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Issue Date: July 18, 2022
Deadline for Question: July 27, 2022 at 5.00 p.m. Eastern Time
Closing Date for Technical Application: September 14, 2022 at 9.00 a.m. Eastern Time

Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72036722RFA00003

Activity Title: USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion

Dear Prospective Applicants:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for a cooperative agreement from qualified entities to implement the **USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion**. Eligibility for this award is not restricted. The total estimated amount is anticipated to be \$20 million.

USAID intends on engaging in a pre-award co-design and 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 subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and selection process. **USAID strongly discourages the use of exclusive agreements with organizations and key personnel as this limits the program's potential to receive the best services.**

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, 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 or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at 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.7.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process using the [Registering to Work with USAID: Main Step-by-Step Guide](https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/trainings-how-work-usaid/how-work-usaid-registering-to-work-usaid) available on <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/trainings-how-work-usaid/how-work-usaid-registering-to-work-usaid> .

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.

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,

-s-

Maria Televantos
Agreement Officer

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SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award 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.

A.1 TITLE OF ACTIVITY

USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion

A.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this **USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion** activity is to improve equitable education outcomes for marginalized¹ youth in grades 6-10. The activity will support local governments to bring out-of-school children into school, increase retention of learners through grade 10, and ensure equitable and quality learning opportunities for marginalized youth.

A.3 BACKGROUND

A broad array of data indicates that Nepal has made considerable progress over the last decades in expanding *access* to basic education (grades 1-8). While key measures of access have improved, the same data indicate that the *quality* of basic and secondary education service delivery has not kept pace and has been hampered by vast inequality. A key measure of the quality of an education system is school completion rates and in Nepal, one out of every 10 students does not complete grade 8. This translates into more than 70,000 out-of-school 12 year olds every year. For the children who complete basic education, only 65 percent will complete grade 10 and less than half of all of those who enroll in school will complete the full secondary cycle (grade 12). This sector-wide inefficiency results in large numbers of children and youth, especially in the most access-poor populations, who are unprepared for the future of work, unable to contribute to and benefit from Nepal’s economic development and who are increasingly caught in a cycle of marginalization and poverty.

There are also significant provincial disparities in education outcomes and rates of out-of-school children (OOSC). Grade 9 and 10 enrollment rates in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces are almost 10 points lower than national averages. Analysis of key indicators by caste/ethnicity, geographic region, and household wealth show that education gains have not been universal and inequities persist. Persistent cultural, social, gender and economic structures have continued the marginalization of certain groups in terms of access to quality public health, education, and livelihood services. Girls are disproportionately more likely to drop out at all levels, nationwide.

¹ Marginalized Groups: People who are typically denied full access to legal protection or social and economic participation and programs (such as police protection, political participation, access to healthcare, education, employment, etc.), whether in practice or in principle, for either historical, cultural, political, or other contextual reasons. Such groups may include but are not limited to: women and girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTI people, displaced persons, economic migrants, indigenous individuals and communities, youth and the elderly, religious minorities such as Muslims, ethnic minorities, Dalits, and people of diverse economic class and political opinions. These groups often suffer from discrimination in the application of laws and policy and/or access to resources, services, and social protection, and may be subject to persecution, harassment, and/or violence.

In response to these inequities in the education sector, Nepal launched a Consolidated Equity Strategy in December 2014 to reduce disparities in access, participation, and learning outcomes for learners in basic and secondary public education through the use of education data for equitable resource allocation and targeted programming. The strategy identified the districts² in Nepal that were lagging in terms of access and participation using a composite Equity in Education Index (Equity Index) calculated using enrollment rates, survival rates, caste/ethnicity, and gender. Initially, the Equity Index also planned to incorporate learning outcomes into the calculation but did not have assessment data at that time. Seven of the 15 districts are in Madhesh and one is from Karnali. Based on the Equity Index, the MoEST supported targeted government grants to municipalities and technical assistance to support the development of Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs) at the municipal level. These plans were developed by municipalities to inform need-based planning at the local government level to improve equitable education.

However, as of January 2021, only 13 percent of targeted municipalities had endorsed their ESIPs. A recent Equity Strategy evaluation found that most municipalities spent a bulk of their funds on back-to-school campaigns, school meals, and girls hygiene products instead of focusing on improving learning outcomes, and the ESIPs did not always address the root causes of inequality. The evaluation found that over the period of performance of the Equity Strategy, gender gaps and access outcomes improved in the 15 targeted districts, and 256,000 out-of-school children (OOSC) reintegrated into school³. Additionally, the percentage of OOSC in the five lowest ranking districts was reduced from 10.6 percent in 2015/2016 to 6.2 percent in 2019/2020. However, the evaluation found that this rise of enrollment in the lower basic level of school is associated with a decrease in the survival rates indicating that while more children may have been enrolled in school, they were not staying in school.

The MoEST also introduced a set of minimum enabling conditions to provide schools as an initiative to increase need-based support to schools to reduce disparities in learning environments, which are known as the five prioritized minimum enabling conditions (PMECs)⁴. While the number of schools meeting all PMEC requirements is unavailable by province, EMIS data shows that only 61.4 percent of schools in Madhesh and 77.6 percent of schools in Karnali have a toilet. Additionally, only 67.3 percent of schools in Madhesh and 77.4 percent of schools in Karnali have drinking water. The SSDP final evaluation revealed that only 13.4 percent of all community schools nationally meet all 5 PMECs and 63.6 percent meet 3 of the PMECs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated inequalities in education. Schools in Nepal were closed for nearly two academic years, with distance learning opportunities primarily available to urban populations and secondary level students. School closures and the resulting loss of educational opportunities increase the risk for marginalized populations to fall behind in school and not return. Reduction in household income also potentially impacted willingness for families to send their children to school.

² Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Bara, Doti, Parsa, Achham, Saptari, Dolpa, Rolpa, Bajhang, Siraha, Rasuwa, Taplejung, and later identified municipalities

³ [Equity Strategy Evaluation](#)

⁴ Student-teacher ratio, classroom space, set of textbooks per child per year, separate girls and boys toilets plus water, and book/learning corners in all classrooms

A.3.1 MAIN CHALLENGES

The main challenges section intentionally takes a comprehensive approach and describes the full range of inequalities and barriers faced by youth in Nepal, and the stumbling blocks to reducing inequalities, such as gender, caste, socioeconomic, cultural, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and geography. USAID does not expect recipients to propose interventions that will address all inequalities and associated barriers for youth in each province. USAID expects that the recipient will use and analyze data shared by USAID (and/or gather localized data) to make informed choices as to which of these barriers are most relevant to the youth in the municipalities the activity will work in and provide justification for the set of interventions most appropriate for achieving the desired results.

Access and retention in the education system at the higher grades (upper basic and lower secondary; grades 6-10) remains a challenge overall, and, even more so, for the youth from most marginalized communities.

Lack of prioritization on keeping adolescents in school and addressing disparities

While measures of access to basic education services have made important gains, these gains have not been universal and some key demographics still face barriers to accessing education. For example, learners from Dalit communities have the lowest access amongst the different social groups to basic education at 88 percent of age-appropriate learners, while 99 percent of Brahmin have access.⁵ There is also a stark disparity in access to secondary education based on economic status, with the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for secondary for the poorest students at only 58 percent, but almost all youth in the highest quintile accessing secondary education (GER=98.5 percent). Data shows that learners with disabilities also face barriers to access. Only 0.3 percent of the school-age population enrolled in basic and secondary education have a disability, significantly lower than the estimated 1.94 percent of Nepal's population that has a disability. Further, in contrast to the gender parity in public schools, girls' enrollment rates in institutional (private schools) lag behind the rates for boys by 5 to 7 percentage points in all provinces due to the perceived quality of education in public schools.

