand the factors that constrain or encourage healthy diets, considering different demographic groups/settings and the effect on private sector engagement

### **Funding Priority Research Area 3: Decreasing food loss and waste to increase quality of diets and evidence-informed policies on production of nutrient-dense foods.**

Nutrient-dense foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy and other animal source foods are particularly vulnerable to loss and waste and food safety risks. Overall availability and affordability of these perishable, nutrient-dense foods are a constraint to improved production, however, constraints to improved productivity are context specific and policy makers need tools to make evidence-based choices on which sources to prioritize. The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will identify and develop scalable solutions to reduce food loss and waste, focusing on nutrient-dense foods and develop tools for evidence-based decision making on production priorities for nutrient-dense foods. Illustrative activities include:

1. Research on food loss, waste, and food quality
2. Research on analytic tools to understand potential context-relevant productivity gains for nutrient dense foods to inform policy choices and research prioritization

**Funding Priority Research Area 4: Advancing Nutritious Food Systems by Design: Research to strengthen the evidence on theory-driven food systems design program design to scale up nutrition-sensitive food systems.**

The evidence base on what is required for food systems to deliver for nutrition is expanding rapidly. However, the application of that evidence to purposefully design food systems, monitor their performance from a nutrition perspective and course-correct is lagging. The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will not be a primary translator of evidence but will assess the extent to which evidence is used to inform food systems design, performance and impacts. Illustrative activities include:

1. Support qualitative research to elucidate policy makers' perceptions concerning food systems and nutrition and political economy barriers to prioritizing nutrition within food systems policies
2. Support research that focuses on theory driven program design, program fidelity and coverage of the intervention, understanding or elucidating in an empirical manner, the potential for specific program inputs to translate into selected outcomes
3. Determine how to better measure, the nutritional impacts, the scalability, and sustainability of food system interventions

**(3) Management of the Research Portfolio**

A clear and compelling plan to adapt and apply generic best practices of performance monitoring for impact-oriented research in the context of the proposed technical approach is required to provide evidence of the program's successes. Furthermore, an approach to achieving development impacts must also address opportunities for the program to implement or support food safety technology-scaling activities, if funding becomes available through Associate Awards or buy-ins. Performance management requires access to useful and timely information on a broad range of factors throughout the life of a program. Without planning how and when this information will be obtained, it will be difficult or impossible, once activities start, to put systems in place to ensure adequate information flow to enable ongoing decision-making and to meet performance reporting requirements (see Section F.6). The ME must take adequate steps to plan and institutionalize a process for collecting performance information as part of everyday work. This performance information consists of the indicators that will measure progress toward intermediate and results and includes baseline data and periodic and final performance targets. Reporting to the Feed the Future monitoring Systems using appropriate indicators is required.

USAID maintains a commitment to fair and open competitive procurement processes, out of conviction that this approach generates the highest-quality research and development outcomes. As a result, most of the funds allocated for research activities must be used for sub awards issued through competitive solicitations issued by the Management Entity. To support a vigorously competitive solicitation process, the successful applicant will develop and publicize Requests for

Application that elicit high-quality applications from an appropriate range and number of institutions in the U.S, including minority-serving institutions MSIs), in the selected focal geographies and from appropriate international institutions.

The ME will engage an appropriate range of expertise to mount an intellectually rigorous peer review process for a given solicitation. This process must produce a portfolio of sub awards that, collectively, meet the primary and cross-cutting technical objectives of the proposed research and HICD strategies.

The financial office of the successful applicant must have the demonstrated capacity to issue and manage international sub-grants and/or sub-contracts using financial mechanisms appropriate to the proposed range of sub awardees. Sub awardees must include universities and research organizations from the US and proposed partner countries, international research organizations, and additional partners from the private or public sectors, as appropriate in the context of the solicitation.

The ME will adaptively manage the portfolio of sub-awards and/or -contracts to ensure optimal implementation of all activities. The ME will institute procedures that provide sub awardees with appropriate technical guidance and feedback, to ensure that planned research and HICD benchmarks are met, to assure compliance and accountability, and address unexpected challenges and opportunities. The ME will also ensure that sub awardees are accountable for progress along their impact pathway.

A “Collaboration, Learning and Adapting” (CLA) approach<sup>6</sup> is a primary precept for USAID work. The ME’s explicit incorporation of CLA is expected to strengthen the technical knowledge base for new strategies and programs, as well as continuously align programs with dynamic contexts, encourage adaptability and accountability, support early recognition and application of new trends and findings to strategically influence outcomes within and beyond the food systems sector. The ME must plan to develop approaches, such as partnerships and platforms, to share “lessons learned” both internally (among target and partner countries and among the program participants) and externally, such as with stakeholders, including the public and private sectors and civil society. The ME must provide approaches to ensure that structures and opportunities are in place to facilitate cross-project learning within the program portfolio. The ME must also ensure that knowledge and understanding gained from the cross-cutting issues of gender and youth are incorporated into the rest of the portfolio as part of a virtuous cycle in addition to being shared with external Feed the Future stakeholders as relevant.

Recognizing that throughout the life of the program there may be instances where directed or commissioned research and associated activities best meet program goals, the ME must directly commission research without a competitive process. To reduce delays between project award and initial program outputs, one set of commissioned research “Quick Start” activities (Initial Activities) are to be proposed with the submission of the application to this NOFO in accordance to Section A.III.f.(2) and will be evaluated according to Section E.I as an integral part of the overall application according to the quality of the research concepts, applicability to

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<sup>6</sup> <https://usaidlearninglab.org/faq/collaborating-learning-and-adapting-cla>

overarching research goals, and the diversity represented among the concept notes. These Initial Activities must be ready to commence within 60 days of project award, and USAID will determine and approve the final selection and scope of these immediate research activities and reserves the right to approve all, some, or none of the proposed activities or to approve with modifications. Throughout the lifetime of the award, the ME may choose to propose that some activities be awarded directly, without competition, when there is compelling justification to do so after review and recommendation by appropriate program advisory body and final approval by the Agreement Officer (AO). The combined cost of all approved “Quick-Start” activities must not exceed \$500,000, and the combined cost of all remaining commissioned activities (excluding buy-ins and Associate Awards) must not exceed \$725,000 over the life of the program.

The ME must submit a preliminary Activity MEL Plan for this application (see Section B.3), and the winning applicant must submit a comprehensive Activity MEL Plan within 60 days after award. See the How-To Note on Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning (MEL) Plan for more information<sup>7</sup>. The comprehensive Activity MEL Plan will serve as a tool to plan and manage the process of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting progress toward achieving the desired results. Appropriate gender-sensitive and youth-inclusive methodologies (including sex and age disaggregation per ADS 205 of all person level indicators) must be used. The preliminary Activity MEL Plan must be an outline of the full Activity MEL Plan and must include a plan and schedule to establish the following:

- Performance indicators that will measure progress toward achieving the desired results and account for gender and youth dimensions, as relevant. The Activity MEL Plan must use appropriate Feed the Future indicators. Mandatory indicators, required to use when relevant, are defined under the Standard Program Structure (SPS) indicator categories in the most recent version of the [Feed the Future Handbook of Indicator Definition](#)<sup>8</sup> (Only Implementing Mechanism Indicators are required to be applied if applicable). Indicators can include quantitative data (i.e. individuals receiving training) and qualitative information (i.e. description of technology adoption and reported barriers). Indicator definitions and required disaggregation categories can change from year to year. At times, Feed the Future may designate additional mandatory indicators or drop mandatory designations. When research activities include issues around aspects of sustainable intensification, the “Sustainable Intensification Framework”<sup>9</sup> must be used to guide indicator selection<sup>10</sup>. Custom indicators specific to the proposed theory of change should also be included

#### **4. Institutional Capability, Accountability, and Staffing Plan**

The objective of the NOFO is to find a Management Entity (ME) to manage the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab. The ME must ensure that a clear knowledge management plan is in

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<sup>7</sup> [https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cleared\\_-\\_how-to\\_note\\_-\\_activity\\_mel\\_plan\\_sep2017.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cleared_-_how-to_note_-_activity_mel_plan_sep2017.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://feedthefuture.gov/resource/feed-future-handbook-indicator-definitions>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.k-state.edu/siil/documents/docs\\_siframework/Guide%20for%20SI%20Assessment%20Framework%20-%2010.24.17.pdf](http://www.k-state.edu/siil/documents/docs_siframework/Guide%20for%20SI%20Assessment%20Framework%20-%2010.24.17.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.k-state.edu/siil/documents/docs\\_siframework/Sustainable%20Intensification%20Assessment%20Methods%20Manual%20-%2010.24.17c.pdf](http://www.k-state.edu/siil/documents/docs_siframework/Sustainable%20Intensification%20Assessment%20Methods%20Manual%20-%2010.24.17c.pdf)

place that links explicitly with the objectives of the award and which supports achieving and sustaining those objectives (knowledge management plan should be provided as part of the full application in phase III) . The Knowledge management plan must include, at minimum;

1. At least one implementer’s technical brief for each priority research area (as described in this NOFO)(no more than 4 pages maximum), and;
2. Provision of annual key messages and conclusions from work completed to date directed toward RFS staff , internal program staff & external audience

The ME must engage and leverage existing knowledge-sharing platforms and resources to further their reach and impact. For insights on and some examples of knowledge management under Feed the Future programs, please visit [Agrilinks](http://agrilinks.org/)<sup>11</sup> and the [USAID Learning Lab](http://usaidlearninglab.org/)<sup>12</sup>.

USAID is committed to making U.S. Government funded data accessible, discoverable and usable by our partners and is proactively releasing Agency-funded data to the public as a member of the [Open Government Partnership](http://www.opengovpartnership.org/)<sup>13</sup>. USAID’s policy of sharing data in machine readable formats for public benefit is in adherence with the Office of Management and Budget’s [Open Data Policy](https://project-open-data.cio.gov/)<sup>14</sup>. The ME is responsible for developing a Data Management Plan for the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab in accordance with [USAID Development Data ADS Chapter 579](http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/500/579)<sup>15</sup> and storing and maintaining data in such a way as to deliver the data to the [USAID Development Data Library](https://www.usaid.gov/data)<sup>16</sup>.

In addition to buy-ins, the ability for Missions, Bureaus and Offices to issue \associate awards is also important for the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab. For example, other Innovation Labs have found that as they begin project implementation in a specific country or region, Missions often identify previously unforeseen research and/or capacity development needs that they would like to support and that fall within the technical scope of the Innovation Lab. And, due to the country- or region-specific nature of the activity, the Mission often wants to maintain direct management of the activity. Associate Awards are frequently used (but not limited to) to scale up technological innovations proven to be successful by the Innovation Labs and where the innovations still reside under the purview of the Innovation Lab. The LWA mechanism allows the Mission to do this efficiently and effectively while taking advantage of a competitively awarded program of global expertise working in their country or region.

