



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Subject: USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity Number 72036722APS00001 Addendum to the Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX), a New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Annual Program Statement (APS) No. 7200AA20APS00009.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: 98.001, Foreign Assistance for Programs Overseas

Pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, the United States Government, as represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Nepal and the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI)¹ is announcing the **USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity Addendum** to the Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX), a New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Annual Program Statement (APS), hereafter known as the HELIX APS.

Through this USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity, USAID/Nepal aims to engage locally based new and underutilized partners to expand and amplify the Agency's work through and with higher education. NPI seeks to support partner countries' progress to self-reliance, achieve sustainable and resilient results, and catalyze more effective partnering for impact. This Addendum disseminates information to prospective Applicants so they may develop and submit Concept Notes in response and ultimately be considered for USAID funding. This Addendum describes and provides:

- The type of activities for which Concept Notes will be considered;
- Available funding, process and requirements for submitting Concept Notes and Full Applications;
- The Merit Review Criteria for evaluating Concept Notes; and
- Refers prospective Applicants to relevant documentation and resources.

USAID/Nepal anticipates awarding one assistance award, a cooperative agreement, under this Addendum. Issuance of this Addendum does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of the U.S. Government to make an award, nor does it commit the U. S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a Concept Note or Application(s). The actual number of assistance awards, if any, is subject to the availability of funds, as well as the viability of eventual Full Applications received.

Based on the submitted Concept Note(s), USAID/Nepal will determine whether to request a Full Application from an eligible organization(s). To be competitive under this Addendum to the HELIX APS, Concept Notes and Full Applications must be fully responsive to all directions

¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-development-democracy-innovation>

under the APS except when specifically noted otherwise in this Addendum or in the request for full application.

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the entire APS and Addendum Opportunity have been downloaded from www.grants.gov and USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the APS, please contact the grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

Thank you for your interest in USAID activities.

Sincerely,

Robyn Bertholon
Agreement Officer
Office of Acquisition and Assistance
USAID/Nepal

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT

CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES

USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity 72036722APS00001

UNDER EXISTING

Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX)

Annual Program Statement

A New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) Opportunity

No.: 7200AA20APS00009

PLEASE NOTE: This is an Addendum to an existing announcement. All interested organizations should carefully review both the USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity AND the full APS announcement, which can be found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=326056>. Important information contained in the full worldwide announcement is not repeated in the *USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity Addendum*.

This activity is authorized in accordance with Part 1 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended.

Through this **USAID Agriculture Higher Education Activity Number 72036722APS00001** Addendum to the Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange (HELIX) Annual Program Statement (APS) New Partnerships Initiative No.: 7200AA20APS00009, the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation, Center for Education (DDI/EDU) and USAID Nepal seeks to strengthen Agriculture and Forestry University's (AFU) capacity to contribute to Nepal's agricultural development by improving the quality of agricultural higher education, increasing agricultural graduates' employability, and contributing to research and extension activities that play a central role in Nepal's agricultural and economic transformation.

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID/ Nepal anticipates supporting up to one award valued at between \$4 million to \$5 million over the life of the award. USAID reserves the right to award more awards than this estimate and is not obligated to make any awards.

Unless otherwise stated herein, all terms and conditions of the HELIX APS apply (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=326056>).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
AFU	Agriculture and Forestry University
AO	Agreement Officer
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
APS	Annual Program Statement
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CLA	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
CSISA	Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia
DDI	Bureau for Development, Democracy and Innovation
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act
FTF	Feed the Future
GON	Government of Nepal
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HELIX	Higher Education for Leadership, Innovation, and Exchange
HICD	Human and Institutional Capacity Development
IAAS	Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science
KISAN	Knowledge-based Integrated Agriculture in Nepal
LEAD	Leadership and Education for Advancing Development
MOALD	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NESP	National Education System Plan
NPI	New Partnerships Initiative
NSAF	Nepal Seed and Fertilizer Activity
PYD	Positive Youth Development
TU	Tribhuvan University
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is issuing this Addendum pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. Any potential resulting award(s) will be subject to 2 CFR 700 and 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards and USAID’s Standard Provisions for U.S. and Non-U.S. Based organizations per ADS 303.

A. Background

USAID/Nepal’s 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS)² aims to achieve a more self-reliant, prosperous, and inclusive Nepal that delivers improved democratic governance, health, and education outcomes. To truly advance Nepal’s development trajectory, the underlying development challenges of federalism, inclusion, and resilience need to be addressed. In order to achieve improved democratic governance, health, and education outcomes, USAID/Nepal seeks to foster broad-based and inclusive economic growth, of which, agriculture plays an important role, but has failed to reach its full potential. While agriculture accounts for 27.6 percent of GDP and provides livelihoods for more than 60 percent of the population,³ Nepal struggles to produce an adequate supply of food for its citizens due to very low levels of productivity. Transforming Nepal’s largely subsistence agriculture sector to a driver of economic growth is a stated priority of the Government of Nepal’s (GON) Fifteenth Development Plan⁴. USAID/Nepal’s 2020-2025 CDCS contributes to the achievement of this priority set by the government.