MoEST interventions have focused on enrollment at the basic level rather than providing adequate support to stay in school beyond grade 8, leading to high levels of dropout later in the education system. The causes of dropout are likely to be different for girls and boys. The USAID Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment found the most serious barriers girls face are heavy burdens of household chores, arranged marriage and elopement, menstruation, and parents' unequal treatment of daughters compared to sons and failure to value their education.⁶ In contrast, adolescent boys often do poorly and drop out because of drug or alcohol use and because of the pressures and responsibilities involved in having to contribute to their families' economic well-being, either by earning money in Nepal or by migrating for a job.⁷

⁵ MoEST, Education Sector Analysis 2021

⁶ [USAID Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment](#)

⁷ [USAID Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment](#)

Child Marriage

Marriage in Nepal is legal for a person who is 20 years of age, however UNICEF defines child marriage as persons below the age of 18 in any formal or informal union.⁸ While data from the 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) indicate that the child marriage rates fell to 19 percent for girls and 5 percent for boys in the 15-19 age range⁹, Nepal still has had one of the highest rates of child marriage in the region, with the national rate of child marriage being 32 percent for women 20-24 years old.¹⁰ In Madhesh, the MICS found that 46 percent of female respondents aged 20-24 had been married before the age of 18, the highest among all provinces, with Karnali following at 44.3 percent of women aged 20-24 years married before the age of 18. Child marriage disproportionately affects girls. In Karnali Province, child marriage rate for boys is 17 percent, the highest among all provinces, with Madhesh Pradesh following at 7.8 percent. The State of Social Inclusion Report in Nepal shows caste and ethnicity differences in child marriage rates with Madheshi Dalit women have the highest percentage who were married before age 18 (73.5 percent), followed by Madheshi Other Castes (69.5 percent) and Muslim (60.0 percent), based on responses by women aged 15-49.¹¹ When disaggregated even further, the study found child marriages rates of 87.7 percent of the Dom caste and 88.8 percent of the Halkhor caste, both part of the Madheshi Dalits caste. While the law dictates that child marriage is illegal in Nepal, in reality, it is difficult to enforce this law.

Field work findings from the USAID Nepal Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment noted that girls who get married while in grades 7-8 are likely to drop out of school, while girls who delay marriage until grades 10-11 are more likely to obtain their Secondary Education Examination (G-10) or SEE and may continue to grade 12. Adolescents mainly discussed elopement as a possible preemptive response to an unwanted arranged marriage facilitated by parents, rather than as a "love marriage." The overwhelming majority of girls and boys in focus groups discussions agreed that education before marriage gives girls a better life. Many interventions aiming to decrease child marriage, have increased students', parents' and communities' knowledge on the legal age for marriage and harmful effects of CEFM. However, deeply rooted cultural norms around child marriage, particularly the practice of dowry in Madhesh Province where the cost of dowry is lower for younger girls, perpetuate this harmful practice and barrier to education. While the pressure to get married early is on girls, there is parental pressure on boys to engage in the labor system to pay for their sister's dowry. Child marriage is a product of economic, cultural and social influences that negatively affects both boys and girls.

Menstruation and Chhaupadi

The USAID Nepal Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment identified menstruation at school as a recurrent stressor for girls, leading to reduced school attendance. At a practical level, in order to manage menstruation hygienically, women and girls must have access to water, pain relievers, sanitation and convenient disposal/cleaning facilities. They require somewhere private and safe to change their sanitary cloths, pads and clothes; clean water and soap for washing their hands and the

⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

⁹ GoN, 2019

¹⁰ https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/11081/file/Nepal_percent20MICS_percent202019_percent20Final_percent20Report.pdf

¹¹ [State of Social Inclusion Report in Nepal](#)

used cloths; and facilities for safely disposing of used materials or a place to dry them if reusable.¹² A UNICEF study that looked at menstruation data in three districts¹³ found on average 18.7 percent of girls missed a day of school in the past three months due to menstruation, with 41.5 percent in Parsa.¹⁴ The study found menstruation-related barriers to education include: toilets were often not clean or private so most girls did not change their products or use the toilets at school; girls that left school in order to go home to change usually remained at home and did not return to school that day; and slightly less than half of the girls, 45 percent, felt uncomfortable sitting near the front of the classroom when they had their periods, and 37.5 percent would never write on the board when menstruating. Half of the girls reported that it was difficult to concentrate on their classes due to discomfort, pain, and fear of leakage. Additionally, the school curriculum does not fully explain the menstruation process to students. Adolescent girls in school described menstruation as a ‘normal healthy process’, however many of the girls did not know the cause or reason for their menstruation, including 76 percent of the girls in Parsa.¹⁵

Additionally, 'Chhaupadi' is a deeply rooted socio-cultural practice followed in the mid and far western regions within Nepal, particularly in Karnali. In such practice, the menstruating women and girls are considered 'impure', and they have to follow several restrictions and barriers. In communities practicing Chhaupadi, the menstruating women and girls have to stay in isolated places like Chhaupadi (menstruation shed), or separate rooms in the house. In households that practice Chhaupadi, girls menstruating are restricted from entering their home, consuming nutritious foods, physically touching male family members, using similar toilets and water taps, participating in social functions, and other essential daily activities.¹⁶ Research on the practice of Chhaupadi and education in three districts of Karnali found that out of the 37.8 percent of respondents who do not attend school during menstruation (including girls who dropped out, never attended and absent during menstruation),¹⁷ 15 percent have to stay in a separate place strictly due to the practice of Chhaupadi in those days, so they remain at home.

Harmful Socio-Cultural Norms

Socio-cultural norms and lack of parental engagement in education are known to be barriers to accessing education, in particular retention for girls at the secondary level. The USAID Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment found both boys and girls spoke repeatedly about “discrimination between sons and daughters,” in two main areas: (1) Parents privileging sons' educations and reluctance to support options for girls other than marriage; and (2) Other kinds of gender discrimination in families posing indirect barriers to girls' education. In the former, daughters are more burdened with household chores and have less time for studies than sons, and sons are provided with pocket money, tiffin (lunch boxes), and stationery/school supplies, but daughters often are not.¹⁸ In the latter area, once daughters reach puberty, parents restrict their movement, reasoning that they are grown up and might elope or fall prey to violence or bad influences, although sons are allowed to

¹² <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/sites/unicef.org.nepal/files/2018-07/607531012327148357-analysis-of-menstrual-hygiene-practices-in-nepal.pdf>, p 3

¹³ Achham, Bajura and Parsa

¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/sites/unicef.org.nepal/files/2018-07/607531012327148357-analysis-of-menstrual-hygiene-practices-in-nepal.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/sites/unicef.org.nepal/files/2018-07/607531012327148357-analysis-of-menstrual-hygiene-practices-in-nepal.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.actionworksnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/A-Research-Report-on-Chhaupadi-and-Mobility-1.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.actionworksnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/A-Research-Report-on-Chhaupadi-and-Education-1.pdf>

¹⁸ USAID Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Assessment

“roam here and there.” Additionally, daughters sometimes get less food and access to healthcare than sons and parents are reluctant to spend money on sanitary pads or pain medication for cramps. In addition, Muslim communities primarily send their girls to madrasas for education. While technically guided by national education standards, madrasas in practice are still not integrated into the state-run and supervised education system. They often do not teach the national curriculum or continue passed the basic level which results in a low transition rate from primary to secondary education for Muslim girls.