To ensure successful implementation of core technical and management functions, applicants must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of proposed staff and external advisory bodies. USAID discourages exclusivity agreements between the Applicant and any candidates that will be proposed for Key Personnel or Other Personnel. The proposed technical team must demonstrate strong technical capacity in gendered agricultural research, youth inclusion, and

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<sup>11</sup> <http://agrilinks.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://usaidlearninglab.org/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://project-open-data.cio.gov/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/500/579>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/data>

HICD either within the key personnel or through technical specialists

#### **4. Staffing Structure**

To ensure successful implementation of core technical and management functions, applicants should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of proposed staff and external advisory bodies. USAID discourages exclusivity agreements between the applicant and any candidates that may be proposed for Key Personnel or Other Personnel.

##### Key Personnel (KP):

The project must consist of two KP positions. Presented below is the recommended KP structure for this award. USAID may consider proposed structure/title changes. However, written approval from the AO is required prior to any cost incurred from changes in the KP structure.

##### a. Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab Director

The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab Director will have overall responsibility for the management and implementation of the Lab and will serve as USAID's principal point of contact for all issues regarding the project. The Director will publicly represent the project to the US government, the public, the global research community, and other diverse stakeholders, as well as be ultimately responsible for activity coordination, planning, work-plan development, program reporting, and overall program monitoring and evaluation. The Director will ensure that cross-cutting themes are properly addressed throughout the entire Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab portfolio. The Director will ensure coordination, communication and cross-learning between both internal and external partners and stakeholders of the project. The Director will be the primary point of contact for development of Associate Awards and will be responsible for integrating Associate Awards into the overall Innovation Lab Program. The Director is envisioned as a full-time position, with minimum qualifications to include an advanced university degree (i.e. doctoral degree/PhD) in a subject relevant to food systems research-for-development as described by this NOFO, relevant technical expertise, and demonstrated competency in international agricultural development program management. Experience in managing research partnerships between international, national, and local partners, and at least ten years of experience is required. Experience integrating gender, social sciences, environmental, and nutritional considerations into research programs is highly desirable.

##### b. Associate or Deputy Director

The Associate or Deputy Director will support the Director and serve as program leader when called upon. The Associate or Deputy Director must hold an advanced university degree (i.e. Master degree or higher) in a subject relevant to food systems, nutrition sensitive work, social science, economist, international agriculture development, relevant technical expertise, and program management competency. Experience in managing research partnerships between international, national, and local partners, and at least five years of experience is highly preferred. Experience integrating gender, social sciences, environmental, and nutritional considerations into research programs is highly desirable.

## Non-Key Personnel:

### a. Other Personnel

Suggestion of any additional management positions, position descriptions, and accompanying level of effort, rests with the Management Entity and will depend on the nature of the proposed program. Proposed personnel must be sufficient to effectively and efficiently execute all technical and management functions. Various roles that may be needed to be filled within a successful Management Entity may include, but not restricted to:

- Effective management of all financial tasks, including timely and accurate financial statements and reports according to USAID guidelines and generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).
- Creations of materials to increase awareness and to promote productivity including maintaining a positive image of the Lab to all parties, including research and development communities, users of generated technologies, and the general public.
- Driving development results planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting in line with USAID requirements.
- In-country coordination to ensure that decisions and analyses are consistent with on-the-ground realities; that activities are aligned with USAID country and region priorities and geographies; and that critical partners are engaged from the beginning of the project.

### b. Technical Specialist

Depending on the nature of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab research program, identified Technical Specialists may be selected to perform such functions as conducting scoping studies to inform an NOFO (e.g. gender and food systems) or monitor programming, according to a plan of action directed by the Innovation Lab Director. The Innovation Lab program must determine the level of effort needed for these positions. These specialists might include the following: food systems interplay with various production systems (e.g animal source food, fish, Fruits and vegetables) and other aspects of the food systems such as human nutrition, knowledge management, social science, community development organizer, gender, youth, HICD, policy, and market development. Specialists may be cross-cutting in several technical fields. Technical Specialists may be local host country or regional hires with length of assignment determined by need.

## **5. Maximizing Development Impact through Incorporation of Cross-Cutting Issues**

The Applicant must ensure that key cross-cutting issues are addressed, both across the program portfolio and within component activities; these cross-cutting issues include youth and gender inclusiveness; human and institutional capacity development.

For research investments to contribute to achieving development gains in nutrition, resilience, or agriculture-led economic growth in Feed the Future countries, research programs must play an important role in ensuring that research outputs are ultimately handed off to partners who

effectively promote their widespread, sustained adoption and use by beneficiaries in a manner that enhances nutrition and food security. The process by which research outputs undergo progressive dissemination, adoption and impact across expanding geographies and populations is referred to as scaling. Scaling can occur via a variety of different delivery pathways, ranging from commercialization by the private sector to dissemination by public-sector or civil-society partners (or a combination thereof).

Although scaling of technologies, knowledge, or practices generally occurs after the research phase has concluded, and may be outside the immediate manageable interests of research partners, research programs must not defer consideration of downstream adoption pathways or beneficiary demand until the final moment of transfer to a scaling partner. Therefore, USAID requires that research partners actively address issues of downstream handoff and eventual scaling of outputs throughout all stages of research activity design, selection, and implementation, as an essential element of a research program’s technical and management approach.

Best practices to maximize the scaling potential and development impact of research outputs include:<sup>17</sup>

- Consider local needs, preferences and market demand throughout activity design and implementation, to ensure the resulting research outputs will ultimately achieve scale.
- Explore and identify potential scaling pathways early in activity design and implementation.
- Foster research partnerships with potential scaling partners in order to promote co-innovation, inform development of appropriate and user-oriented technologies, and facilitate downstream adoption of new knowledge and practices.
- Use participatory research methodologies that engage intended end-users and potential scaling partners, especially the private sector, in co-design and testing of innovations.
- Solicit and respond to ongoing, iterative feedback from end-users, stakeholders and scaling partners to inform research activities.
- Maintain research partner engagement after handoff to scaling partners, with the aim of providing technical support, building capacity of local scaling partners, and maximizing development impacts.

In response to these expectations for development-oriented research programming, the strategic objectives of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab require that the program not only generate improved knowledge, technologies, and practices, but also must make those research outputs “available for uptake” by partners who will take them to scale (Section A.III.b). The Management Entity of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will develop a coherent technical approach to ensure that essential cross-cutting issues are both addressed at the program level and incorporated within individual component activities as appropriate.

#### a. Gender Equality and Youth Inclusion in Food Systems

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Government’s Global Food Security Research Strategy (2017)

USAID policy requires that gender equality be addressed as appropriate in all USAID-funded activities, and programming contribute to the 2012 Gender and Female Empowerment Policy<sup>18</sup> objectives and the GFSS Cross-cutting Intermediate Result of advancing gender equity and female empowerment<sup>19</sup>. The Applicant is highly encouraged to demonstrate familiarity with the Gender Analysis and associated recommendations provided as Annex 2.

The Management Entity is expected to outline key research processes or questions to support gender integration in descriptions of each proposed Funding Priority Research Areas. Through gender analysis<sup>20</sup> research activities must demonstrate a clear understanding of men's and women's distinctive roles in food systems (from food production, processing, marketing, and consumption) or, where this information is unavailable, address knowledge gaps to ensure that outputs and outcomes of research conducted under the Innovation Lab are beneficial to women and men, boys and girls.

The 2012 Youth in Development Policy<sup>21</sup> also mandates the inclusion of youth (ages 10 – 29) across USAID’s portfolio while the GFSS has committed itself to mainstreaming youth in agriculture, food security and nutrition whenever and wherever possible using a Positive Youth Development framework (see [www.youthpower.org](http://www.youthpower.org)). The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab must be a gender-sensitive and youth-sensitive program that will develop knowledge, recommendations, tools, and strategies that recognize and account for the needs and multi-dimensional roles of youth and both women and men in small-scale production and marketing systems. Gender analysis and integration as well as youth analysis and inclusion must be implemented as a cross-cutting effort within all activities. A Gender Analysis conducted by the USAID Bureau of Food Security for this NOFO is included in Annex 2. Applicants must review this document for gender issues of specific interest to USAID food safety programming.

#### b. Human and Institutional Capacity Development

Under the GFSS, USAID’s approach to improving human, organizational and system performance is rooted in local capacity development, a “process of unleashing, strengthening, and maintaining the ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully.”<sup>22</sup> USAID strongly emphasizes the importance of capacity development to improve food security outcomes and impacts by increasing local ownership, sustainability, and partnership of local organizations, donors, the public sector, and other stakeholders.

In the context of research activities, Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) must build local capacities at three interconnected levels: individuals, organizations, and the

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<sup>18</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy\\_0.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy_0.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://feedthefuture.gov/resource/global-food-security-strategy-technical-guidance-advancing-gender-equality-and-female>

<sup>20</sup> Gender analysis is a tool for examining the differences between the roles that women and men play in communities and societies, the different levels of power they hold, their differing needs, constraints and opportunities, and the impacts of these differences on their lives. Gender analysis identifies root causes of existing gender inequalities and/or obstacles to female empowerment.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/youth>

<sup>22</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee. (2006). The Challenge of Capacity Development: Working Towards Good Practice, Paris, [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/capacitybuilding/pdf/DAC\\_paper\\_final.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/capacitybuilding/pdf/DAC_paper_final.pdf)

enabling environment. Thus, an integrated Agricultural Innovations Systems HICD approach must establish a strong and empowered cadre of researchers and practitioners with advanced competencies and professional skills, as well as strengthen the organizations and institutional networks in which these individuals are embedded. While capacity development of each level (individuals, organizations, and the enabling environment) has to be addressed in its own right, it also must be done through multiple but complementary pathways for change. A purposeful intervention enhances the capacities of individuals and organizations to interact, innovate, and learn in addition to creating an enabling environment. The applicant must focus on creating enabling conditions for research in host countries. Potential beneficiaries include host country scientists, universities, national agricultural research institutions, NGOs, private sector actors and/or other relevant beneficiaries within the local food system (and market systems).