The goal of USAID’s Youth Development Policy - 2012⁵ 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. Therefore, USAID’s past investments in Nepal on youth-specific issues focus primarily on improving access to quality health care and foundational skills education. Current youth-inclusive activities related to employment and agriculture include Feed the Future’s Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture in Nepal (KISAN II) (annex 3). The Government of Nepal defines youth as ages 16-40⁶, and the National Youth Policy (2015) prioritizes producing technical human resources in agriculture and forest, improving agriculture technology and providing job creation opportunities to encompass the growing youth population. However, there are several challenges facing youth. High levels of youth unemployment, poor quality public education, youth labor migration, and lack of opportunities for youth leadership are some of the biggest issues. Therefore, ensuring access to higher education and technical skills is an essential precondition to equip future young women

² <https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/cdcs>

³ Ministry of Finance Economic Survey 2017/2018

⁴ https://npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf

⁵ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_0.pdf

⁶ <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/nepal/>

and youth from marginalized communities with tools necessary to be included in all levels of society. Without this access, marginalized youth with low education and skills are forced to migrate abroad to seek jobs in low paying and harsh conditions⁷. Current youth data for Nepal is limited and further research through a youth assessment is needed to gain a more detailed picture of the challenges and opportunities for young people. USAID’s youth development programming uses a Positive Youth Development (PYD)⁸ approach. PYD engages youth along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. USAID also encourages taking into account different programming models for different age groups, an “Ages and Stages” approach such as: Early Adolescence (10-14 years), Adolescence (15-19 years), Emerging Adulthood (20-24 years), and Transition into Adulthood (25-29 years). It is anticipated that the USAID Agriculture Higher Education activity will primarily work with youth ages 15-29.

In Nepal, women comprise only 30% of the total professional and technical workers, though the percentage of the country's population by male and female is nearly equal. Gender gaps are more pronounced in jobs requiring higher skills⁹. In comparison to other fields of study, the enrollment of women students into studies of agriculture, forestry, and related sectors is comparatively low (21.7 percent), which may explain fewer women in agriculture (11 percent) and forestry (4 percent) higher-level professions¹⁰. Women occupy only 4 percent of positions within the planning and decision-making domain, reflecting an acute gender imbalance and under-representation in forestry¹¹. Women in leadership positions in farmers’ cooperatives, networks, or in local government remain low due to their limited access to knowledge and information compounded with patriarchal narratives prevalent in institutions.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nepal can play a critical role to increase the capacity of the workforce, increase equity and inclusion, particularly of women and youth, and to effectively carry out agricultural education, research, and extension services, all of which are needed to bring about the innovation and advances in technology needed to revitalize the sector and grow the economy.

The history of higher education in Nepal is relatively short, but its growth has been rapid since the establishment of democracy in the 1950s. In Nepal, modern higher education began in 1919 with the establishment of Tri Chandra College, the first institution of higher education. Later in 1959, Tribhuvan University (TU) became the pioneer and leading national institution of higher education in Nepal, providing courses in different areas such as Humanities, Agriculture, Forestry, Sciences, Management, Medicines and Engineering.

For higher education in the area of agriculture, the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Sciences (IAAS), an autonomous academic center under Tribhuvan University, was established in 1972 to

⁷ State of Social Inclusion in Nepal: Caste, Ethnicity and Gender, Evidence from Nepal Social Inclusion Survey 2018. <http://anthropologytu.edu.np/state-of-social-inclusion-in-nepal/>

⁸ <https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework>

⁹ Global Gender Gap Report 2021: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/ab6795a1-960c-42b2-b3d5-587eccda6023>

¹⁰ FAO, Country Gender Analysis, 2019, p. 49: <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1181859/>

¹¹ Ibid, p. 50.

provide education in Agriculture, Animal and Veterinary Sciences. Recognizing the need for Nepali HEIs to offer quality technical education, the GON established the Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU) in 2010 – modeled after the land-grant university system established in the United States¹². Since its inception, AFU has seen a steady increase in undergraduate enrollment - from 173 students in 2012 to 1,162 students in 2019. To date, the university has awarded 1,069 Bachelors of Science, 369 masters, and 5 doctorate degrees¹³. The university has achieved much in the short time since its founding and has ambitious goals to serve its student body and the country of Nepal. However, AFU has yet to realize the robust teaching, research, and extension programs that it aspires to implement.

While HEIs in Nepal, like AFU, have produced graduates with degrees in agriculture and related fields, they often fail to innovate their curricula and management approaches in response to the changes affecting agriculture and rural spaces, including the needs of the private sector. Their primary focus has been - and continues to be - on providing education and services geared to the professional development of those responsible for agriculture and rural development. Evidence indicates, however, that agricultural universities also have an important role to play in rural poverty alleviation when they expand beyond their traditional roles and models to partner with rural stakeholders and policymakers¹⁴. In this context, the relationship between higher education and rural development is an important policy concern, particularly in countries such as Nepal, where the revitalization of rural areas presents a critical challenge.

Innovative agricultural HEIs have managed to reinvent themselves in order to meet the changing needs of rural areas and economies. AFU is experiencing challenges that impact the quality of the education it provides and bring into question the relevance of the programs it offers in light of changes in Nepal. Issues specific to AFU of concern include poor infrastructure, low faculty morale, and high graduate unemployment rates. Apart from these, five critical issues in current higher education development in Nepal, are also applicable to AFU: 1. the overly rapid expansion of enrollment; 2. the under-financing of the higher education system; 3. the low level of managerial effectiveness; 4. the irrational structure of the system; and 5. education quality erosion.