Social and cultural norms around youth with disabilities affect parents and communities' attitudes around access and participation in school for these children. A study found that access to education for children with disabilities was restricted mainly by long distances to schools, lack of mobility and parental attitudes¹⁹. Outreach to parents of children with disabilities and linking them with government services, such as disability cards and school scholarships can support closing the gap on access. Teachers in classrooms do not always have the skills needed to ensure respect, acceptance, inclusion and participation of learners with disabilities in their classrooms.

There is a lack of information about the experiences of LGBTQI+ youth in schools. Focus group discussions shows LGBTQI+ youth challenges such as physical danger from homophobic and transphobic bullying, poor mental health from bullying within one's community, in school or by family members, limited access to education, discriminatory attitudes of teachers, and absence of an LGBTQI+-friendly curriculum for students and the lack of toilets for transgender people in educational settings. Homophobic attitudes in education officials, teachers, and students are mainly shaped by a lack of understanding of gender and sexuality. Participants noted that homophobic remarks and physical harassment is common and practiced by teachers, staff, and fellow students.²⁰

Pressure to enter the formal and informal labor market early

Among seven million children between the ages of 5 and 17 in Nepal, 1.1 million children (15.3 percent) are found to be engaged in child labor, with female children more likely to be engaged in child labor (17 percent) than that of male children (14 percent).²¹ Child labor is the highest in Karnali (24.6 percent), with Madhesh Province at 11.5 percent, compared to the province with the lowest percent in Bagmati at 8.9 percent. Among the total children engaged in child labor, about 87 percent are engaged in the agriculture sector while 13 percent are in other sectors. The percentage of children engaged in child labor decreases as the wealth index increases - with 25 percent of children in the lowest wealth quintile engaged in labor compared to 5 percent of children in the highest wealth quintile.

Boys are typically under more social and household pressure to leave secondary school for labor opportunities than girls. Overall, the likelihood of labor migration is high among male youth with low levels of schooling, at about 50 percent, but the figure declines in an almost linear fashion for individuals who have completed more than six years of schooling. For female youth, the likelihood of labor migration is low throughout the distribution of years of schooling, with a small increase after

¹⁹ Cited by: Ministry of Education, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2016). *Global Initiative on Out of School Children - Nepal Country Study*. Kathmandu: UNICEF.

²⁰ Being LGBT in Asia: Nepal Country Report (2014), UNDP, USAID.

²¹ Nepal Child Labor Report 2021, page 13

12 years of schooling. For labor migration to India for boys, the likelihood of migration is relatively high at low levels of schooling but decreases sharply after six years of schooling.²² For labor migration to external destinations besides India, the likelihood of migration for boys increases with years of schooling for up to 10 years of schooling but decreases with years of schooling after that. For female youth, the likelihood of labor migration is low throughout the distribution of years of schooling, with a small increase after 12 years of schooling²³. For female youth, those who are married are less likely to migrate, while those who have higher levels of education attainment, who come from richer households, or who reside in a community with a higher level of development are more likely to migrate. For male youth, those with higher levels of education (Secondary Education Examination or higher) are less likely to migrate. Compared to youth from the Brahmin community, those from the Dalit and Muslim communities are more likely to migrate.

Global evidence shows that conditional cash transfers can provide the financial stimulus necessary for low income families to send their children to school and increase access.²⁴ While the GON's scholarship schemes contributed toward increased enrollment for targeted students,²⁵ the majority of parents feel the scholarship amount provided is insufficient, with the scholarship amount (450-600 rupees per year for the Girls and Dalit scholarship) not able to cover all school-related costs.²⁶ A study looking at higher value scholarships (\$7 to \$19) found that the scholarship decreased the number of hours girls aged 8-16 worked per week in Nepal, from nearly 23 hours to 7.5 hours weekly. However, the amount of scholarship does not fully alleviate the parental pressure that students face to engage in the labor market and drop out of school. For example, the ILO Child Labor report shows that children ages 5 and 17 (working and receiving wages) make on an average NPR 3,072 per week.²⁷

For 77 percent of households, the amount of remittance received was higher than the investments made for migration, slightly more than 20 percent continued to incur losses, in that the remittance they received was lower than the costs incurred in funding the migration of family members.²⁸ Most poor households cannot take bank loans to pay for migration fees because the only form of asset they have is ailani land (unregistered public land, which cannot be used as collateral²⁹). In terms of caste/ethnicity, a higher percentage of Tarai Dalits incurred losses while Hill Dalits fared relatively better with their net benefits and losses comparable to other Hill Castes. These differences between districts and caste/ethnic groups are possibly due to the country of destination, total duration of migration, and other circumstances such as type of employment, level of skills and education, and networks. Out of the top ten districts with the most migrant workers, four fall within Madhesh Province: Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, and Saptari, districts with a higher percentage of

²² <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29682/124999-WP-4-4-2018-16-2-18-YouthLaborMigrationinNepalFULL.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, page 12_

²³ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29682/124999-WP-4-4-2018-16-2-18-YouthLaborMigrationinNepalFULL.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> page 10

²⁴ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED573790.pdf>

²⁵ Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence, page 17

²⁶ <https://www.doe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/0abf8e73c50b2cca90dc2b43e2eeb848.pdf>

²⁷ https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_784225/lang--en/index.htm

²⁸ <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Labour-Migration-and-the-Remittance-Economy.pdf>, p 11

²⁹ <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Labour-Migration-and-the-Remittance-Economy.pdf>, p 10

marginalized population.³⁰ Migrants from wealthy backgrounds pay less than poor households for the same destination since the latter, in this case Tarai Dalits, are almost entirely dependent on intermediaries, mainly *dalals* (recruitment agents), at every step of the recruitment process, while the better-off households tend to be educated and have better social networks which enable them to avoid exploitation. A greater proportion of Tarai Dalits and Muslims also had loans acquired at higher interest rates (average above 30 percent interest rate), constraining their ability to invest their remittances. Additionally, returnees from external destinations besides India are 23 percentage points less likely to be employed than nonmigrants. The weak labor market integration of returnees from other external destinations may be because these returnees expect to migrate out for labor again soon.³¹

Inequalities widen during shocks to the system

Furthermore, natural disasters, such as the April 2015 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated existing inequalities related to access and participation in education. While the MoEST has pivoted to supporting out-of-school youth through the development of online/offline/media-based and printed learning materials, unequal access to technology, the internet, and digital learning portals will widen the gap between those who are able to shift to remote learning and those who cannot. During school closures, out-of-school children and youth may face increased risk of child labor, early marriage, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence. The impact of school closures may be especially harsh for girls, who are often relied upon as caretakers for the rest of the household.

Poor quality education leads to low learning outcomes

The average learning adjusted years of schooling (LAYS) for youth aged 18 years is only 6.9 years although students attend an average of 11.7 years of school. The 2019 Grade 10 National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA), a curriculum-based systematic evaluation of student learning outcomes, found that students are struggling to acquire minimum learning levels and a majority of students are not able to learn what is taught in all subjects, and have achieved or mastered less than 50 percent of the curriculum in all subjects.³² The report shows variation in the performance of province-level achievement, with Madhesh and Karnali as the lowest level learning achievement. For example in Math, the NASA showed that Grade 10 students in Karnali had the highest percentage of students (33 percent) performing below minimum proficiency learning level, compared to 11 percent in Bagmati and Gandaki. Madhesh Province also lagged behind at 21 percent of Grade 10 students unable to meet the minimum learning level in Math. Nationally, students performed poorly in science; however, Madhesh and Karnali provinces have 74 percent and 76 percent of students not able to meet the minimum learning standards, respectively, and have the highest number of students performing in the lower proficiency level out of all Provinces.