The Management Entity of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will ensure that HICD is a fundamental design consideration; both across the overarching technical program and within individual program activities as appropriate. To the extent possible, HICD efforts must be integrated into research activities, but well-justified, standalone capacity-development activities also may be appropriate. The successful applicant's approach to HICD as a cross-cutting issue will identify the anticipated beneficiaries of HICD efforts under the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab, provide a rationale and process for how beneficiaries are selected, describe what types of capacity-development efforts and approaches will be applied, and explain how these efforts will contribute to sustainable achievement of the program's Strategic Objectives.

The following documents can provide additional insights on USAID's overarching approach to transforming innovations and reforms into sustained development: [USAID Local Systems Framework](#)<sup>23</sup>, the [USAID Technical Note on the 5Rs Framework](#)<sup>24</sup>, and the USAID ADS 201 Additional Help Document, [Local Capacity Development: Suggested Approaches](#)<sup>25</sup>. Technical guidance for capacity development in the framework of the GFSS can be found at [Global Food Security Strategy Technical Guidance for Capacity Development](#)<sup>26</sup>. Nothing in this section must be interpreted as restrictive to HICD of research institutions. An important facet of a system of organizational development includes the incorporation of the private sector to enable technologies to be implemented at scale during and after the life of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab.

## **6. Geographic Focus Areas**

Research outputs of this activity must be primarily focused on achieving global and regional impacts, rather than focusing more narrowly on national or sub-national areas. However, as a key component of its Technical Approach, the successful applicant will select focus countries in which to conduct research and capacity-development activities funded under the leader award.

- a. At a minimum, at least one country must be selected in priority regions

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>

<sup>24</sup> <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/5rs-framework-program-cycle>

<sup>25</sup> [https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/ads\\_additional\\_help\\_lcd\\_1.13.2017.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/ads_additional_help_lcd_1.13.2017.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> [https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/GFSS\\_TechnicalGuidance\\_Capacity%20Development.pdf](https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/GFSS_TechnicalGuidance_Capacity%20Development.pdf)

The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab Management Entity will, in consultation with the AOR, advisory committee, researchers, and USAID missions, determine in which countries to focus research work. While some investigations may merit from regional or global approaches, it is expected that the majority of research and on-the-ground activities will be carried out within Feed the Future focus and aligned countries and that benefits of the research outputs will accrue, as appropriate, to beneficiaries within specified “zones of influence” identified by the USAID country Missions. This does not imply that all research must take place directly within the zones of influence.

It is expected that the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will select a small number of countries, or focus efforts with regional research bodies, so as to maximize the research impact by minimizing overhead of operating in too many countries while maintaining as much of a broad regional or global focus as appropriate to the Priority Research Areas. At a minimum, the program must select countries from different world regions. It is not expected that the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will engage in all four Priority Research Areas (Section A.II.2.2.a) within each selected region or country. In each selected country, a research program must be conducted that targets key bottlenecks or constraints along the value chain from point of production or capture to market as specified by the Priority Research Areas in A.II.2.2.a, and the Cross-Cutting Issues in A.II.5 All activities in each country must be coordinated and integrated within the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab as well as with outside research activities, where appropriate, to enable the greatest potential impact from the research portfolio.

Additional information on Feed the Future Mission strategies and programs can be accessed from <http://feedthefuture.gov/countries> and Mission websites (<http://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work>). Information on USAID resilience programming can be found at <https://www.usaid.gov/resilience>.

Research outputs of this activity must be primarily focused on achieving global and regional impacts, rather than focusing more narrowly on national or subnational areas. However, as a key component of its Technical Approach, the successful applicant will select focus countries in which to conduct research and capacity-development activities funded under the leader award.

In addition to identifying focus countries for core Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab activities funded under the leader award, the successful applicant must be able to expand activities into other countries in which USAID invests agriculture and nutrition resources, in response to additional buy-in or Associate Award funding opportunities that may arise.

## **SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

### **1. Use of Leader with Associates (LWA) Mechanism**

#### **a. Award Structure**

The FtF Innovation Lab for Food Systems for Nutrition is an LWA. The LWA mechanism involves the issuance of a Leader Award that covers a specified worldwide activity. The Leader Award includes language that allows a Mission or other office to make one or more separate awards, called Associate Awards, to the Leader Award recipient. The Associate Award(s) are within the terms and scope of the program description of the Leader Award and support a distinct local or regional activity.

As stated in Section B.2, the award's Total Estimated Amount (TEA) allows a maximum award ceiling of up to **\$39,900,000**, structured as follows:

**A \$25,000,000 Leader Award** will support the successful U.S. university applicant to act as the Management Entity (ME) of the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab. In this capacity, the Awardee's primary responsibility will be to develop, select, and manage a portfolio of nutrition-sensitive food systems research and capacity-development activities. The Leader Award is intended to support Management Entity (ME) costs associated with managing and implementing the portfolio of Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab activities, with a majority (minimum of 70%) of leader award funds to be allocated to sub-awarded (or subrecipient) research and capacity development activities. These sub-awards must include a mix of competitively procured activities and commissioned (i.e. not-competed) activities; Some funds must also be reserved by the ME to facilitate trainings, workshops, conferences, and meetings for the purpose of professional development of students and researchers associated with the Innovation Lab, but such funds must primarily be accounted for within the individual budgets of the sub-awards.

**\$14,900,000 of potential additional funding** will be awarded noncompetitively by USAID field missions or other offices, to support additional activities that fall within the technical scope of the award. This may include:

- A maximum \$7,000,000 in potential Associate Awards
- A maximum \$7,900,000 in potential buy-in

Buy-ins to the LWA are a particularly valuable tool for Missions to access a global research program such as the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab. They permit Missions to address their country-specific needs and respond to dynamically changing programmatic requirements by tapping into a competitively awarded program that offers global expertise that can be put into place quickly and efficiently. Finally, buy-ins are the preferred mechanism when they fund activities that are already part of the approved Leader Award technical program and the operating unit (Mission or Office) contributing the funds does not want to directly manage the buy-in.

### **2. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated**

USAID intends to award one Leader Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this NOFO. Under the LWA, there is one Leader Award and an unknown number of Associate Awards anticipated. **There is no guarantee regarding the number of Associate Awards, if any.** Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide \$39.9 million (leader plus associate awards) in total USAID funding over a 5-year period.

### **3. Expected Performance Indicators, Targets, Baseline Data, and Data Collection**

See the How-To Note on Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning (MEL) Plan for more information here ([https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cleared\\_-\\_how-to\\_note\\_-\\_activity\\_mel\\_plan\\_sep2017.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/cleared_-_how-to_note_-_activity_mel_plan_sep2017.pdf)). More information of feed the future indicators can be found in the Feed the Future indicators handbook (<https://www.feedthefuture.gov/resource/feed-the-future-handbook-of-indicator-definitions/>)

### **4. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards**

The anticipated period of performance is TBD. The estimated start date will be at the end of fourth quarter of FY 2021.

### **5. Substantial Involvement**

#### **a. Leader Award**

USAID will be substantially involved in the implementation of the core program of this NOFO under the leader award described in Section B.2. The intended purpose of the substantial involvement during the implementation of the program is to assist the recipient in achieving the supported objectives.

Substantial involvement includes:

1. Approval of Key Personnel.
2. Approval of the Recipient's Activity MEL Plan, including impact pathway and theory of change documentation, and performance evaluation.
3. Approval of the Recipient's Data Management Plan and Environmental Mitigation & Monitoring Plan.
4. Approval of Annual Implementation Plans, work plans, budgets, and semi-annual and annual reports. The work-plan must include a travel matrix of proposed international trips.
5. Collaborative involvement in selection of members for any advisory body or bodies for oversight, such as oversight of the program's research and capacity development portfolio, and membership on such body/bodies.
6. Approval of subawards or subcontracts, including the substantive provisions.
7. Agency's ability to immediately halt an activity if the recipient does not meet detailed performance specifications.

8. Review and approval of one stage of work, before work can begin on a subsequent stage during the period covered by the cooperative agreement.
9. Agency and recipient collaboration or joint participation when the recipient's successful accomplishment of program objectives would benefit from USAID's technical knowledge.
10. Agency monitoring to permit specific kinds of direction or redirection of the work because of the interrelationships with other projects or activities; and,
11. Direct agency operational involvement or participation to ensure compliance with statutory requirements such as civil rights, environmental protection, and provisions for the handicapped that exceeds the Agency's role that is normally part of the general statutory requirements understood in advance of the award.

b. Associate Awards

Associate award(s) may be a grant or a cooperative agreement. If an associate award will be a cooperative agreement, the associate award will include the substantial involvement of the leader award.

**6. Authorized Geographic Code**

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is Code 937 (the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source).

**7. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient**

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the FtF Innovation Lab for Food Systems for Nutrition which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

**8. NOFO Amendments**

If this NOFO is amended, all terms and conditions that are not amended remain unchanged. The AO will do their best to alert Applicants that have already submitted applications that an amendment to the NOFO has been published; however, it is ultimately the responsibility of the applicants to be aware of published amendments to the NOFO through the Grants.gov platform.

## SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### 1. Eligible Applicants

This program is authorized under Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. CNs must only be submitted by eligible U.S. colleges and universities as defined under Section 296(d) of Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended. The eligibility requirements only apply to the leader award holder. The types of subrecipients or subcontractors are unrestricted. The Title XII university-led Feed the Future Innovation Lab programs involve multiple partners, principal of which are U.S. universities, working in collaboration with scientists in developing country universities, national and international research centers, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to jointly pursue scientific investigations to overcome critical agricultural constraints facing today's global food systems. All types of U.S. and non-U.S. entities are eligible as collaborating partners (i.e. sub-recipients or contractors at various tiers), provided that they are not excluded from U.S. Government (USG) acquisition and assistance awards (this may be verified through the Government System for Award Management). In preparing the application, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that no individuals or organizations proposed for participation in the program are excluded by the USG. After award, it is the Recipient's responsibility to ensure that no transactions are conducted with excluded parties.

USAID strongly encourages applicants to include qualified Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) including, but not limited to, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Asian American Native Alaskan and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions.

The Innovation lab Management entity (ME) is encouraged, but not required, to be composed of two eligible US universities under Title XII. To broaden USAID's partnership with qualified Title XXI institutions, this is USAID's preferred approach if an eligible US University under Title XII has never led an Innovation Lab with USAID in the role as an ME. If the applicant(s) choose(s) to take this approach, the roles could, however it is not required, to be split as a director from one university and an associate director from the other university. USAID welcomes applications from organizations which have not previously received financial assistance from USAID.

Applicants must have established financial management, monitoring and evaluation processes, internal control systems, and policies and procedures that comply with established U.S.G. standards, laws, and regulations. The successful applicant(s) will be subject to a responsibility determination assessment (Pre-award Survey) by the Agreement Officer (AO).