AFU approached USAID/Nepal for consultation and support to address some of the challenges the university faces in reaching its goals, including effectively supporting students to gain marketable skills to serve Nepal's agriculture sector. In response to AFU's commitment towards reforms, and USAID's interest in partnering with new and underutilized partners, USAID/Nepal and the Feed the Future (FTF) Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems conducted a human and institutional capacity development (HICD)¹⁵ analysis of AFU in 2018. This analysis revealed several obstacles to AFU's support of student success. The analysis identified outdated pedagogical approaches and gaps in instructor knowledge as primary concerns and barriers to

¹² A land-grant college or university is an institution that has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862, 1890, and 1994. A key component of the land-grant system is the agricultural experiment station program created by the Hatch Act of 1887. Thus, a university modeled after the land-grant university system often is characterized by its three-part mission—or a commitment to providing education, research, and agricultural extension services.

¹³ [AFU October 2020 powerpoint presentation](#)

¹⁴ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6486812.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://livestocklab.ifas.ufl.edu/media/livestocklabifasufledu/pdf/HICD-gap-analysis-Nepal.pdf>

student learning. This challenge is further compounded by a lack of appropriate educational infrastructure, particularly laboratory and research facilities. Further, some instructors have knowledge gaps in the subjects they teach and resort to skipping sections of the syllabi.

The same HICD analysis concluded that AFU’s curriculum is perceived to be rigorous and competitive, particularly with regard to theoretical foundations, but lacks sufficient practical and soft skills training, as well as experiential learning opportunities. A focus on theoretical learning creates a gap between the skills demanded by the private sector and the skills that AFU students can offer upon graduation. The resulting absence of work-based learning leaves graduates unprepared for employment in the private sector and for supporting the transformation of Nepal’s agricultural development in meaningful ways. Lastly, students and faculty at AFU have limited opportunities for educational and cross-cultural exchange, thus limiting their exposure to freedom of thought and ideas, such as the opening of markets, outside of AFU and Nepal. This has led to faculty replicating and teaching out-of-date research methods, reduced capacity to introduce new ideas and innovations, an overall limited research portfolio due to limited relationships and collaborations with researchers in regional and global research networks, and a lack of competitiveness for international research funding¹⁶. Moreover, the lack of international exposure for faculty negatively impacts the curriculum and learning experience for students.

B. Purpose

As the only Nepali agricultural university, AFU bears a weighty responsibility to effectively carry out not only education, but also research and extension (also referred to as engagement) responsibilities. Together, these three components - education, research, and extension — are integral for determining the success of AFU’s students, guaranteeing they receive a quality education, complete with theoretical instruction and practical application of skills in their field of study. These components are also reflected as the core of the USAID Higher Education Program Framework¹⁷. Accordingly, USAID/Nepal has identified an opportunity to strengthen HEIs in Nepal by strengthening the capacity of AFU to integrate education, research, and extension functions and play a central role in Nepal’s agricultural and economic development.

Therefore, this activity is expected to empower a future workforce that is more gender balanced, stronger, more resilient, and more capable of contributing to inclusive agricultural and economic transformation in Nepal. ***Thus, the purpose of this activity is to strengthen AFU's capacity to contribute to Nepal's agricultural development by improving the quality of agricultural higher education, increasing agricultural graduates' employability, and contributing to research and extension activities that play a central role in Nepal's agricultural and economic transformation. It is anticipated that direct work with AFU will in turn also create system-level change in the overall higher education system in Nepal.***

USAID/Nepal is seeking Concept Notes from eligible HEIs with the specific purpose of supporting student success at AFU through four primary objectives:

¹⁶ FTF Capacity Development Gap Analysis: Nepal

¹⁷ Figure 1 in USAID’s Higher Education Program Framework illustrates the core of higher education as “providing quality and relevant education and workforce training,” “advancing knowledge and research,” and “engaging and strengthening networks and communities.”

- Improve the development of processes and capacity within AFU to ensure a comprehensive, student-centered package of curricula, course materials, and methods of instruction;
- Improve the capacity of AFU to develop, maintain, and update programs that provide students with opportunities for civic engagement and leadership, to gain practical and soft skills development through experiential service-learning or experiential models, and use a Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework¹⁸; and
- Strengthen and upgrade the research system and research methodology for students and the faculty to generate innovations, and link them with the extension practices, especially as it relates to technology transfer and intellectual property.
- Improve and promote women's leadership and capacity to enable women faculty members to take a lead role and to improve processes to ensure increased enrollment of female students

Underpinning the activity purpose and all three intended objectives will be the establishment of cross-cultural exchanges to provide students and faculty exposure to American values and innovation to inform the higher education experience in Nepal.

Potential applicants should propose technical assistance approaches that will contribute to strengthening the capacity of faculty to use improved pedagogical practices that focus on student-centered learning and to facilitate curriculum reform that ensures courses respond to private sector demands by including ample practical and soft skills learning opportunities¹⁹.

Genuine social transformation for Nepali youth to play a central role in the country's agricultural and economic development will require youth involvement in the decision-making process at the individual, community, and institutional levels. A holistic, PYD approach treats young people as equal partners with adults - about the issues that affect them directly. The activity will incorporate youth voices and decision-making into the activity, in order to empower a future workforce that is stronger, more resilient, and more capable of contributing to Nepal's agricultural and economic transformation. To mitigate these issues, this activity will improve student outcomes and support student success by ensuring curricula and course materials are comprehensive and methods of instruction reflect pedagogical best practices and have a greater focus on student-centered learning.