The 2019 NASA identified mother tongue language as a factor affecting learning outcomes. There was a significant difference in the achievement of the students who use Nepali as their mother tongue compared to the achievement of the students who use other languages as their mother tongue. The

³⁰ Migration Report 2020

³¹ Youth Labor Migration, page 30

³² https://www.ero.gov.np/upload_file/files/post/1614876114_221299301_nasa_percent20report_percent202077_percent20for_percent20web.pdf

report also showed that ethnicity affects learning outcomes. Students from Brahmin and Chhetri communities are on average higher achievers whereas students from Dalit communities are achieving lower scores. Gendered differences were also found between subjects at the national level in the NASA report, with the achievement of boys above the national average in Science, Math, and English, whereas girls performed below the national average in these subjects except in Nepali. For example, in Grade 10, 23.2 percent of girls fell into the lowest proficiency for math compared to boys at 13.2 percent. Disparities are also seen in rural versus urban areas in correlation to learning outcomes. While there is a lack of performance data for children with disabilities, qualitative data suggests that their specific learning needs are not being met. An estimated 30 percent of out-of-school children have some type of disability, and for students in school, disabilities can often go undetected, leaving them at a disadvantage.

Teacher quality is the biggest obstacle to advancing students' learning. Pedagogy within the schools has not been adjusted consistently to reflect child-centered, inclusive practices, with teachers often lacking the tools, guidance, or instructional support to tailor instruction and support student needs. The NASA report found that teachers' attendance at school also affected the learning outcomes of students as students with teachers who would arrive late to class and leave early, or not attend at all, was correlated with lower achievement levels of students. When it comes to regular feedback from teachers, there was a statistically significant difference between students who received regular feedback from teachers and those who never received feedback.

Gender- and ethnicity- based violence and discrimination in schools also remains an issue, with a recent evaluation showing that 81 percent of students report that they had seen or heard of an incidence of violence.³³ A shortage of trained teachers in disability inclusive education, insufficient learning materials in accessible formats, insufficient caregivers training, and need for school level screening are some of the gaps identified in providing access to quality education to learners with disabilities.

Deployment of teachers to schools is also not equitable. The number of positions of permanent, temporary, and *Rahat* teachers has been kept unchanged in the central budget for many years and MoEST is expecting local governments or schools to compensate for shortcomings from their own resources. Yet not all local governments have the capacity to compensate and recruit more personnel, meaning that economically poor schools have a higher student to teacher ratio.

Risks to Education under the Federal Structure

During the transition to federalism, education was cited as a key justification for the decentralization of authority in an effort to improve internal efficiency and give local governments the opportunity to take care of their more marginalized children.³⁴ Federalism provides an opportunity to bring government services closer to its constituents, increasing responsiveness and equity. However, while national laws and frameworks are robust, they are often poorly implemented at municipalities and are sometimes hindered by locally-specific cultural beliefs and entrenched harmful practices, particularly in regard to the enforcement of regulations regarding discrimination and violence in schools. Local

³³ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/press-releases/eight-out-10-children-nepal-experience-violent-discipline-unicef>

³⁴ UNESCO Nepal, 2015

nonformal power dynamics and discriminatory norms can affect participation and significantly influence municipal actors with budgetary/planning authority. The legal and policy environment for gender equality and social inclusion is strong in the education sector, but there exist key gaps when it comes to monitoring progress and holding stakeholders accountable for changes. Nepal has made significant efforts in gender responsive budgeting, however its effectiveness is weak at a subnational level in addressing gaps or achieving widespread adoption. In addition, there are no responsive budgeting structures related to social inclusion.

Federalism is a monumental undertaking and in Nepal involves central, provincial, and local government institutions and municipalities that are understaffed and often have insufficient capacity and support to execute their roles and responsibilities. The School Education Sector Plan and Joint Review meetings and associated annual fiduciary assessment flag concerns about local government capacity in planning, budgeting, and accountability. Furthermore, the Government of Nepal (GON) has yet to pass the Federal Education Act detailing roles and responsibilities in education for newly formed municipal and provincial officials. This has caused confusion of responsibilities and authorities, prevented the development and passage of municipal education legislation and policies, and prevented effective management of schools and in particular management of teachers at the local level. Additionally, support structures and authorities may be weakened or unclear in light of federalization. For example, prior to federalization, girls' education networks chaired by the District Education Officer were active in several districts, and comprised relevant local authorities, teachers' organizations, NGOs and civil society organizations representing disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and youth representatives. However, since 2017, these district level structures have been dismantled, and the individuals with expertise and experience in gender issues often transferred to different roles.

A.4 LINKS TO THE USAID EDUCATION POLICY AND USAID/NEPAL COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY (CDCS) and USAID PROGRAMMING

Promoting equity and inclusion is one of the six key principles in the USAID Education Policy that drive decision-making and investment into partner country education programming. The Policy posits that USAID investments should reinforce policies and procedures that promote equitable access to quality education, the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities and gender equality in education.³⁵ Another key principle, strengthening systems and developing capacity in local institutions, is rooted in the belief that building capacity of the stakeholders within the national education system is essential for sustaining learning and educational outcomes. Anchored in these principles, this activity will also directly support three of the four Policy key priority areas:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.

³⁵ <https://www.usaid.gov/education/policy>

- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.

The USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity will contribute to USAID/Nepal's [Country Development Cooperation Strategy](#) (CDCS) strategic approach to support the transition to federalism, advance inclusion, and integrate resilience into outcomes. Specifically, the activity will support Development Objective 3: Inclusive Health and Education Systems Strengthened and directly address the Intermediate Results (IR) IR 3.1: "Quality of health and education services improved" and IR 3.2 Equitable Access to Health and Education Services Improved.

This CDCS's approach will reinforce country ownership on laws and policies in place related to equity and inclusion and support local systems to achieve results that support these objectives. The Activity will strengthen GON capacity and systems required for implementing interventions that contribute to equity and inclusion in education. Through Objective 3 of this activity, USAID/Nepal will provide support to the provincial and local governments to implement these interventions with limited support to the central level.

USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will coordinate closely with all USAID/Nepal Education Development Office (EDO) led interventions and build off previous successes and lessons learned. Specifically, USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion is intended to coordinate closely with USAID's Early Grade Learning (EGL) activity which will work with municipalities on their local education sector plans in many of the same municipalities that the Activity will be working in. The Activity will build off lessons learned from the USAID Reading for All activity in disability inclusive education. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will complement USAID's Government to Government (G2G) support through the Multi-Donor Joint Financing Arrangement (JFA) to support implementation of the GON's associated Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). The Activity will also support the JFA's interventions in supporting the MoEST to plan, budget, and implement these associated DLIs related to equity and inclusion. The Activity will also closely coordinate with the USAID Local Systems Strengthening for Reducing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) activity, which provides technical assistance to municipalities to plan, budget, implement, and measure reducing child marriage within their communities. R-CEFM works in six palikas in Madhesh Province and is developing a Palika guidance document on reducing CEFM.