The Recipient must be a responsible entity. The AO may determine a pre-award survey is required to conduct an examination that will determine whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award.

## 2. Cost Share, Matching, or Leverage

**Leader Award:** There is no mandatory level of cost-sharing, matching, or leveraging for this program. However, USAID encourages cost sharing to the maximum practicable extent. Cost-share or matching means that a portion of project or program's costs are not borne by the U.S. Government. Cost share or leverage includes cash and in-kind contributions, and for U.S. organizations is subject to 2 CFR 200.306 and the USAID standard provision for U.S. NGOs entitled "Cost-Sharing (Matching)", which, inter alia, requires that cost sharing, be verifiable from the Recipient's records. Cost sharing or matching is normally associated with contributions from the same prime and sub-recipient sources that also receive USAID funds under an award, but can include contributions from third parties, called leverage.

**Associate Awards:** Cost sharing requirements, if any, will be established for each Associate Award by the USAID mission or office that finances the Associate Award.

## 3. Risk Assessment

For an award to be made, the USAID AO must evaluate the risks posed by applicants as outlined in 2 CFR 200.205 and ADS 303.3.9. This means that the applicant must possess, or must have the ability to obtain, the necessary management and technical competence to conduct the proposed program, and must agree to practice mutually agreed-upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided or funded by USAID.

In evaluating the risks posed by applicants, the Federal Awarding Agency uses a risk-based approach and must consider:

1. Financial stability.
2. Quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in this part.
3. History of performance. The applicant's record in managing Federal awards, if it is a prior recipient of Federal awards, including timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements, conformance to the terms and conditions of previous Federal awards, and if applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards;
4. Reports and findings from audits performed under Subpart F—Audit Requirements of this part or the reports and findings of any other available audits.
5. The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities.
6. That applicant is otherwise qualified to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations (i.e. Nondiscrimination, Lobbying, Debarment/Suspension, Terrorist Financing, etc.).

In the absence of a positive risk assessment, an award can ordinarily not be made. Awards to

potential new partners may be significantly delayed if USAID must undertake necessary pre-award reviews of these organizations to make an adequate risk assessment. These organizations must take this into account and plan their implementation dates and activities accordingly.

#### **4. Other**

There is a limit of **one CN per eligible institution.** USAID does not require and does not encourage exclusivity contracts between proposed key personnel and the applying institution. As such, the proposed key personnel may be listed on more than one application.

If more than one CN is submitted from the same institution, USAID will give the institution the option to prioritize one CN or withdraw from the competition. If the institution does not respond within 3 business days, USAID will not review any of the multiple CNs submitted from the same institution.

## SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 1. Agency Point of Contact(s)

Name: Bruce Baltas  
Title: Agreement Officer  
Email: [bbaltas@usaid.gov](mailto:bbaltas@usaid.gov)

Name: Matthew Case  
Title: Agreement Officer  
Email: [mcase@usaid.gov](mailto:mcase@usaid.gov)

Name: Olivia Ricks  
Title: Agreement Specialist  
Email: [oricks@usaid.gov](mailto:oricks@usaid.gov)

### 2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted to the Agency's point of contacts no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to this NOFO, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

In order to maintain the integrity of the competitive process, *USAID staff, to include mission staff, will be unable to advise or provide information to potential applicants that would be used in preparation of the application. Therefore, applicants are advised not to contact USAID missions or any other USAID staff members regarding this NOFO.* Information on mission strategies and programs can be accessed from <http://feedthefuture.gov/countries> and mission websites (<http://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work>).

### 3. General Content and Form of Concept Notes

#### a. Preparation of Concept Notes

1. Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of the NOFO.
2. Each Applicant must furnish the information required by this NOFO. Applicants must retain for their records one (1) copy of the application and all enclosures which accompany it.
3. Unless otherwise indicated, applications must cover only the Leader Award. Separate applications will be submitted for Associate Awards when and if they arise.

b. Required Content and Organization of Concept Note

Applicants shall submit initial Concept Notes introducing the proposed research topics.

**General**

1. All CNs must be in English.
2. The Application shall use the Letter Format 8 ½” x 11” (There are two exceptions to the aforementioned instruction: 1) budgets may be in a slightly smaller font (10 point) with smaller margins, and 2) tables may use smaller fonts and margins, however, must be easily readable, no smaller than font of 9 point).
3. Times New Roman 12-point font using fixed pitch spacing per inch
4. 1” margins on standard, letter-sized paper (8½” x 11”).
5. CN can be in MS Word or PDF format.
6. Subject to the area of interest your application address, the electronic files must be labeled as follows: “[**Organization Name**] (**Food Systems for Nutrition NOFO**)”

**Please note that for Phase 1, applicants only need to provide the following information**

The CN shall include:

1. Cover Page (1 Page):
  - a. Prime Organization Name
  - b. Prime DUNS Number
  - c. Prime Tax Identification Number (TIN)
  - d. Prime Contact Name (authorized negotiator)
  - e. Prime Contact Email address
  - f. Prime Contact telephone and fax number
  - g. Prime Complete business mailing address
  - h. Prime Active Sam.gov Registry (Y/N)
  - i. Proposed total estimated amount of the project
  - j. List anticipated subrecipients/subcontractors/partner institutions.
2. Concept Note Body (5 Pages):
  - a. Program and Strategy
    - 1) This section will describe the applicant’s proposed Program and Strategy to implement a successful, high-quality food systems for nutrition research program. The application must address the overall strategy, proposed approach and planning processes, development goals and objectives;
    - 2) List key members of proposed team structure (within the Management Entity); type(s) of function each team member will serve. Describe how private sector providers and food systems, agriculture production related firms will be included and how public extension services may be engaged. Describe how results and outcomes can be efficiently and sustainably scaled;

- 3) Describe the rationales and theory of change;
  - 4) Describe the prime plan to engage and build upon current and previous USAID investment; and,
  - 5) Describe the prime plan to engage with other donors and their funded programs on food systems for nutrition.
- b. Staffing (As an Annex, not to exceed 1.5 pages)
- 1) A brief narrative and Key Personnel description shall be provided to give an overall understanding of the applicant's staffing structure and to demonstrate adequate technical and business experience. At minimum, description of director and associate/deputy director are required. **No Resumes/CV's necessary at this point.**
- c. Cost Share and Resource Leveraging (Optional as an Annex not to exceed 1 page, if provided)
- 1) A brief description (complemented by Attachment 2) of plans for cost share, leveraging others' in-kind and cash resources. Cost-share and leverage is not required but highly encouraged.
2. The Applicant is **not** required to submit the SF-424 series with the CN. However, the applicant must sign and submit the SF-424 series with the Full Application. The Standard Forms can be accessed electronically at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
  3. The Applicant is **not** required to submit the required Certifications and Assurances at the CN stage. The Applicant must submit a signed copy of the following documents with the Full Application:
    - 1) "Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" ADS 303mav document found at <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>
    - 2) Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
    - 3) 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).

#### **4. Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407**

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed Full Application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the applicant must specify and justify that cost in the Full Application. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

#### **5. Approval of Subaward(s)**

The applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. **The Applicant only needs to list its proposed subawards/partner institutions in the CN.** In the Full Application, the applicant must provide the following for each proposed subaward:

- Name of organization;
- DUNS Number;
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list;
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM);
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list;
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred;
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.332(b); and,
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

## **6. Dun and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements**

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (DUNS number) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients.
2. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient ([www.beta.sam.gov](http://www.beta.sam.gov)).
3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

SAM registration: <http://www.beta.sam.gov>

Non-U.S. applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on [www.beta.sam.gov](http://www.beta.sam.gov), navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

## **7. Branding Strategy & Marking Plan**

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to provide a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer and incorporated into any resulting award.

### **Branding Strategy – Assistance (June 2012)**

- a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Branding Strategy," describing how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, and how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and host country citizens.
- b. The request for a Branding Strategy, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.
- c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.
- d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement, or other assistance instrument.
- e. The Branding Strategy must include, at a minimum, all the following:
  - 1) All estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth.
  - 2) The intended name of the program, project, or activity.
    - i. USAID requires the applicant to use the "USAID Identity," comprised of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline "from the American people" as found on the USAID Web site at <http://www.usaid.gov/branding>, unless the RFA or APS states that the USAID Administrator has approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.
    - ii. USAID prefers local language translations of the phrase "made possible by (or with) the generous support of the American People" next to the USAID Identity when acknowledging contributions.
    - iii. It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

- iv. If branding in the above manner is inappropriate or not possible, the applicant must explain how USAID's involvement will be showcased during publicity for the program or project.
  - v. USAID prefers to fund projects that do not have a separate logo or identity that competes with the USAID Identity. If there is a plan to develop a separate logo to consistently identify this program, the applicant must attach a copy of the proposed logos. Section VI of the RFA or APS will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.
- 3) The intended primary and secondary audiences for this project or program, including direct beneficiaries and any special target segments.
  - 4) Planned communication or program materials used to explain or market the program to beneficiaries needs to:
    - i. Describe the main program message.
    - ii. Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.
    - iii. Provide any plans to announce and promote publicly this program or project to host country citizens, such as media releases, press conferences, public events, and so forth. Applicant must incorporate the USAID Identity and the message, "USAID is from the American People."
    - iv. Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.
  - 5) Information on any direct involvement from host-country government or ministry, including any planned acknowledgement of the host-country government.
  - 6) Any other groups whose logo or identity the applicant will use on program materials and related materials. Indicate if they are a donor or why they will be visibly acknowledged, and if they will receive the same prominence as USAID.
- f. The Agreement Officer will review the Branding Strategy to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.
  - g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Branding Strategy will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement

(END OF PRE-AWARD TERM)

### **Marking Plan – Assistance (June 2012)**

- a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Marking Plan," detailing the public communications, commodities, and program materials, and other items that will visibly bear the "USAID Identity," which comprises of the USAID logo and landmark, with the tagline "from the American people." The USAID Identity is the official marking for the Agency and is found on the USAID Web site at

<http://www.usaid.gov/branding>. Section VI of the RFA or APS will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

- b. The request for a Marking Plan, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.
- c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Marking Plan within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.
- d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement, or other assistance instrument.
- e. The Marking Plan must include all of the following:
  - 1) A description of the public communications, commodities, and program materials that the applicant plans to produce, and which will bear the USAID Identity as part of the award, including:
    - i. Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature.
    - ii. Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audiovisual productions, public service announcements, Web sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID.
    - iii. Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs.
    - iv. It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.
    - v. Events financed by USAID, such as training courses, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, fairs, workshops, press conferences and other public activities. If the USAID Identity cannot be displayed, the recipient is encouraged to otherwise acknowledge USAID and the support of the American people.
  - 2) A table on the program deliverables with the following details:
    - i. The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;
    - ii. The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;
    - iii. When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;
    - iv. What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID Identity, and
    - v. The rationale for not marking program deliverables.