The prospective applicant should also plan to engage the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC)²⁰, within the Agriculture and Forestry University, established under the AFU Act enacted by Nepalese parliament. The CDC is part of the academic affairs unit of the university to provide academic excellence in teaching and direction to the academic program. CDC maintains the academic quality of the university and ensures AFU certificates meet the standards of certificates given by the other universities around the world.

¹⁸ <https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework>

¹⁹ USAID seeks technical assistance

²⁰ <http://afu.edu.np/curriculum-development-center>

Additionally, this activity will also provide exposure to higher education values that embrace academic freedom, research integrity, diversity, critical thinking, and innovation through partnership with at least one HEI. As a result, faculty and students will gain invaluable expertise and experiences to AFU, and skills to offer in the private sector, bringing much needed innovation and professionalism to agriculture in Nepal.

C. Coordination and Complementarity

The successful applicant will be expected to coordinate activities with relevant Nepali institutions including the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MOALD), the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), and private sector institutions. The coordination with other international institutions and academia are also important, to equip AFU with best practices for supporting successful and sustainable management of the university, including but not limited to:

- Long-term collaborative research programs with national and international institutions;
- Strategic partnerships with relevant private and public sector entities; and
- Introduction of sciences and technologies.

Construction and large equipment procurement will not be allowed under this award; however, small equipment purchases related to updating and upgrading the existing lab with the new technologies may be allowed. Overall, capacity strengthening activities should focus on improving processes, procedures, and knowledge.

USAID is committed to increasing the sustainable impact of our development assistance through partnerships, alliances, and other forms of collaboration with various stakeholders. Coordination and collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, such as the private sector, GON, and with other USAID and donor projects will inform the design and implementation of interventions that reflect the diverse contexts. Therefore, close consultation and collaboration with a variety of private and public market actors will be key to the success of this activity. USAID Agriculture Higher Education activity concept notes are encouraged to plan for collaboration with other ongoing and new USAID activities, including but not limited to:

- FTF Nepal Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture in Nepal (KISAN II) implemented by Winrock International
- FTF Nepal's Nepal Seed and Fertilizer (NSAF) activity implemented by CIMMYT
- FTF Nepal Integrated Pest Management activity implemented by Virginia Tech
- And other centrally funded FTF activities, such as,
 - The FTF Innovation Labs (including, for example, the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, led by the University of Florida)
 - Farmer to Farmer, led by Catholic Relief Services
 - Cereal Systems Initiative for South Asia (CSISA), led by CIMMYT
 - Business Drivers for Food Safety, led by Food Enterprise Solutions
- Relevant projects funded by other donors, including the World Bank's Livestock System Innovation project and IFAD's Value Chains for Inclusive Transformation of Agriculture
- Relevant GON programs, including the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project

It is envisioned that this HELIX addendum activity will also contribute to reporting on indicators and supporting outcomes under USAID's Global Leadership and Education for Advancing Development (Global LEAD) initiative.

D. Programmatic and Geographic Focus

Programmatic Focus

This addendum provides a unique opportunity for USAID/Nepal to directly engage with the higher education community broadly and creatively to meet the activity's purpose and objectives.

USAID/Nepal through this addendum to the HELIX APS seeks to enhance partnerships among a wide variety of local and other institutions (including the private sector, government, and civil society organizations) to address the key development challenges. The HELIX APS also seeks to build the evidence base for how higher education can be leveraged as a central actor in development and for the research expertise of the higher education community to be utilized to provide data and evidence for addressing development challenges. Activities that arise from the HELIX APS should strive to be equitable, inclusive, transparent, data driven vehicles by which our partners at the individual, institutional, and systems level are empowered to serve as change agents.

USAID/Nepal anticipates that ultimately the USAID Agriculture Higher Education activity will contribute to USAID's Mission and objectives through successful achievement of one or more of the following outcomes and focal areas as leverage points in higher education programming:

- **Increase capability, contributions, and quality of individuals:** Quality and capacity of faculty members including women faculty members, researchers, staff, and students play important roles in the efficient functioning of higher education systems. These individual human resources within AFU will develop the ability to act as leverage points for change within the university and ultimately contribute to generating the impact at the system level. For faculty, researchers, and staff, it is important that they are a part of, and can bring important connections, develop unique experiences, and a high degree of expertise to the administrative, research, and teaching work of the AFU. For students, this activity has the potential to create an enabling environment for their agency, assets, and contributions to be recognized and supported, through a PYD approach.
- **Enhance sustainable and self-reliant Institutions of Higher Education:** Strategically, HELIX APS outcomes will be best achieved within a country context by building local ownership and fostering partnerships across organizations and sectors, in particular higher education institutions. USAID/Nepal strongly encourages prospective applicants to partner with a wide range of relevant institutions and leverage external resources to promote sustainable, long-term development impacts. USAID/Nepal also supports collaboration with other donors and multilaterals, both local and international, to avoid duplication of effort and allow for more efficient, catalytic, and effective programming.
- **Strengthen Higher Education Systems to Ensure Long-lasting Impact:** Higher Education systems achieve sustainable outcomes through partnerships and leveraging of resources. Strategically, HELIX APS outcomes will be best achieved within a country

context by building local ownership and fostering partnerships across organizations and sectors. It is equally important to have an enabling environment (including, but not limited to policy, private sector, innovation environment, etc.) primed for integrating promising findings and solutions into the appropriate channels for successful uptake and sustainability. Whenever possible, USAID/Nepal seeks to strengthen the capacity of AFU for impacts at the systems level for both the higher education system, as well as the agricultural system in Nepal. In addition, it is anticipated that the improved capacity of individuals to reduce barriers and maximize opportunities to promote evidence-based decision making and uptake will improve performance in relevant systems.