A.5 THEORY OF CHANGE AND CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS

USAID posits that:

- If local governments reduce barriers to accessing education for marginalized youth; and
- If the quality and relevance of education for marginalized youth improves;
- Then equitable education outcomes for marginalized youth will improve.

Critical Assumptions: The following are a list of critical assumptions and known factors that will affect the equitable education outcomes of the activity that should be taken into account in design and implementation of the activity:

- The federal structure and the frequent transfer of government personnel necessitate the need for periodic or multiple training refreshers during implementation to accommodate new government personnel.

- School closures are possible as Nepal is still in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nepal is also one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to natural disasters which could cause further disruption to the school year. Approaches will incorporate educational strategies and management practices to adaptively manage and operate during normal and emergency situations.
- Barriers to accessing education and factors impacting quality of education service delivery will vary greatly between provinces and municipalities; as such, adaptive and context specific solutions will need to be utilized.

A.6 GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AND TARGET POPULATION

The activity will be primarily implemented in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces and will support all community schools that have grade 6-10 classes, approximately 1,790 schools³⁶. In the event of an emergency, such as a natural disaster, the activity may be required to pivot to respond to education needs of youth in other provinces. All municipalities in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces should be supported under Objective 3, targeting municipalities with greater levels of inequity first. When determining the most appropriate technical approach, the recipient should prioritize context-specific activities from among the interventions deployed under Objectives 1 and 2. For example, while Karnali and Madhesh Provinces both have low educational outcomes and enrollment compared to the rest of the country, the barriers to education vary greatly between these provinces and across municipalities (e.g. the needs of youth in municipalities along the Nepal-Indian border versus youth living in the Hill or Tarai regions). USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion must take into account these differences and present solutions that are contextually appropriate, data driven, adaptive, and responsive to emergencies, for each province.

For the purposes of this activity, USAID/Nepal defines marginalized youth in grades 6-10 who are currently enrolled in school or not enrolled in school but are of the school going age for grades 6-10. This may include girls and boys from extremely poor families and remote areas, learners from marginalized castes and ethnicities especially Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesi other castes and Muslims, child brides, boys and girls participating in child labor, LGBTQI+ youth, non-binary youth, and youth with disabilities.

A.7 ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

In order to improve equitable educational outcomes for marginalized youth, USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will pursue the following objectives:

- (a) Objective 1: Reduce barriers to access and retention in grade 6-10**
- (b) Objective 2: Improve quality of education for marginalized students in grade 6-10**
- (c) Objective 3: Ensure quality implementation of disbursement linked indicators related to equity and inclusion activities under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology's School Education Sector Plan**

³⁶ EMIS 2020 Flash 2 Report

A.7.1 OBJECTIVE 1: Reduce barriers to access and retention in grade 6-10.

Given that Madhesh and Karnali Provinces have the lowest enrollment in upper basic and lower secondary, highest drop out, and lowest learning outcomes, USAID seeks to support a flexible and multi-pronged activity that will reduce barriers to access for those out of school, and support retention in school for learners in grades 6-10. If successful, enrollment, retention, re-entry, and grade transition rates will increase, and drop-out rates will decrease for marginalized learners.

To achieve this objective, the activity will address the multiple, compounding barriers that limit access, retention, and participation for the most marginalized youth. As outlined in the Main Challenges section, language, caste/ethnicity, socio-economic status, geographic location, disability, socio-cultural norms, parental engagement and gender including sexual orientation and gender identity can serve as barriers to equitable access, retention, and inclusive participation in Nepali schools. In particular, at the secondary level, financial barriers and pressures to migrate for employment or participate in household labor or informal labor markets are key factors that propel drop out.

The activity will work with municipalities and other stakeholders to identify evidence-based interventions that address the root causes of such barriers and support programming that is responsive to the specific needs of each municipality. Interventions proposed will build on local evidence and previously tested approaches in Nepal, including with youth-led and youth-serving organizations.

A.7.2 OBJECTIVE 2: Improve quality of education for marginalized students in grades 6-10.

Enrollment and attendance in school does not automatically lead to learning.³⁷ A recent analysis of the education system in Nepal suggests the primary barriers to improving learning outcomes are: a lack of schools meeting minimum primary enabling standards to guide quality learning environment, quality of instruction, such as reliance on teacher-centered pedagogical approaches, little time on task, low pedagogical knowledge on core subjects, and insufficient attention paid to lower performing students.³⁸

Currently only 64 percent of community schools nationally meet the PMECs that serve as a measure of the quality of the learning environment. In particular, Karnali and Madesh Province schools rank low in terms of meeting minimum requirements for water, sanitation, and hygiene requirements and in terms of appropriate student-teacher ratio. Given that Madhesh and Karnali Provinces have some of the lowest learning outcomes, USAID seeks to support a flexible and multi-pronged activity that will improve the quality of the learning environment and the use of relevant pedagogical approaches for learners in grades 6-10 in these provinces. If successful, national assessment outcomes in these grades will improve for marginalized learners.

³⁷ USAID Education Policy, 2018.

³⁸ Nepal Education Sector Analysis, MoEST 2021

A.7.3 OBJECTIVE 3: Ensure quality implementation of disbursement linked indicators related to equity and inclusion activities under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology’s School Education Sector Plan

The MoEST finalized their new ten year School Education Sector Plan in 2022. This plan includes four main objectives, including “To enhance the quality and relevance of overall school education and ensure minimum learning achievement in each child” and “To ensure equitable access to and participation of all children, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities.” To support achievement of objectives under this plan, Nepal’s education Development Partners, including USAID, Asian Development Bank, European Union, Finland, Global Partnership for Education, JICA, Norway, UNICEF, and the World Bank, will develop a Joint Financing Arrangement and associated Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). Milestones under the DLIs will be jointly financed through results-based financing mechanisms. USAID intends to support, along with other donors, key results-based financing milestones to improve equity and access to education for children from marginalized groups. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will provide technical and operational support to local governments to support effective implementation, achievement, and reporting on progress of identified DLI activities aimed at improving equity and inclusion in education. While DLIs are currently being finalized, past examples of DLIs that specifically target equity and inclusion include the implementation of pro-poor scholarships, increasing number of schools meeting PMECs, reducing the number of OOSC. USAID envisions that this activity will not only directly implement activities and provide complementary activities that will support the GON in achieving their objectives under the SESP and specifically DLIs, but also provide technical assistance to local governments to implement, track, and report on identified activities under the SESP DLIs. Activities include providing technical support and orientation and interpretation of associated Program Implementation Manual guidelines associated with DLIs, providing training to education actors on quality implementation of activities, support to schools and local governments in developing DLI activity monitoring and reporting tools for milestones not captured in the EMIS system. The recipient will likely need embedded staff at cluster or municipal levels to support this objective. If successful, the execution of DLI-linked conditional grants will improve and the number of municipalities reporting progress on DLIs annually will increase.

A.8 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A.8.1 GENDER EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)

Historical and structural reasons have resulted in a highly hierarchical stratification of Nepali society with differential access to economic, political, and socio-cultural resources, which has resulted in marginalization of groups of people.³⁹ Nepal is a patriarchal society with a well-ingrained caste system that affects equity and shapes who accesses and benefits from the education system. The Background and Challenges paragraphs in Section A highlight the main drivers and dimensions of inequality in the education sector. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is an integral part of USAID/Nepal's work, and specifically in this activity, and gender integration is a mandatory consideration in all USAID programming. Applicants are required to take GESI issues into

³⁹ MoEST, Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal, 2014

consideration in designing their technical approach to USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion and highlight GESI indicators and evaluation and learning questions in their MEL plan.