- 3) Any requests for an exemption from USAID marking requirements, and an explanation of why the exemption would apply. The applicant may request an exemption if USAID marking requirements would:
  - i. Compromise the intrinsic independence or neutrality of a program or materials where independence or neutrality is an inherent aspect of the program and materials. The applicant must identify the USAID Development Objective, Interim Result, or program goal furthered by an appearance of neutrality, or state why an aspect of the award is presumptively neutral. Identify by category or deliverable item, examples of material for which an exemption is sought.
  - ii. Diminish the credibility of audits, reports, analyses, studies, or policy recommendations whose data or findings must be seen as independent. The applicant must explain why each particular deliverable must be seen as credible.
  - iii. Undercut host-country government “ownership” of constitutions, laws, regulations, policies, studies, assessments, reports, publications, surveys or audits, public service announcements, or other communications. The applicant must explain why each particular item or product is better positioned as host-country government item or product.
  - iv. Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.
  - v. Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.
  - vi. Offend local cultural or social norms, or be considered inappropriate. The applicant must identify the relevant norm, and explain why marking would violate that norm or otherwise be inappropriate.
  - vii. Conflict with international law. The applicant must identify the applicable international law violated by the marking.
- 4) The Agreement Officer will consider the Marking Plan's adequacy and reasonableness and will approve or disapprove any exemption requests. The Marking Plan will be reviewed to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.
- 5) If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Marking Plan, including an approved exemption, will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement, and will apply for the term of the award unless provided otherwise.

(END OF PRE-AWARD TERM)

## **8. Funding Restrictions**

Profit is not allowable for the recipient or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction is not anticipated under awards resulting from NOFO.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer.

Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

## **9. Conflict of Interest Pre-Award Term (August 2018)**

### **a. Personal Conflict of Interest**

- 1) An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.
- 2) ii. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

### **b. Organizational Conflict of Interest**

The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

(END OF PRE-AWARD TERM)

## **10. Changes to the CN**

Any erasures or other changes to the application must be initiated by the person signing the application.

CNs signed by an agent on behalf of the Applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

After the closing date (deadline) of the application period, applicants must submit revised CN/addenda only if requested or allowed by the Agreement Officer.

CNs must be withdrawn by written, electronic notice (email) received at any time before award. Withdrawals are effective upon receipt of notice by the Agreement Officer.

## **11. Responsiveness to NOFO and False Statements**

The applicant must follow the instructions contained herein and supply all information as required. Failure to furnish all information requested, or to submit an CN directly responsive to the terms, conditions, specifications, and provisions of this NOFO may disqualify a CN or full application. Applicants must provide accurate and complete information as required by this NOFO. The penalty for making false statements to the Government is prescribed in 18 U.S.C. 1001.

## **12. Submission Procedures**

It is the Applicant's responsibility to ensure that all necessary documentation is complete and received on time.

Applications must be submitted electronically to Bruce Baltas at [bbaltas@usaid.gov](mailto:bbaltas@usaid.gov), Matthew Case at [mcase@usaid.gov](mailto:mcase@usaid.gov) and Olivia Ricks at [oricks@usaid.gov](mailto:oricks@usaid.gov). **Applications must not be submitted through grants.gov.** USAID cannot accept e-mails over 25MB in size. If the Application attachments are more than that size, then the Applicant must submit over multiple e-mails.

## **SECTION E: EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **1. Criteria**

The evaluation criteria set forth below serves to: (a) identify the significant matters which applicants must address in their CNs; and (b) set the standard against which all CNs will be evaluated. To facilitate the review of the CNs, applicants must organize their narrative sections of the CN in the same order as the selection criteria.

An evaluation will be conducted during each phase under this NOFO. The evaluation criteria listed below only applies to the evaluation of the Concept Notes & Co-creation during Phase I & II. During Phase III, the Full Applications, USAID will issue a Request for Full Applications (RFAs) to individual Universities containing the evaluation criteria applicable to the Full Application.

### **2. Review and Selection Process for Phase I & Phase II: Concept Notes & Co-creation:**

#### **Merit Review**

The CNs will be evaluated in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria set forth below. The Government will evaluate responsive CNs based on best value basis, with technical merit more important than cost. The Factors are listed in descending order of importance, with Factor 1 Technical Approach-Program Strategy having the highest weight of importance. All sub-elements in both factors are equally important.

The applicants invited to co-creation will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria stated in this section, with all weights established for each factor and sub-elements remaining unchanged.

#### **Evaluation Factors:**

##### Factor 1: Technical Approach-Program and Strategy

- a. Degree to which the strategy, proposed approach, and planning fulfills the three objectives described in the PD.
- b. Priority Research Areas:
  - 1) Overall vision and approach for implementing a global research program that includes a portfolio of high-quality, innovative research activities in the Priority Research Areas described in Section A of this NOFO that contribute to GFSS goals and are designed to achieve long-term development impact among host country beneficiaries;
  - 2) Plan to develop an integrated research program in the biophysical and social sciences that can contribute to knowledge on technologies and policy solutions to support nutrition sensitive Food Systems in target countries, regionally and / or globally.

- c. The extent to which the goals and objectives are in line with the GFSS research strategy.
- d. Degree to which the strategy, proposed approach, potential solutions, and planning reflect a deep understanding of current food systems and nutrition challenges, research, and evidence gaps in Low-Middle Income Countries (LMICs).
- e. Degree to which the proposed team reflects a strong and experienced mix of global leadership in food systems and nutrition.
- f. How the ME will have a robust and balanced plan to engage local stakeholders that will contribute to efficiency, reach, impact, and sustainability.
- g. How the ME will engage, collaborate, and synchronize with other USAID funded projects, Missions, and other donors on food systems and nutrition.

**Factor 2: Results Planning, Feedback Process, Sustainability and Scalability**

- a. Extent to which the concept note describes a clear and persuasive plan for the sustainability and scalability of the technical and policy solutions that emerge from proposed research results based on reasonable assumptions and noted experience.
- b. Extent to which the concept note describes a clear and inclusive plan for engaging the wider scientific community in the sub-award process.
- c. Extent to which the concept note describes a clear and rigorous strategy to engage with NPIs, MSIs, HBCUs in the sub-award process.

**Business/Cost Review:**

For the Concept Note, the applicant is *only* required to provide the anticipated **leader award** cost, excluding cost-share or leverage, not to exceed \$25 million. Concepts that exceed the above-mentioned ceiling will be considered unresponsive and will not be considered for a leader award. No detailed budget is required with the Concept Note submission. However, the applicant(s) should be prepared to answer any questions the Government has regarding the estimated total leader amount.

**Cost Share and Leverage:**

The applicant should provide any anticipated cost-share with the Concept Note. Proposed cost share, if provided, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities.

## **SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **1. Federal Award Notices**

Award of the agreement contemplated by this NOFO cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award.

### **2. Administrative & National Policy Requirement**

The resulting award from this NOFO will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For US organizations: [ADS 303](#), [2 CFR 700](#), [2 CFR 200](#), and [Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations](#). See Annex 1 for all mandatory and required as applicable standard provisions.

[USAID Youth in Development Policy](#). The goal of the USAID Youth Policy is to improve the capacities and enable the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to and benefit from more stable, democratic, and prosperous communities and nations.

[Mandatory Reference for ADS 200: Promoting Nondiscrimination and Inclusive Development in USAID-funded Programs](#)

[USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy](#) whose goal is to improve the lives of citizens around the world by advancing equality between females and males, and empowering women and girls to participate fully in and benefit from the development of their societies.

[Mandatory Reference for ADS 200: Policy/Guidance on the Implementation of USAID's Child Safeguarding Standards](#)

### **3. Reporting Requirements**

The following reporting requirements may be applicable to the award(s) that results from this NFO. The required reporting applicable to the resulting award (s) will be stated in the RFA.

### **4. Financial Reporting:**

The Recipient must submit to the AOR an estimate of quarterly accruals at least 2 weeks prior to the end of each financial quarter.

The Recipient must submit a completed [Standard Form SF-425<sup>27</sup>](#) to the AOR no later than 30 days after the end of each financial quarter.

## **5. Annual Work-Plans**

The Recipient will be required to submit annual work-plans, covering the period October 1 through September 30 (or parts thereof), delineated by the reporting periods described in Section F.6 below, which describes all activities planned for the year, including activities planned under Associate Awards to the extent known at the time; the site(s) where they will be conducted, benchmarks/milestones and annual performance targets; the outputs/outcomes which the Recipient expects to achieve; and the input/support planned to be provided by the Recipient, during the work-plan period. Included must be an explanation of how those inputs are expected to achieve the outputs/outcomes and benchmarks/milestones. The Recipient must describe and use appropriate gender-sensitive methodologies and must maintain gender integration and balance in all activities, targeting women and girls when it is necessary to achieve that balance. A gender analysis for the overall program of work must be undertaken in the first year. The work plans must include geographic data collection, geographic analysis, and data submission methods as a separate section.

The first-year work-plan will include the environmental documentation that must be required by the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation (see Section F.8). An EMMP (Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan), PERSUAP (Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan), or other document which is approved by USAID as a requirement of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation will be integrated into subsequent-year annual work-plans, making any necessary adjustments to activity implementation in order to minimize adverse impacts to the environment.

The annual work-plan for the first year will be submitted no later than 60 days after the effective date of the award. Annual work-plans for subsequent years must be submitted no later than 60 days prior to the start of that year. As indicated in Section B.III of this NOFO annual work-plans and significant revisions thereto are subject to USAID approval.

A first year Data Management Plan is also required at the time of the submission of the first-year work plan. The work-plans will describe activities to be conducted at a greater level of detail than the Program Description of the award but must be cross-referenced with the applicable sections in the Program Description. All work-plan activities must be within the scope and objectives of the award. Work-plans must not change such scope and objectives or any other terms and conditions of the award in any way; such changes must only be approved by the Agreement Officer, in advance and in writing. Thereafter, if there are inconsistencies between the work-plan and the Program Description or other terms and conditions of the award, the latter will take precedence over the work plan.