- **Advance the Higher Education Evidence Base for Learning:** It is anticipated that USAID Agriculture Higher Education activity will contribute towards larger learning and building the evidence base for higher education in achieving development objectives. The activity is also anticipated to contribute to achieving the goal of HEIs, such as, AFU, to serve as a central actor in locally-led development in support of the Agency-wide Higher Education Learning Agenda²¹ Agency-wide Higher Education, as well as specific learning priorities identified in this Addendum and/or via co-creation. HELIX APS activities may use implementation research, cost capture and analysis, performance and impact evaluations, or a broad range of methods to contribute to building the evidence base and may also seek to utilize the higher education community to advance the evidence base for education and other sector needs. AFU's partnership with private sector actors, student's internship and/or experiential learning opportunities in the private sector, and engagement with the Government of Nepal is critical for AFU to understand the business growth drivers, research management, technology, and emerging issues. Strengthening AFU's capacity in terms of building strategic partnership with various organizations will contribute to strengthening the larger agriculture market system and also contribute to the larger higher education system in Nepal.

Successful applicants will be expected to actively engage young people to conduct a youth assessment within the first six months of the award to determine areas for curriculum improvement, vocational skills gap with the local labor market, and areas for improvement in higher education programming. Youth could be engaged as focus group participants, survey enumerators, and as researchers. Engagement should not be limited to learners and educators only, but also incorporate out of school youth and marginalized youth populations. Construction and large equipment procurement will not be allowed under this award; however, small equipment purchases related to updating and upgrading the existing lab with the new technologies may be allowed.

Geographic Focus

AFU is located in Bagmati Province, Nepal. However, the prospective applicant may develop partnerships with a wide range of institutions situated within and outside Bagmati province to achieve the purpose and objectives listed above.

Guiding Principles

²¹ <https://www.edu-links.org/HELearningAgenda>

- **Positive Youth Development**²²: The prospective applicant must contribute to building AFU's skills, assets, and competencies of its students to reach their full potential. A holistic, PYD approach treats young people as equal partners with adults - about the issues that affect them directly. The prospective applicant should propose interventions for incorporating youth voices and decision-making into the activity, in order to empower a future workforce that is stronger, more resilient, and more capable of contributing to Nepal's agricultural and economic transformation and increased self-reliance.
- **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**: For societies to thrive, women's access to education and technology is imperative. This will further enable them to access economic opportunities, income, land, and markets so they may fully participate as productive members of society. They must also have equal rights and opportunities as change makers, peace-builders, and leaders. Transforming the ways in which we engage men and boys in gender equality and women's empowerment efforts is essential to creating long-lasting change and challenging the negative cultural and social definitions that can limit the ability of boys and girls to achieve their full potential. The activity will address gender inequalities and support women's empowerment in the design of interventions.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**: UDL is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. UDL's goal is to support learners to become "expert learners" who are, each in their own way, purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal driven. Instead of changing the learner, UDL aims to change the design of learning environments to reduce barriers so that all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning. The UDL Guidelines provide a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. The proposed activity should use the UDL Guidelines in designing and implementing interventions to ensure an inclusive learning environment for all.
- **Private sector engagement** enables USAID and partner countries to collaborate with the private sector to co-create and co-design market-based and enterprise-led development approaches. Such approaches leverage markets, investments, firm behavior, and technical expertise to drive valuable business and development results in a sustainable manner over the short, medium and long term. Given the growing and vital role the private sector has in solving global development problems, private sector engagement is essential to building resilient and lasting self-reliance. Engagement and partnerships with the private sector will help improve the effectiveness of interventions under this activity and ensure that degrees, non-degrees, short-courses, or certification programs will meet the workforce development needs of the private sector.
- **Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)**: Strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management are key to development effectiveness. CLA can ensure that programs are coordinated, grounded in a strong evidence base, and iteratively adapted to remain relevant throughout implementation. The systematic application of CLA approaches, grounded in a strong learning agenda, to drive implementation will improve the effectiveness of interventions and support the achievement of development

²² <https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework>

outcomes. The proposed activity should incorporate rapid assessments, such as a labor market needs assessment, and other CLA approaches to inform the development and adjustment of interventions and program implementation.

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

A. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

The anticipated Total Estimated Amount of this award is between \$4 million and \$5 million. USAID/Nepal anticipates awarding one award under this Addendum to the HELIX APS.

B. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Award

The Period of Performance of this HELIX APS addendum activity will be for five years.

C. Type of Instrument

The Assistance Award that will result from this addendum may take the form of a cooperative agreement.

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

USAID defines “Implementing Partners” as U.S. and non-U.S. non-governmental organizations that can design and implement assistance activities outside the United States. All Implementing Partners must be legally registered entities under applicable law and eligible under the relevant laws to receive funding from a foreign source. Individuals, unregistered, or informal organizations are not eligible to be Implementing Partners. The New Partnership Initiative (NPI) provides further details on eligibility, depending on the approach to partnership. Implementing Partners must also have a DUNS number and maintain current registration in SAM.gov to be eligible to receive United States Government (USG) funding.