A.8.2 HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN APPROACH

Human-centered design (HCD) is a way of thinking that places the people we are trying to serve and other important stakeholders at the center of the design and implementation process. HCD was developed in the private sector to integrate business and technology around human needs.⁴⁰ The HCD development of new ideas and solutions is grounded in an understanding of the needs, behaviors and context of the people who will interact with the final product, service or policy. Embedded within the HCD discipline are a number of methods that help organizations engage with people on a deeper level and assist in making sense of what they see, hear, experience and learn as a result of interacting with the end users. HCD methodology uses a variety of tools that support the building of ideas so that they can be tested with or used as a starting point to co-create with the people for whom you are designing. HCD is anchored in the principle that in order to create or co-create solutions to address the root causes of problems, one must deeply understand the people affected by the problem.⁴¹ USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion must use an HCD approach when engaging with municipalities and other stakeholders to determine what interventions are best suited to address the root causes of inequality and exclusion in education.

A.8.3 UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will approach all interventions using principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), based upon the premise that all people learn differently and as a result, the activity needs to provide learners with pathways to (1) be engaged, motivated and to learn through multiple means, (2) receive information in various ways, and (3) express their learning in multiple ways.

A.8.4 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Genuine social transformation for Nepali youth to access equitable education will require youth involvement in the decision making process at the individual, community, and institutional levels. Youth engagement will necessitate a holistic, Positive Youth Development⁴² (PYD) approach where young people are treated as equal partners with adults - about the issues that affect them directly. Further, the recipient will be encouraged to engage young people specifically from the marginalized communities in the development of their Concept Notes and throughout the life of the activity. USAID invites the recipient to share innovative approaches to meaningful youth participation within the activity.

A.8.5. FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

⁴⁰ [https://www.usaid.gov/cii/human-centered-design#:~:text=Human percent2Dcentered percent20design percent20\(HCD\),and percent20technology percent20around percent20human percent20needs.](https://www.usaid.gov/cii/human-centered-design#:~:text=Human%20centered%20design%20(HCD),and%20technology%20around%20human%20needs.)

⁴¹ <https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/5-ways-human-centered-design-can-improve-work/?elq=2d11b72dd55e84e4d9d9c9db28d4ebd244&elqCampaignId=7344&elqaid=8741&elqat=1&elqTrackId=94e97d96ad62453f97c4c730870ac5e9>

⁴² <https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development-pyd-framework>

Interventions to be implemented should be flexible and be adaptive to change in the operating environment as Nepal is routinely struck by disasters and shocks. Similarly, due to shocks, the recipient may need to shift emphasis between and within activity objectives to: concentrate resources where the opportunities to make progress are greatest, refine programming in response to knowledge obtained through learning exercises and accommodate shifts that have taken place. The recipient should be able to pivot activity operations to capture opportunities and address complexities as they emerge. By remaining agile, the recipient can leverage best practices and resources to maximize impact and program effectiveness.

[END OF SECTION A]

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

B.1 ESTIMATE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE AND NUMBER OF AWARDS CONTEMPLATED

USAID intends to award one Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide up to \$20,000,000.00 in total USAID funding over a five-year period.

B.2 PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The anticipated period of performance is five years.

B.3 SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

Consistent with ADS 303.3.11, USAID/Nepal will be substantially involved during the implementation of this Cooperative Agreement. The specific areas of USAID involvement will include, but are not limited to:

1. **Approval of the Recipient's Annual Work Plans:** The Recipient must prepare and provide the annual work plan for the Agreement Officer Representative's (AOR's) approval. This also includes the initial implementation plan. Any significant changes to the plan will also require additional approval from the AOR.
2. **Approval of specified Key Personnel:** Key Personnel positions will be identified and stated in the award. The Recipient must request prior approval from the USAID Agreement Officer (AO) for the replacement of key personnel or changes in the key personnel positions. The only key personnel positions mandated under this award will be the Chief of Party (COP) and Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP); however, applicants can propose additional key personnel positions.
3. **Agency and Recipient Collaboration or Joint Participation:**
 - a. *Approval of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:* The AOR will review and approve the Recipient's monitoring and evaluation and learning (MEL) plan, inclusive of realistic and appropriate performance indicators and plans for periodic evaluation of activities.
 - b. *Approval of sub-awards:* 2 CFR 200.308 already requires the Recipient to obtain the AO's prior approval for the subaward, transfer, or contracting out of any work under an award. USAID shall have substantial involvement in the criteria and selection of sub-awards (to include subgrants and contracts) through means of collaboration and joint participation. The Recipient shall be responsible for implementing all IEE conditions pertaining to activities to be funded under each subaward (to include subgrants and contracts), including submitting Environmental Review Checklists (ERC) when applicable. All subawards (to include subgrants and contracts) shall be approved by AO. No subawards to government entities are planned under this award.

- c. *Collaboration with USAID*: The Recipient will collaborate with the AOR to provide technical input to inform USAID about the education sector and the activity, including but not limited to, policy brief and activity updates. Specific activities will be detailed in the activity implementation plans. The recipient will be expected to meet regularly (via phone, email or in person) with the AOR or his/her designee to review the status of activities, and should be prepared to make periodic briefings to USAID as appropriate.

The Recipient must immediately notify USAID 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.

4. Agency authority to immediately halt an activity or construction if detailed performance specifications are not met. For purposes of this program, “construction” means construction, alteration, or repair (including dredging and excavation) of buildings, structures, or other real property and includes, without limitation, improvements, renovation, alteration and refurbishment. The term includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures.

Construction activities undertaken under this Cooperative Agreement are those expressly stated and within the approved Agreement and budget. The AOR has the authority to stop work at any Activity site due any observed or reported conditions of unsatisfactory quality of workmanship, violations of health and safety requirements, or adverse security situations.

B.4 AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is **937** which means that the Recipient will be allowed to make purchases for items from the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source.

B.5 TITLE TO PROPERTY

Property title under the resultant agreement shall vest with the Recipient in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 700.

B.6 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 USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion 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.

[END OF SECTION B]

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligibility for this NOFO is not restricted. The eligibility requirements apply to both the principal applicant and to any sub-awardee. While for-profit firms may participate, pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400(g), it is USAID policy not to award profit to prime recipients and subrecipients under assistance instruments. However, while profit is not allowed for sub-awards, the prohibition does not apply when the recipient acquires goods and services in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 -326, “Procurement Standards.” Forgone profit does not qualify as cost-share.

Each applicant must be found to be a responsible entity before receiving an award. The Agreement Officer (AO) may determine that a pre-award survey is required in accordance with ADS 303.3.9.1 to determine whether the applicant 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 established U.S. Government standards, laws, and regulations. Applicants who do not currently meet all USAID requirements for systems and controls may still be eligible under special award considerations and should not be discouraged from applying. USAID welcomes applications from organizations that have not previously received financial assistance from USAID. The prime recipient is encouraged to promote involvement of “underutilized” partners and local organizations in the implementation of this activity. USAID will not accept applications from individuals.