Additional information on the annual work-plans, Activity MEL Plan, and periodic reports will be provided to the ME after award. Applicants are suggested to review the document “Guidance

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/post-award-reporting-forms.html#sortby=1>

to New Research Projects on Planning and Reporting Deliverables”.

a) Activity MEL Plan

The Recipient will be required to submit an Activity MEL Plan, as described in Section B.3 of this NOFO, within 60 days after the award is made. The Activity MEL Plan, which describes the program over the life of the project, will be submitted at the same time as the first-year work-plan discussed in the previous paragraph. The semi-annual reports must be concise and present the following information:

- A comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives established for the period, the findings of the investigator, or both. Whenever appropriate, and when the output of programs or projects can be readily quantified, such quantitative data must be related to cost data for computation of unit costs.
- Progress made toward established benchmarks and result indicators of development impact, as discussed in the program description of this NOFO and detailed in the Recipient’s Activity b.
- Progress made on each discrete research activity.
- Reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate.
- Other pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.
- In addition, qualitative descriptions of success stories and achievements to illustrate impacts of the program must be included when possible. At the conclusion of each research activity, at least one success story and achievements must be submitted for that activity. Efforts must be made to continue following the results of the achievements each reporting period until the end of the Innovation Lab.
- Summary information on capacity training investments to include, but not limited to, number of Ph.D. candidates and M.Sc. candidates, candidates’ countries of origin, and institutional affiliations during training (U.S. host institution and host country partner institution(s) involved in student training).
- A list of all peer reviewed journal articles published during the reporting period.

b) Annual Reports

Annual Reports covering the period October 1 through September 30, or the equivalent time period as per the award date, must be submitted not later than 30 days after the end of the reporting period. The reports are to include the following sections: Title Page, Management Entity Information, Technical and/or Advisory Committee Information, Map or List of Countries Where Working, List of Program Partners, Acronyms, Glossary, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Program Activities and Highlights, Key Accomplishments, Research Program Overview and Structure, Research Project Reports, Associate Award Research Project Reports, Human and Institutional Capacity Development, Innovation Transfer and Scaling Partnerships, updates on EMMP and Open Data Management Plan progress, Governance and Management Entity Activities, Other Topics, Issues, Future Directions, and required Appendices.

### c) Final Performance Report

The final performance report will replace the last semi-annual report and must include the information described in Section F.5 above. The final performance report must include an executive summary of the Recipient's accomplishments overall and by country program in achieving results and impact; conclusions about lessons learned; future challenges and opportunities; an overall description of the Recipient's activities and attainment of results by country or region; an assessment of progress made toward accomplishing the development impact objectives and expected results; significance of these activities; important research findings; and comments and recommendations. The final report must incorporate the findings and results that were included in previous annual reports and is due no later than 90 days after the completion, expiration, or termination of the award. The AOR may provide additional or alternative instructions as to the format and content requested of the Final Report.

## 6 Notifications

The Recipient will be required to immediately notify the AOR and the Agreement Officer of developments that have a significant impact on the award-supported activities. Also, notification must be given in the case of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the objectives of the award. This notification must include a statement of the action taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.

## 7. Evaluation

The Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab will be subject to a performance evaluation during the fourth year of the program, per USAID's [evaluation policy](#). USAID will arrange for and support the cost of the external evaluation outside of the award resulting from this NOFO. The ME and individual sub-award activities must support the evaluation efforts by coordinating access to project researchers and facilities, arranging (but not paying for) local transportation and hotels for external evaluators (if needed), continued salary support of researchers and staff during the evaluation, and travel and per diem costs of activity researchers and staff during the evaluation. If any sub-award activity to be evaluated has already closed, the ME must arrange logistics associated with a site visit, and as agreed by the evaluation team, the ME must support the participation of the Primary Investigator and any appropriate collaborators to participate in the evaluation, such as covering the cost of transportation. Similarly, if any staff member from the ME is a part of the evaluation team, the ME must support the travel and Per Diem costs from the ME budget. The evaluation will assess the following: (1) the research program performance, (2) the capacity building efforts, and (3) overall management.

The performance evaluation will evaluate the implementation of the global research program, including incorporation of the core program components; the quality and progress of the research; the achievement of development targets; the degree to which the research activities achieve integration and are relevant to development in the host countries and more broadly; and overall progress on agreed-upon measurable research, training, outreach/dissemination,

knowledge and technology hand-off, and institutional strengthening results of the program.

It will also evaluate the administrative and management effectiveness of the Management Entity (ME), including the relationship between the ME and sub-recipients/partners; the relationship and communication with USAID Washington and missions; and the outreach and intellectual leadership activities undertaken by the ME.

The performance evaluation is distinct from, but will complement, any impact assessment activities undertaken by USAID that examine the program's impact (see Sections A.II.1 and A.II.2.2.a) of this NOFO). The performance evaluation is generally conducted during the fourth year of the five-year award.

## **8. Submission of Reports**

The Recipient must submit the Semi-Annual, Annual, and Final Reports and all other requested and required periodic reporting documents to the AOR. Additionally, Semi-Annual, Annual, and Final Reports, once approved by the AOR, must be submitted to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) at <http://dec.usaid.gov>. Occasionally, a report will contain sensitive information such as data not yet ready for release to the general public or otherwise embargoed information. In such an event, the AOR will work with the Recipient to either 1) approve an interim, edited version that can be submitted to the DEC until the full report can be released publicly or 2) approve a delay of a reasonable amount of time for submission to the DEC. Evaluations, whether conducted by the Recipient, USAID, or other entity contracted to perform the evaluation, must also be submitted to the DEC.

## **9. Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP)**

The applicant is required to comply (and ensure compliance by partners) with USAID's branding and marking requirements set forth in 2 CFR 700.16 with Feed the Future specific guidance located at [feedthefuture.gov](http://feedthefuture.gov).

These regulations and provisions include the requirement for the apparently successful applicant to submit a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan for pre-award review, negotiation, and approval by the Agreement Officer. Under these regulations and provisions, the BS/MP does not need to be submitted until the applicant is notified by the Agreement Officer that it is the apparently successful applicant, and is requested to submit the BS/MP by a time specified by the Agreement Officer. Thus, the initial cost/management application is not required to include a BS/MP.

Nevertheless, applicants are encouraged, but are not required, to submit their BS/MP with their initial cost/management applications. Applicants who choose not to include their BS/MP with their initial cost/management application will not be penalized during the evaluation process, but must be aware that, if the applicant is the apparently successful applicant, the applicant will be required to submit an acceptable BS/MP as a prerequisite for any resulting award. This would delay any such award, pending receipt, review, and, if necessary, negotiation of the applicant's

BS/MP, with failure to submit or negotiate a BS/MP within the time specified by the Agreement Officer making the apparently successful applicant ineligible for award. Moreover, because USAID's branding and marking requirements have cost implications, such costs must be included in the detailed budget (see Section D.VII.b (2)(i)), even if the applicant does not submit its BS/MP with the initial cost/management application.

Failure to submit or negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time specified by the Agreement Officer will make the Apparently Successful Applicant ineligible for award.

The proposed Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP) will not be evaluated competitively. The Agreement Officer will review for adequacy the proposed BS/MP, and will negotiate, approve, and include the BS/MP in the award.

## **10. Program Income**

Any program income generated under the award will be added to USAID funding (and any cost sharing that will be provided) and used for program purposes. Program income will be subject to 2 CFR 200.307.

## **11. Environmental Compliance**

Section 117 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying-out its development programs. This mandate is codified in [22 CFR 216](#) and in USAID's [Automated Directives System \(ADS\) Parts 201.5.10g and 204](#), which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. The environmental compliance obligations of the Recipient of the award resulting from this NOFO under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs.

- a. In addition, the Recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter will govern.
- b. No activity funded under the award resulting from this NFO must be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Such documents are hereinafter described as "approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.")
- c. To this end, the technical application and any environmental analysis therein will be reviewed by USAID for the purpose of conducting an IEE of the proposed program. Depending on the results of the IEE, USAID may:

- 1) Approve a Request for Categorical Exclusion.
  - 2) Determine that a Negative Determination with Conditions applies to one or more of the proposed activities. This indicates that if these activities are implemented subject to the specified conditions, they are expected to have no significant adverse effect on the environment. Such conditions must be stipulated in the award, and the Recipient will be responsible for implementing all IEE conditions pertaining to activities to be funded under the award. Because the exact nature and location of many activities will only be fully known after sub-awardees are selected, which will take place after award, the initial IEE may require further environmental review and an IEE amendment to be completed post-award, before sub-award activities may proceed.
  - 3) Determine that a Positive Determination applies to one or more of the proposed activities. This indicates that these activities have the potential for significant adverse effects on the environment. In such cases, the Recipient must be required to prepare and submit an EA addressing the environmental concerns raised by such activities. No activity identified under a Positive Determination can proceed until Scoping (as described in 22 CFR 216.3[a][4]) and an EA (as described in 22 CFR 216.6) are completed and approved by USAID. (Note: The completed Scoping Statement is normally submitted by the Mission Environmental Office [MEO] to the BEO when the project originates in a mission. The Statement must be circulated outside the Agency by the BEO with a request for written comments within 30 days and approved by the BEO subsequently. Approval of the Scoping Statement must be provided by the BEO before the EA can be initiated.) Accordingly, the technical and cost/management applications would need to reflect IEE or EA preparation costs and approaches.
- d. As part of its annual work-plans, the Recipient, in collaboration with the AOR and MEO/BEO, will review all ongoing and planned activities under the award to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation. If the Recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it must prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities will be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments. Any activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation will be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received.
- e. Unless the approved Regulation 216 documentation contains a complete Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) or a Project Mitigation and Monitoring (M&M) Plan, the applicant or Recipient will need to prepare and submit an EMMP or M&M Plan for USAID approval. The EMMP or Project M&M Plan will describe how the Recipient will, in specific terms, implement all IEE and/or EA conditions that apply to proposed project activities within the scope of the award. The EMMP or M&M Plan must include monitoring the implementation of the conditions and their effectiveness. Unless included in the successful technical application or

- revisions/addenda thereto, the completed EMMP or M&M Plan will be integrated into the initial work-plan. The approved EMMP or M&M Plan will be integrated into subsequent annual work-plans, making any necessary adjustments to activity implementation to minimize adverse impacts to the environment.
- f. The Recipient will be required to use an Environmental Review Form (ERF) or Environmental Review (ER) checklist using impact assessment tools to screen sub-award and contract proposals to ensure the funded proposals will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify monitoring and reporting. Use of the ERF or ER checklist is required when the nature of the proposals to be funded is not well enough known to make an informed decision about their potential environmental impacts; yet, due to the type and extent of activities to be funded, any adverse impacts are expected to be easily mitigated. Implementation of these activities cannot proceed until the ERF or ER checklist is completed and approved by USAID. The Recipient is responsible for ensuring that mitigation measures specified by the ERF or ER checklist process are implemented. The Recipient will also be responsible for periodic reporting to the AOR, as specified in the award.
  - g. The costs of environmental compliance will be reimbursable under the award resulting from this NOFO if they are in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award.
  - h. Associate Award(s) under the LWA
    - a. Reporting requirements and evaluation plans for Associate Awards will be specified in such awards. The Recipient will be required to provide an electronic copy of all reports produced under Associate Awards to the AOR for the Leader Award.

**SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)**

Additional information can be found at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). For any questions, please refer to the points of contact listed in Section D.1.

## SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

### Applications with Proprietary Data

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, must mark the title page with the following legend:

“This application includes data that must not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and must 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 will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. 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 *[insert sheet numbers or other identification of sheets]*.”

Applicants must also 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.”

Applicants are advised that the successful technical application, as amended, will become the Program Description of the cooperative agreement awarded as a result of this NOFO. Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act of 1981, the public is entitled to request information from Agency award files. Generally, information will be disclosed except:

- Information submitted in response to this NOFO, prior to award of the grant or cooperative agreement, or modifications or revisions thereto.
- Information properly classified or administratively controlled by USAID; and
- Information specifically exempted from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Upon award of the cooperative agreement resulting from this NOFO, USAID will disclose, use, or duplicate any information submitted in response to this NOFO to the extent provided in the award and as described in Section F.I of this NOFO and as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

**[END OF NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY #7200AA21RFA00007]**

## ANNEX 1 - STANDARD PROVISIONS

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa>.) The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations. The award may also contain the following “required as applicable” Standard Provisions:

### REQUIRED AS APPLICABLE STANDARD PROVISIONS FOR U.S. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

RAA1. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PREDETERMINED (NOVEMBER 2020)
RAA2. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PROVISIONAL (Nonprofit) (NOVEMBER 2020)
RAA3. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE - PROVISIONAL (Profit) (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA4. INDIRECT COST – DE MINIMIS RATE (NOVEMBER 2020)
RAA5. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
RAA6. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
RAA7. PROTECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT (APRIL 1998)
RAA8. CARE OF LABORATORY ANIMALS (MARCH 2004)
RAA9. TITLE TO AND CARE OF PROPERTY (COOPERATING COUNTRY TITLE) (NOVEMBER 1985)
RAA10. COST SHARING (MATCHING) (FEBRUARY 2012)
RAA11. PROHIBITION OF ASSISTANCE TO DRUG TRAFFICKERS (JUNE 1999)
RAA12. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
RAA13. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA14. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
RAA15. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
RAA16. CONDOMS (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
RAA17. PROHIBITION ON THE PROMOTION OR ADVOCACY OF THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
RAA18. USAID DISABILITY POLICY - ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2004)
RAA19. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)

RAA20. STATEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTERS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES ON LACK OF SUPPORT FOR PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
RAA21. ELIGIBILITY OF SUBRECIPIENTS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS (JUNE 2012)
RAA22. PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT, OR ADVOCATE FOR THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
RAA23. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (NOCEMBER 2020)
RAA24. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (NOVEMBER 2020)
RAA25. PATENT REPORTING PROCEDURES (NOVEMBER 2020)
RAA26. ACCESS TO USAID FACILITIES AND USAID'S INFORMATION SYSTEMS (AUGUST 2013)
RAA27. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
RAA28. AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)
RAA29. PROGRAM INCOME (AUGUST 2020)
RAA30. NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY (NOVEMBER 2020)

## **ANNEX 2 – Gender Analysis**

### **Innovation Lab for Food Systems and Nutrition**

#### **Gender Analysis**

##### **1. Background: Approach to Analysis to Support the Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab Solicitation Design**

The Feed the Future (FtF) Innovation Lab (IL) for Food Systems and Nutrition will design, lead and implement a program of food systems research and capacity building aimed at addressing the opportunities and challenges confronting the food systems in delivering improved nutrition outcomes for all. The Innovation Lab will additionally serve as a resource to the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS), Missions and their partners.

The RFS Gender Team, with guidance from the Design Team for the IL for Food Systems and Nutrition and building on a literature review conducted by the Nutrition Innovation Lab and a subsequent e-consultation organized by USAID Advancing Nutrition, has undertaken a desk based review of literature to serve as a gender analysis to provide specific outcomes or directions to be incorporated into the IL for Food Systems for Nutrition research priorities (white paper and e-consolation materials can be found at this link <https://www.agrilinks.org/event/food-systems-and-nutrition-e-consultation-emerging-evidence-and-research-opportunities>).

Gender equality and female empowerment are included as an explicit Intermediate Result (CCIR 3) of the Global Food Security Strategy: “Our programming, policy, and research efforts will engage women, men, communities, and institutions to regularly identify and address gendered needs and barriers throughout design, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning”. This gender analysis describes how the IL research activities under the GFSS strategy can integrate gender and ensure improved gender outcomes. Additional general guidance on gender integration in GFSS programming can be found in the Global Food Security Strategy Technical Guidance on Advancing Gender Equality and Female Empowerment.

##### **2. Why Gender Matters for Food Systems for Nutrition**

Food systems have increasingly come into focus as the critical unit of analysis for understanding and fostering agriculture-to-nutrition linkages. This new focus builds on and complements the research and programmatic learning which honed in on the household and emphasized productivity and production diversity including livestock, women’s empowerment, market access, food safety, technology adoption and value addition, and behavior-change communication as pathways to improve nutrition outcomes.

Food systems encompass all the people, institutions and processes involved in the production, aggregation, processing, packaging, trade, marketing, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry, fisheries and pastoralism as well as the socio-economic, nutritional, health and environmental outcomes they produce. The systems lens helps trace the complex pathways through which the food system and nutrition outcomes are linked and capture the influence of the social, political, economic, and environmental drivers on the system. Gender

norms, attitudes and practices impact and are impacted by these drivers, shape how food systems are structured, their sustainability and resilience, and whether they deliver on the improved nutrition and health outcomes for all.

Specifically, across contexts and geographies, gender norms shape men and women's productive and care roles in agriculture and food systems and underpin the gender gaps in access to productive resources and control over income. Gender-based discrimination further exacerbates gender resource gaps and stifles inclusion, equal voice and leadership across food system institutions. These gender-based differences in capacity, opportunity and voice shape men and women's access to and adoption of new technologies, participation in and access to markets, and decisions about processing and storing crops. They also shape households' demand for healthy and nutritious foods and their ability and incentive to adopt food safety practices. Gender relations, including roles, responsibilities, ownership of assets and ability to influence decision-making, have a strong impact on whether or not a food systems innovation is adopted and to what extent it benefits the target population.

Finally, gender intersects with other spheres of disadvantage - age, caste, ethnicity and socio-economic status - and identity further impacting how women engage in food systems and reap benefits. More sustainable resilient food systems require a deeper and system specific analyses of these gender based differences and research-driven action that enable women to participate and benefit equally and empower them.

### **3. Gender-based Roles and Responsibilities Across Food Systems**

#### **Food Supply**

Men and women play multiple and varied roles in agriculture and food production systems. Increasingly visible and recognized are women's roles: they comprise 43 percent of the agricultural labor force in developing countries, make up nearly half of the fisheries sector workforce globally and constitute almost two-thirds of the world's 925 million rural poor livestock keepers."

Studies find that while gendered patterns of cropping remain prevalent - and more pronounced in some contexts than others - men and women smallholder farmers often pool their labor and have complementary roles, sharing and/or dividing tasks along defined gender lines.' In many developing countries, women tend to be more engaged in subsistence food production and harvesting; keep kitchen gardens, gather indigenous fruits and vegetables and in some contexts, grow a large share of the staple cereals and root crops for household consumption.' Opportunities for contract farming and out-grower schemes for high-value produce aimed at domestic and international urban markets remain more accessible to men while women increasingly contribute household labor to these types of commercial farming.

Labor pooling and gendered division of labor is also present in livestock production systems, although patterns differ across regions and the social, cultural, and economic factors that shape livestock ownership of men and women. In many societies, cattle and larger animals are owned by men, while women tend to smaller animals – such as goats, sheep, pigs, and backyard poultry kept near the house. Typical male tasks include herding and administering modern medicines

while women are responsible for milking ewes, providing feed/fodder and water, caring for newborn and sick animals.

In the fisheries sector, women's and men's roles in harvesting activities are once again embedded in their social, cultural, and economic contexts. Women who provide 15 percent of the labor for harvesting fish traditionally engage in nearshore harvesting also called "gleaning" while in most cultures, men dominate fin-fish harvesting as women often are not allowed to go out on boats.

Beyond production, women's labor force participation often takes the form of self-employment with a growing number of women-owned and -led enterprises operating across the agriculture and food system. These enterprises tend to be smaller-scale with low capacity to integrate into formal and distant markets." For instance, women often dominate informal small-scale food processing while formal modern processing operations such as dairy cooperatives and industrial fish processing are dominated by male-owned and -led enterprises. Similarly, women food vendors are more likely to operate in local markets, selling fresh produce, run small catering operations, and sell street food. In parts of Africa, women also constitute a majority of informal cross-border traders and mostly trade in food products.

As wage laborers, women who are employed in agriculture and food systems face similar challenges experienced by women across all sectors: they tend to be segregated into labor intensive jobs, informal and seasonal employment that offers lower wages and employment security, weaker health and safety standards, and weaker social protection.' At the same time, the expansion of export-oriented crops and agro-processing is linked to improved employment opportunities for women. In the industrial fisheries sector women hold up to 90 percent of the processing jobs.

### **Food Environment and Food and Water Utilization**

As the primary caregivers, women are also mostly responsible for food purchases, preparation and feeding practices. They are responsible for 85-90 percent of household food preparation and most of the food shopping and undertake 75 percent of the world's unpaid care work, including food provision and preparation.' In many countries, women and girls are also responsible for water collection for all household uses - in an estimated eight out of ten households with off-premises water.

Women's role in providing food for their families puts into focus the need to understand their food preferences and behaviors as well their purchasing power and ability to make decisions regarding household budgets. For example, limited evidence suggests that demand for biofortified crops and food products is growing rapidly among women who view them as a way to provide nutritious foods to their families.

### **4. Common gender constraints that affect food systems**

Many of the issues and constraints encountered across agriculture and food systems are common to both men and women, including inadequate access to resources (land, information, tools, technology etc.), credit facilities, transportation, poor roads and infrastructure, low-level processing and marketing facilities, and poor storage, among others. However, women often face

disproportionate challenges in regard to some common constraints and also face additional gender-specific challenges.