Applicants must meet at least one of the NPI modalities listed in Section C: Eligibility Information of the HELIX APS. In addition, **the prime awardee under this activity *must* be an Higher Education Institute.** The Applicant must plan to work with AFU as a primary partner for knowledge management and peer to peer exchanges during implementation. During the entire procurement process, **Applicants must refrain from obtaining a Letter of Commitment from AFU, including during the Concept Notes and Request for Full Applications stages.** Contact information for AFU will be provided by USAID to the Implementing Partner upon award, so that a Memorandum of Understanding or equivalent can be negotiated and established by the Prime. However, AFU will participate as a co-creation partner during the entire procurement process so Applicants may engage with AFU to develop their applications.

In addition, please note that direct subawards to Parastatal or Government Entity Organizations (per ADS 303.3.21(b)²³) are not encouraged.

All eligible interested organizations are restricted to submitting only one Concept Note as the Prime Applicant. If more than one Concept Note is received with the same Prime Applicant, USAID will seek written clarification from the relevant entity regarding which Concept Note should be considered for review. If clarification is not resolved *within five (5) business days*, all Concept Notes submitted by the Applicant will be deemed ineligible.

Note: Applicants can serve as sub-awardees or supporting partners on multiple Concept Notes under an Addendum.

Please refer to the HELIX APS for additional information on eligibility requirements, including NPI requirements, for Addendum under the APS.

²³ AFU is considered a parastatal entity, which is defined as a Foreign government-controlled university (see ADS 220 for further policy on types of foreign governmental organizations and applicability); ADS 303 link : <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303.pdf>

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Agency Point of Contact

For any questions regarding this AFU Building Capacity Activity Addendum, contact kathmanduooaexchange@usaid.gov.

USAID/Nepal will furnish promptly to all prospective Applicants, as an amendment to this Addendum, any information concerning this Addendum given to a particular prospective Applicant, if that information is necessary in submitting Applications, or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective Applicant.

If an award is made, the Agreement Officer (AO) will appoint an Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) at that time to provide technical and administrative oversight of the specific award during implementation.

B. Content and Format of Application Submission

Applicants must submit concept notes to USAID/Nepal at: kathmanduooaexchange@usaid.gov. Further, Applicants must submit concept notes electronically no later than the deadline stated in the cover letter for consideration. Below please find the concept note page and formatting dimensions and limitations:

- **Paper Size:**
 - Letter *or* American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Letter (i.e., 8.5 by 11.0 inches *or* 215.9 millimeters (mm) by 279.4 mm); *or*
 - A4 (i.e., 8.27 inches × 11.7 inches *or* 210mm × 297 mm)
- **Type Size:** 12-point font
- **Font Style:** Times New Roman *or* similar serif typeface
- **Spacing:** Single spaced
- **Margins:** One inch (25.4 mm) top, bottom, left, *and* right
- **Language:** English
- **Page Limitation:** Not to exceed **five pages**. USAID will not consider any pages that exceed the prescribed page limitation. Concepts must be submitted in English. Applicants must provide the following information in concept submissions:

i) COVER PAGE INFORMATION (this section may not exceed 1 page)

1. Title of Proposed Activity.
2. Name and Address of Organization.
3. Contact Point (lead contact name; relevant telephone, fax, e-mail information).
4. Names of other organizations (federal and non-federal) to whom you are submitting and/or have submitted the application and/or who are funding the proposed activity.
5. Lead Institution Name

6. Lead Institution DUNS Number²⁴ (if known):
7. Other Partner(s):
8. Sub-award Organization Name(s):
9. Sub-award Organization DUNS Number(s):
10. Proposed Period of Performance (Estimated Start Month/Year and Estimated End Month/Year):
11. Proposed Project Budget:
12. Overall Concept Objective (1-2 sentences):
13. Type of Organization (e.g., U.S., non-U.S., multilateral, private, for-profit, non-profit etc.)
14. Signature of an authorized representative of the applicant.

ii) DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY (this section may not exceed 5 pages)

A. Alignment with Strategic Objectives and Programming Priorities:

Describe how the proposed approach and activities are aligned with USAID and M/B/IO strategic objectives and programmatic priorities as identified in the APS and associated Addendum.

B. Description of Partnership and Partners

Describe the proposed partnership and how the core partner(s), including institutional strengths, capabilities, resources leveraged, alignment with individual or institutional priorities and mandates, and other appropriate context. Indicate institutional commitment and roles to the proposed activities and their intended outcomes. Describe how the proposed approach to partnership specifically fits the development problem(s) or challenge(s) to be addressed. Describe the role of each partner in developing the Concept Note, including contribution to the following:

- Identification and development of proposed solutions to the problem(s);
- Identification of needs/priorities in improving local capacity of individuals, institutions and/or systems for the opportunity identified
- Identification and development of proposed implementation of the activities;
- Role in decision making regarding the proposed partnership.

Given that substantial collaboration is anticipated between partners at every stage of the proposed activity (including concept development, activity design, and implementation), briefly outline a plan for ensuring effective collaboration and communication between any proposed partners.