C.2 COST SHARING OR MATCHING

USAID has established a mandatory minimum recipient cost share of 10 percent of the projected award amount for the award. Such funds may be provided directly by the recipient; other multilateral, bilateral, and foundation donors; host governments; and local organizations, communities and private businesses that contribute financially and in-kind to implementation of activities at the country level. This may include contribution of staff level of effort, office space or other facilities or equipment which may be used for the program, provided by the recipient. For NGO recipient contributions to qualify as cost share, the cost share must be verifiable from the recipient’s records; for U.S. organizations it is subject to the requirements of 2 CFR 200.306, and for non-U.S. organizations it is subject to the Standard Provision, “Cost Share”; and can be audited. If the recipient does not meet its cost sharing requirement, it can result in questioned costs.

C.3 LIMITATIONS ON SUBMISSIONS

Each applicant is limited to one application submission under this NOFO as the prime Applicant. There is no limitation on being included as a potential sub-awardee across multiple applications. **The use of exclusive teaming arrangements is strongly discouraged.**

[END OF SECTION C]

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1 AGENCY POINT OF CONTACT

The point of contact will receive all questions related to this NOFO by the deadline specified in the cover letter. The point of contact will also receive all applications related to this NOFO by the closing date specified on the cover letter. The point of contact for this NOFO is:

1. Ms. Nalinee Wichetthumsak
Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
Email: nwichehthumsak@usaid.gov

2. Ms. Robyn Bertholon
Agreement Officer
USAID/Nepal
Email: rbertholon@usaid.gov

3. Ms. Maria Televantos
Agreement Officer
USAID/Nepal
Email: mtelevantos@usaid.gov

The above contact information is only for informational purposes. The NOFO itself and any subsequent amendments can be found at www.grants.gov. All applications must be submitted according to instructions contained in this NOFO.

In order to maintain a fair and transparent funding opportunity, USAID maintains strict guidelines on who within USAID may be contacted regarding applications or questions about the opportunity. Applicants may only contact USAID via the email address provided in this NOFO. Failure to comply with the USAID points of contact guidance mandated in the NOFO may disqualify the Applicant(s).

D.2 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted via email to the Agency Points of Contact above 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 on www.grants.gov, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant. Please check www.grants.gov for any amendments.

D.3 GENERAL CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION

The award process for USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion contains two phases:

- Phase 1 - Technical Application
- Phase 2 - Co-Design

Only eligible and successful applicants from Phase 1 will be invited to participate in Phase 2.

Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of the NOFO. Applicants are required to submit applications according to the instructions below.

- USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections. Please ensure that applications comply with the page limitations.
- Written in English.
- Use standard Letter or A4 size, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, left justification and headers and/or footers on each page including consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and applicant’s name.
- Fonts smaller than 12 points may be used in text boxes, graphics and tables, as appropriate. USAID requests 12 font minimums in order to ensure submissions are easily legible. Please ensure that text boxes, graphics and tables are easily legible by reviewers.
- The technical application must be submitted as a searchable and editable Adobe PDF format, as appropriate.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this NOFO. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly.

D.4 PHASE 1 - TECHNICAL APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

By the deadline indicated on the cover letter of this NOFO, applicants are invited to submit a Technical Application. Applicants must retain proof of timely delivery in the form of system generated documentation of delivery receipt date and time. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

Applications must be submitted by email to the Agency Points of Contact listed in Section D. Email submissions must include the NOFO number and applicant’s name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g., "No. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your technical application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[NOFO number], [organization name], Technical Application, Part 1 of 2".

Technical Applications will be evaluated by USAID, and then one applicant deemed most meritorious to meet USAID NOFO requirements will be invited to Phase 2. **No budget or cost application will be accepted during this phase.** All Technical Applications must be in English.

Phase 1 - Technical Application Format

The Technical Application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely. The application must demonstrate the applicant’s capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this activity. The applicant should take into account the requirements of the activity and evaluation criteria found in this NOFO.

The Technical Application must not exceed 22 single-spaced typed pages, utilizing Time New Roman 12-point font, typed on standard Letter or A4 sized paper with one-inch margins (both right and left) and each page numbered consecutively. This page limitation includes all required documents for the technical proposal. All required aspects of the technical application as noted below must be combined into a single, searchable PDF, and the page limitation will be calculated by the total number of pages of the entire PDF.

The Technical Application must be structured in the following format.

- A. Cover page must contain the following information:
 - Organization's name
 - Unique Entity Identifier created in SAM.gov (If your entity was registered in SAM.gov prior to April 4, 2022, your Unique Entity ID has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov)
 - The primary point of contact person for the prime applicant, including the individual's name, signature, title or position with the organization/institution, address, e-mail address and telephone and fax numbers
 - Program name
 - Notice of Funding Opportunity number
 - Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organization are local organizations, per USAID's definition of "local entity" under ADS 303)
- B. Acronym List
- C. Technical Approach
- D. Management and Staffing Approach
- E. Institutional Capacity

Any pages beyond the page limits noted above will not be provided to the selection committee.

The Technical Application must contain the following content:

- A. Technical Approach

This section shall include an overall technical approach to achieve the requirements contained in the PD and address the following:

 - Primary activities and approaches the applicant will use to achieve each objective, indicators, and results.
 - How the applicant will tailor activities to the different contexts in Karnali and Madhesh.
 - How the applicant will engage the Government of Nepal.
 - The plan for meeting the minimum ten percent cost share requirement to maximize sustainability, as outlined in Section C.2 of the NOFO.
- B. Management and Staffing Approach

The applicant must present a Management and Staffing Approach that addresses the following:

- The relationship with the proposed partnerships and/or consortium of partners or subrecipients, including their expertise and roles in the implementation of the award, and the proposed approach for managing them to achieve program objectives.
- The Applicant must propose the roles, responsibilities, and necessary qualifications of the Chief of Party (COP) and Deputy Chief of Party. (DCOP). The Applicant should propose the titles, roles, responsibilities, and necessary qualifications for up to three additional key personnel that reflect the appropriate breadth and depth of expertise to manage and implement the proposed technical approach. The Applicant must not propose individuals to fill any key personnel position.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) principles: The Applicant must convincingly demonstrate how it will incorporate DEIA principles in its Management and Staffing Approach. USAID/Nepal’s working definition of DEIA: “**Diversity** is the practice of including many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures and beliefs. **Equity** is the consistent and systematic, fair, just and impartial treatment of all individuals. **Inclusion** is the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds. **Accessibility** is the design, construction, development and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.”
- Localization: The Applicant must demonstrate how it will integrate “localization” throughout the Management and Staffing Approach by maximizing the involvement of local partners, inclusive of subawards and local staff, including hiring local staff for significant roles; to leverage existing knowledge, skills and ability; and facilitate future transfer of knowledge, skills, and abilities. “Localization” at USAID is defined as intentional changes to our policies, processes, staffing and funding decisions to support partnerships and programs that equitably build upon the existing power of local actors, strengthen local systems, and facilitate local leadership so that development and humanitarian assistance is more effective and sustainable. More specifically, local organizations and/or local staff must be supported, utilized, leveraged, and/or coached to the greatest extent possible, in order to carry out quality key activities. Localization must be intentionally and systematically integrated throughout the Applicant’s management and staffing approach, and not merely a check the box exercise.
- **USAID strongly discourages the use of exclusive agreements with organizations and key personnel as this limits the program’s potential to receive the best services.**

C. Institutional Capacity

The applicant must describe their capacity, expertise and experience to implement USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion. Institutional capability statements must be submitted.

USAID is not requesting cost information as part of the Phase 1 submission.