**Access to Land:** Both men and women are increasingly impacted by the population pressures on land and the depletion of natural resources. In many contexts however, women are more disadvantaged due to discriminatory legal and customary practices that strain their tenure security (ownership and long term use rights); make it more difficult for them to inherit or otherwise acquire and retain land. Limited evidence also suggests that plots cultivated by women tend to be smaller and of lower quality than those cultivated by men and less favorably located (e.g., more distant or farther from water sources).

Gender differences in tenure security and access to land influence women's and men's crop choice, their ability and incentive to apply good agricultural practices and land's long term productivity to invest in new crop technologies (e.g. biofortified and drought resistant crops). They limit women's ability to engage in contract farming and out grower schemes and even their eligibility for membership in producer organizations or government programs.

**Access to Markets:** Male and female farmers often access different market channels. Women typically experience more difficulty accessing favorable markets where they are less likely to belong to producer organizations such as cooperatives, farmer's groups, or other groups that facilitate marketing processes. They also tend to have less or incomplete market information as a result of not belonging to agricultural associations, lower literacy, less mobility and in contexts where market information is increasingly available through digital platforms due to the gender digital divide.

Though unreliable transportation and lack of infrastructure influence everyone's ability to get to and from the market, women face additional challenges. Women are less likely to have their own means of transport, have limited cash to pay for transport, and may face higher risk to personal security. Moreover, market infrastructure, including wholesale and assembly markets and postharvest processing and storage facilities, is frequently not tailored to women's needs.

Typically, female responsibilities such as cooking meals, childcare and fetching water are necessary on a daily basis. As a result, women may have limited control over their schedules and are often tied to an inflexible home routine that may leave insufficient time to go to markets and search for better prices and terms. Further, women are often bound by gender restrictive norms that may not allow them to interact with men and businesspeople, particularly in public spaces. Men on the other hand are more likely to own bicycles, have greater access to cash for transportation, and have more freedom to negotiate publicly. are constrained by socio-cultural norms restricting their mobility and have household obligations that limit their time to spend traveling and finding/negotiating for better terms. and commonly operate in an environment where men take charge of commercial activities.

**Access to Information:** How and where men and women receive information vary by country and community, however, often follow gendered patterns. Women commonly have lower education levels and higher rates of illiteracy than males which limits their access to written and complex information. The literature also suggests that women's networks are narrower but

deeper and more familial, whereas men's are wider but shallower, in part explained by women's lower mobility and more limited exposure to formal networks and institutions. Gender digital divide means women are less likely to access information through digital platforms compared to men. Finally, women and men's informational needs also diverge due to the gender-based differences including due to their often-differing roles and responsibilities in the social, health and economic spheres.

In the context of agricultural production systems, both men and women need information on good practices, technologies for improved production, productivity and processing, market demand and pricing, and weather data with some differences stemming from gendered cropping patterns and division of labor, variation in scale of men and women's production and resource allocations. Market share and segmentation and differences in scale and capacity between enterprises owned and led by women and men also create demand for different types of technical and market information. As they are primarily responsible for food purchases, preparation and feeding practices, women's access to food safety and nutrition information is critical.

However, women are often disadvantaged. Oftentimes, content is not tailored to their unique needs and delivered in a format and through channels that are accessible to women - for instance through radio or visually accessible materials that do not require advanced literacy. A confluence of time poverty, norms and gender based discrimination also limit women's access to extension and advisory services and producer and trade groups and networks.

**Access to Finance:** Challenges faced by the agricultural sector in developing countries is well documented and is mainly attributed to the high transaction costs, the systemic risks in agricultural production, asymmetric information, and limited acceptable collateral. Gender norms and structural factors make access to finance an even bigger challenge for women compared to men and affect their ability to take advantage of and invest in on- and off- farm economic opportunities and productivity, quality and safety improving technologies including within food systems as producers and entrepreneurs. Seventy percent of women-owned SMEs in developing countries are not served or underserved by financial institutions and prevent women entrepreneurs from innovating and scaling to larger markets. More limited access to financial products and services, such as savings, credit and insurance, also make women producers and entrepreneurs significantly more vulnerable to production and market risks. From a demand perspective, relatively more limited access to such financial tools make it more difficult for women to smooth consumption when faced by income shocks which has implications for household food spending and consequently nutrition outcomes.

**Decision-making:** Power relations in terms of roles and responsibilities in production, use of technology, resource management, access to markets, and income control are often gendered within households, communities and associations and across cultures and countries. Gender norms also shape women's and men's abilities to participate in, be represented in and have leadership roles in agriculture and food system institutions from research to extension to markets.

Studies across various contexts demonstrate that when women can exert more influence on household decisions regarding production and income use, this can lead to increased access to food and health care and eventually improved nutrition. There is also some evidence that shows

that women's control over land, cash, other assets, and related decision-making reduces the prevalence of child malnutrition.' In many contexts however, discriminatory social institutions, including norms and legal frameworks, limit women's critical access to these assets and their ability to make decisions regarding their use.

**Time use:** In many settings, particularly where infrastructure is weak and market substitutes are unavailable or unaffordable, women often face significant time constraints as they work to meet their productive, domestic and care responsibilities; a pattern that became even more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The time poverty women experience have impacts on their health and well-being and the trade-offs they face in allocating their time lead to lost economic opportunity and gain and can compromise feeding and caregiving practices that require women's time. In both cases, households' nutritional outcomes are impacted.

### **Gender and food systems transformation**

A number of global trends, including population growth and land pressure, climate change, and urbanization are transforming food systems and women's roles within. Rural to urban migration which often involves men moving to urban areas for employment, leave women as de facto heads of household and responsible for agricultural production under the pressure of increased climate risks. Changes in food markets driven partly by urbanization and urban food demand have potential consequences for women smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs who dominate informal food processing and sales. Meanwhile, in urban areas in particular, women's increased labor force participation and time constraints will likely contribute to changes in household food consumption patterns (Me-Msope, 2015).

## **5. Approaches to addressing gender issues in food systems research**

The following are the areas where gender considerations should be elevated in the design and implementation of the IL research and implementation:

***Formulation of research questions of particular relevance to women's empowerment and gender equality*** which involves 1) the curation of research questions that are informed by and relevant to women's and men's roles, responsibilities, participation in, and benefits from agriculture and food systems; 2) collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated and gendered data to answer those questions; and 3) communication of findings to key stakeholders. An illustrative list of research questions across the 3 priority areas of inquiry outlined by the Innovation Lab design team can be found in the table annexed to the gender analysis and implementation.

***Gender-responsive research, analytic capacity and other skills within partner institutions*** which requires that partner institutions at all levels have or work to build their capacity to implement research through a gender lens; posing questions on how activities can be implemented to improve likelihood of better gender related outcomes and minimize gender biases. Some of the gender-responsive research capacities may include but are not limited to:

- Application of gender analysis to identify relevant questions for the research areas.

- Design and implementation of data collection that captures gendered perspectives using relevant qualitative, quantitative, and participatory social science research methods and analysis.
- Communication of gendered needs, perspectives, and impacts identified through research to diverse stakeholders, ranging from smallholder farmers to local women’s groups to private sector stakeholders to government officials.
- Ensure policy recommendations are sufficiently nuanced to best address the needs of women and men; improve gender equality and women’s empowerment.

### Gender considerations and illustrative policy questions/actions across GFSS Policy Areas

<i>Areas of Inquiry</i>	<b>Gender Considerations</b>	<b>Illustrative Research Questions and Activities</b>
<i>Improving Human Outcomes: Improved knowledge and practices related to how food systems achieve improved nutrition.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender based differences in men’s and women’s access to and control over productive assets</li> <li>• Differences in men and women’s access to markets and in the types markets they procure from and sell to</li> <li>• Gender differences in vulnerability to risk and coping strategies shaped by different asset endowments, access to networks and financial tools and services</li> <li>• Implicit or explicit gender based discrimination against women in agriculture and food system institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do the gendered differences in access to markets intervene between agricultural production and diet and nutritional outcomes.</li> <li>• Examine women’s role in local food markets and identify supply and demand side approaches that can be targeted to women to improve availability safe and nutritious foods.</li> <li>• Examine the gendered dimensions of rural urban transitions; women’s roles in food systems - including as consumers.</li> <li>• Assessment of the role of cross-border food trade and diagnostics of gendered capacity needs for improved food safety practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce and mitigate risk: technologies, knowledge, and practices that reduce, manage, and mitigate increased food systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men and women have different preferences, abilities and incentives to adopt technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct qualitative research examining interplays between gender dynamics and food systems and ways to best</li> </ul>

<p><b>risks, strengthening and building resilient nutrition-sensitive food systems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender differences in vulnerability to risk and coping strategies shaped by different asset endowments, access to networks and financial tools and services</li> <li>• Gender differences in human capital, training and information can impact men’s and women’s ability to diversify incomes and livelihoods.</li> <li>• Gender differences in informational needs and the source and channels of information access.</li> </ul>	<p>design services accessible to women. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand how to better design services that engage with and can be accessed by women producers,</li> <li>• qualitative studies on the context-dependent interplays between gender dynamics and food systems nutrition pathways,</li> <li>• gain an understanding of the impacts of agricultural interventions on women’s workload, childcare, and time burdens.</li> <li>• Explore gender based preferences and willingness to pay for nutritious and diversified foods.</li> <li>• Examine the role of norms in household food preferences and consumption</li> </ul>
<p><i>Advancing the Productivity Frontier: food systems at the firm, farm, and household levels: pro-poor technologies and practices that improve food safety and healthy diets</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intra-household gender power dynamics may impact their ability to adopt new practices around food selection and preparation.</li> <li>• Gendered differences in the size, capacity, and market access of women owned/led vs male owned/led enterprises.</li> <li>• Men and women have different preferences, abilities, and incentives to adopt technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify culturally acceptable technologies and practices that improve diets, food safety, consumer- and diet-driven food transformation and preservation and enhance adoption.</li> </ul>

### **ANNEX 3 – Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS)**

Please refer to <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy>

## **ANNEX 4 – GFSS Research Strategy**

Please refer to <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1867/us-governments-global-food-security-research-strategy>

## **ANNEX 5 – USAID Multi-sectoral Nutrition Strategy**

Please refer to <https://www.usaid.gov/nutrition-strategy>

## **ANNEX 6 – USAID Youth in Development Policy**

Please refer to <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/youth>