C. Description of the Development Problem or Challenge and Proposed Solution(s)

Clearly identify and describe the development problem or challenge to be addressed and provide a thorough description of:

- How the proposed approach and activities advances the evidence base for learning;

²⁴ A DUNS number is a unique nine-character number used to identify your organization. The federal government uses the DUNS number to track how federal money is allocated. For more information, refer to: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

- A description of how the context will influence and shape the approach to an equitable partnership as well as the outputs, outcomes, results, and impact over the life of the proposal, an identification of the most salient risks to success, and proposed actions to mitigate risk;
- The anticipated outputs, outcomes, results, and impact, noting whether these anticipated changes happen at the individual, institutional, and/or systemic level, and how they will be sustained beyond USAID funding;
- How the proposed partnerships, projects, and activities will substantially improve individual, institutional, and/or systemic performance for the opportunity identified within three to five years;

D. Equity and Inclusion

How the proposed approach and activities will ensure equity and inclusion along the dimensions most relevant to the context and at the appropriate levels.

E. Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Summary

Briefly describe (2-3 paragraphs) your CLA and MEL plans, including illustrative indicators, frameworks, and learning questions that will be tracked throughout program implementation and used to modify implementation, as needed. At the concept note stage, it is normal that both the page limitations of the Concept Note and the stage of the concept development limit how much an applicant can describe. However, applicants should strive to illustrate to USAID that they have discussed with partners where and when to gather robust data as part of their activity design and implementation, what uncertainties they anticipate, and how they will be prepared to learn and adapt during the implementation of the proposed activities. This allows the HELIX community to contribute to the global learning and policy dialogue on the role of higher education and research organizations in achieving development outcomes.

When preparing a CLA/MEL plan, the Applicant is highly encouraged to utilize the CLA and MEL principles described in the following USAID toolkits:

- Monitoring (<https://usaidlearninglab.org/monitoring-toolkit>)
- Evaluation (<https://usaidlearninglab.org/evaluation-toolkit>)
- Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (<https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-toolkit>)

CLA and complexity-aware monitoring²⁵ approaches are particularly relevant in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

If invited to submit one, the Full Application will request a more comprehensive CLA/MEL plan, including all components outlined in Automated Directive Services 201 (ADS 201 at <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201>) section 201.3.4.10: A. Activity

²⁵ <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/complexity-aware-monitoring-discussion-note-brief>

MEL Plan. Final indicators will be negotiated between the Apparently Successful Applicant and the requesting M/B/IO.

iii) SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Proposed Estimated Cost and Cost Breakdown (1 page maximum)

Please use the budget template provided in an Attachment A to this APS Addendum.

If invited to submit a Full Application, USAID will request a more comprehensive budget.

2. Contact Information for Proposed Partners (2 page maximum)

Provide contact information for all the core partners in spreadsheet format. Include organization, point of contact name, title, email, and phone numbers, as well as a brief description of each prospective partner's previous work and experience.

3. Letters of Commitment (1 page maximum per letter of commitment)

Applicants may provide a 1-page letter of commitment from each member of the partnership/consortium²⁶.

²⁶ Reminder that applicants must refrain from obtaining a Letter of Commitment from AFU, including during the Concept Notes and Request for Full Applications stages.

SECTION E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. Review of Concept Notes and Full Application

Once a Concept Note has been submitted in response to an Addendum under the APS, USAID/Nepal will conduct an initial review of the Concept Note using the criteria outlined in the Merit Review Criteria and Considerations section of this Addendum.

The purpose of the initial review and related communication is to determine whether USAID wishes to engage in further discussions regarding the proposed approach and activities. The initial review and communication will result in one of three outcomes:

- A decision to forego further consideration of the approach proposed in the Concept Note;
- A decision to provide the Applicant an opportunity to submit a revised Concept Note (this is very rare); OR
- An invitation to engage in more in-depth and specific co-creation discussions aimed at further developing the proposed approach and determining whether to request a Full Application.

B. Co-creation, Shared Responsibility, Collaboration, and Communication

Please see the HELIX APS for information on co-creation, shared responsibility, collaboration, and communication that applies to this AFU Building Capacity activity.

C. Merit Review Criteria and Considerations

USAID/Nepal will use the following merit review criteria to assess Concept Notes in response to the AFU Building Capacity Activity Addendum. Any Concept Note submitted to this Addendum should propose an approach that satisfies these merit review criteria and exhibits the characteristics set forth below.

Concept Notes will be assessed according to the following merit review criteria on an adjectival system in descending order of importance.

Criteria	Criteria Name	Relative order of importance
Criteria 1	Quality, Feasibility, and Sustainability of Proposed Solutions and Impact at Individual, Institutional and/or System-Level	Most Important
Criteria 2	Quality and Capabilities of Strategic Partnership Approach and Collaboration for Local Capacity Development of Individuals, Institutions, and/or Systems	Second Most Important
Criteria 3	Equity and Inclusion	Third Most Important

Criteria 4	Alignment with USAID and M/B/IO Strategic Objectives and Programming Priorities	Least Important
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Criterion 1: Quality, Feasibility, and Sustainability of Proposed Solutions and Impact at Individual, Institutional and/or System-Level: Extent to which the proposed technical solution(s) to achieving objectives/outcomes are technically sound, well-defined, and achievable; likelihood that proposed activities will result in substantially enhanced capacity for individuals, institutions, and/or systems or build the evidence base for higher education and other related systems; and best practices for data, evidence, and learning are integrated into the proposed approach, including, where possible, the generation of evidence to support adaptive implementation and Agency-wide learning.

Note: Concept Notes should include illustrative indicators used to track progress, quality, and impact, note any technical frameworks that should shape the approach to monitoring, evaluation, or learning, and include at least one illustrative learning priority. Note as an NPI addendum, the use of the CBLD-9 Indicator will be required. See more details in Attachment B.

Criterion 2: Quality and Capabilities of Strategic Partnership Approach and Collaboration for Local Capacity Development of Individuals, Institutions, and/or Systems: Extent to which the proposed activity describes a commitment to equitable collaboration and deep partnership between partners at every stage of the concept development, activity design, and implementation; propose appropriate, inclusive, equitable, and effective collaborations with local individuals, institutions, systems, including marginalized groups as defined by the reference to ADS 201 Additional Help; and demonstrate partner commitment to proposed collaboration(s), including a brief synopsis of how each partner will engage within the partnership.

Note: Linked to this criterion is effective youth engagement in intentional and meaningful ways in the design, implementation, and learning components of the activity.

Criterion 3: Equity and Inclusion: Extent to which proposed technical solution demonstrates a clear strategy/vision to create improved outcomes using an intersectional lens to prioritize equity, along the equity dimensions most relevant to the context, and extent to which a diversity of groups, especially marginalized and underrepresented populations²⁷, are actively invited to contribute and participate at every stage of the concept development, activity design, and implementation.

Note: Inclusive development is a critical priority for USAID/Nepal. Concept Notes must take into account the complex socio-cultural dynamics specific to Nepal, and propose an approach to equity and inclusion that includes women, youth, and all marginalized groups, including marginalized castes, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, and people with disabilities. At a minimum, Concept Note should demonstrate considerations for persons with disabilities who comprise at least 15 percent of any given population, gender equality and women's

²⁷ The USAID Education Policy identifies marginalized populations as girls, people affected by or emerging from armed conflict or humanitarian crises, people with disabilities, people in remote or rural areas (including those who lack access to safe water and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, and victims of trafficking.

empowerment, and crisis or conflict-sensitivity²⁸. Illustrative indicators reporting on numbers of beneficiaries reached must report on sex disaggregates and should also include disaggregates to track inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented populations in all contexts. Specific indicators focused on equity and inclusion are encouraged.

Criterion 4: Alignment with USAID and M/B/IO Strategic Objectives and Programming Priorities: Extent to which the proposed partnerships, technical approach aligns with USAID policies and strategies, as relevant to the Addendum opportunity, including but not limited to the Education Policy²⁹, Youth Policy³⁰, Policy Framework³¹, Scientific Research Policy³², and the Indigenous Peoples³³, Disability³⁴, and Gender and Women’s Empowerment Policies³⁵; USAID Mission’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy; other collaborating Bureau or Independent Office Mission(s) and strategic objectives; and partner country strategies, policies, and/or objectives.

USAID/Nepal Note: Specific to this addendum opportunity, most relevant documents include: USAID Higher Education Program Framework³⁶, USAID Nepal Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) 2020-25,³⁷ USAID’s Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach³⁸ and the mission of AFU³⁹.

²⁸ The USAID Education Policy defines conflict sensitivity as the ability of an organization to: 1) understand the context in which the organization operates; 2) understand the two-way interaction between its intervention and that context; and 3) act upon this understanding to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on conflict.

²⁹ <https://www.usaid.gov/education/policy>

³⁰ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_0.pdf

³¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/policyframework>

³² <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/USAID%20Scientific%20Research%20Policy%202012-3-14.pdf>

³³ <https://www.usaid.gov/indigenous-peoples/usaids-policy-on-indigenous-peoples>

³⁴ <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/usaids-disability-policy-paper>

³⁵ <https://www.usaid.gov/GenderEqualityandWomensEmpowermentPolicy>

³⁶ Figure 1 in USAID’s Higher Education Program Framework illustrates the core of higher education as “providing quality and relevant education and workforce training,” “advancing knowledge and research,” and “engaging and strengthening networks and communities.” <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/higher-education-program-framework>

³⁷ USAID/Nepal CDCS: <https://www.usaid.gov/nepal/cdcs>

³⁸ <https://www.youthpower.org/youthpower-our-approach>

³⁹ <http://www.afu.edu.np/about-us>

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices

The USAID Agreement Officer (AO) is the only individual who may legally commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds. Applicants are prohibited from charging or incurring costs to the proposed award prior to receipt of either a fully executed award or a specific, written authorization from the AO. USAID will administer awards in accordance with Parts 700 and 200 of Title 2 of the CFR, and Standard Provisions for U.S./non-U.S. organizations.

B. Type of Award

Cooperative Agreement

C. Additional Information on Award Administration

- ADS Chapter 201 Program Cycle Operational Policy:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/201.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 204 Environmental Procedures:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/204.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 205 Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/205.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 303 Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mab.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 303 Standard Provisions for U.S. organizations:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303maa.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 318 Intellectual Property Rights:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/318.pdf>
- ADS Chapter 579 USAID Development Data:
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/579.pdf>
- Grant and Contract Process: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/grant-and-contract-process>
- USAID Graphic Standards Manual and Partner Co-branding Guide:
<https://www.usaid.gov/branding/gsm>

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

Pramila Dangol
Assistance & Acquisition Specialist
U.S. Agency for International Development
Office of Acquisition and Assistance
USAID,
Maharajgunj
Kathmandu, Nepal
Email: pdangol@usaid.gov

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the Concept Notes/Full Applications submitted under this addendum to the HELIX APS.

[END OF APS Addendum No: 7200AA22APS00001]