D.5 PHASE 2 - CO-DESIGN

After Phase 1 has concluded, the apparently successful applicant will co-design the program

description with USAID/Nepal and the GON. The apparently successful Applicant will also co-design the management and staffing approach and budget with USAID/Nepal.

Timeline: An apparently successful applicant from Phase 1 must be ready to travel to Kathmandu, Nepal for the co-design process approximately two weeks after USAID notification. Applicants must provide a team that will be available to participate in the co-design process both in Nepal and remotely.

Note: USAID may authorize pre-award costs (See Section D.9 Funding Restrictions) for the travel and logistics of the apparently successful applicant to participate in Phase 2 (only one applicant).

A Phase 2 application will be requested from the successful Applicant invited to Phase 2. Phase 2 application submission instructions are included in Attachment 2 of this NOFO. USAID reserves the right to make changes to Phase 2 application instructions. Applicants are encouraged to review these sections to ensure they are able to meet USAID's requirements for Phase 2 application if their Technical Application is selected.

If during the course of Phase 2, the Agreement Officer determines that the apparently successful Applicant is unable to provide satisfactory Technical and Business Applications, or did not meet deadlines for submissions, or the Applicant and USAID cannot come to agreement on the terms and conditions of the final award, then the Agreement Officer may designate the next highest-evaluated Applicant from Phase 1 as the apparently successful Applicant.

D.6 BUSINESS (COST) APPLICATION

USAID is not requesting cost information as part of the Phase 1 technical application submission. The detailed cost instructions are included in the Phase 2 application submission instructions in Attachment 2.

D.7 UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SAM REQUIREMENTS

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (UEI)(formerly known as DUNS number) created in SAM.gov . 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 unique entity identifier 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.sam.gov). Begin your USAID agreement application through proper U.S. Government registration using the [Registering to Work with USAID: Main Step-by-Step Guide](#).
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.

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

If your entity had registered in SAM.gov prior to April 4, 2022, your Unique Entity ID (SAM) has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov. This includes inactive registrations. Refer to the [guide to getting a unique entity id](#) if you want to get a Unique Entity ID (SAM) for your organization.

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.sam.gov.

D.8 PRE-AWARD TERMS

D.8.1 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 of 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 Section VI of 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.
- (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 brandmark, 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; and
 - (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.

f. 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.

g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Marking Plan, including any approved exemptions, 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)

D.8.2 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. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits the applications. 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)

D.9 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

USAID may authorize pre-award costs only to the apparently successful applicant to participate in the co-design process. The Agreement Officer must provide prior approval to the apparently successful applicant for the specific pre-award costs. USAID will not consider reimbursement of any other pre-award costs.

USAID policy is not to award profit under assistance instruments to the Prime recipient. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the agreement program and are in accordance with applicable cost principles under 2 CFR 200 Subpart E. of the Uniform Administrative Requirements may be paid under the anticipated award.

Construction may be authorized under this award.

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.4 of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

D.10 POTENTIAL REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Upon consideration of award or during the negotiations leading to an award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to make an affirmative determination of responsibility. Applicants should not submit the information below with their applications. The information in this section is provided so that applicants may become familiar with additional documentation that may be requested by the Agreement Officer.

The information submitted should substantiate:

- Bylaws, constitution, and articles of incorporation, if applicable.
- Whether the organizational travel, procurement, financial management, accounting manual and personnel policies and procedures, especially regarding salary, promotion, leave, differentials, etc., submitted under this section have been reviewed and approved by any agency of the Federal Government, and if so, provide the name, address, and phone number of the cognizant reviewing official. The applicant should provide copies of the same.

[END OF SECTION D]

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1 MERIT REVIEW CRITERIA

E.1.1 PHASE 1 - TECHNICAL APPLICATION

a) Technical Application Review

USAID will conduct merit reviews of all Technical Applications received that comply with the instructions in this NOFO. Technical Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the merit review criteria set forth below. The criteria are listed in descending order of importance.

1. Technical Approach

USAID will evaluate the appropriateness and likelihood of the applicant's proposed approaches to achieving each objective and associated indicators and results; and the extent to which the approaches adaptive, justified, and take into account the operating context; the appropriateness of the proposed approach to government engagement and capacity building; and the realism of the cost share plan to maximize sustainability.

2. Management and Staffing Approach

USAID will evaluate the extent to which the proposed management and staffing approach, including the proposed partnerships and key personnel positions and necessary qualifications convincingly demonstrate the Applicant's ability to efficiently and effectively implement the Program Description. Further, USAID will also evaluate the extent to which the management and staffing approach encompasses the use of local partnerships and staff and demonstrates meaningful adoption of the concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

3. Institutional Capacity

USAID will evaluate the extent to which the applicant convincingly demonstrates capacity and experience relevant to implementing the USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity.

b) Cost Review

No budget or cost application will be accepted during Phase 1; therefore, no cost information will be evaluated during Phase 1.

E.1.2 PHASE 2 - CO-DESIGN

This phase is devoted to the co-design process for the program description, management and staffing approach (including Key Personnel), and budget. The apparently successful applicant must work collaboratively with USAID/Nepal and the GON to co-design the Program Description, which will be incorporated into the resulting Cooperative Agreement.

There are no technical evaluation criteria for Phase 2 application. Only the apparently successful Applicant will be invited to Phase 2. If during the course of Phase 2, the Agreement Officer determines that the apparently successful Applicant is unable to provide satisfactory Technical and

Business Applications, or did not meet deadlines for submissions, or the Applicant and USAID cannot come to agreement on the terms and conditions of the final award, then the Agreement Officer may designate the next highest-evaluated Applicant from Phase 1 as the apparently successful Applicant.

E.2 COST REVIEW

A cost application will be developed by the apparently successful applicant selected to co-design the program description and USAID after the program description is finalized.

USAID will evaluate the cost application of the applicant under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

The minimum **ten percent** proposed cost share, as required in this NOFO, 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, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

E.3 PRE-AWARD SURVEYS

Prior to making an award under this competition, the AO may perform a pre-award survey of a prospective NGO recipient if he/she determines that any of the following criteria apply, in accordance with USAID ADS Chapter 303.3.9.1:

- USAID is uncertain about the prospective recipient's capacity to perform financially or programmatically.
- The prospective recipient has never had a USAID grant, cooperative agreement, or contract. This requirement does not apply to Fixed Amount Awards.
- The prospective recipient has not received an award from any Federal agency within the last five years. This requirement does not apply to Fixed Amount Awards.
- USAID has knowledge of deficiencies in the applicant's annual audit (Single Audit or equivalent).
- The USAID Agreement Officer determines it to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

Accounting systems, audit issues, and management capability questions may be reviewed as part of this process in order to determine whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills in order to achieve the objectives of the program, or whether specific conditions will be needed. If notified by USAID that a pre-award survey is necessary, applicants must prepare in advance the required information and documents. A pre-award survey does not commit USAID to make an award to any organization.

[END OF SECTION E]

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.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. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

F.2 ADMINISTRATIVE & NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

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

- For U.S. organizations: [ADS 303](#), [2 CFR 700](#), [2 CFR 200](#) and [Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental Organizations](#).
- For Non-U.S. organizations: [Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations](#).

See Attachment 1, for a list of the Standard Provisions that will be applicable to any awards resulting from this NOFO.

F.3 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

F.3.1 Financial Reporting

Financial reporting requirements will depend on the method of payment. Recipients will comply with the financial reporting requirements set forth in the USAID standard provisions. If advance payments are provided, reporting periods are calendar quarters or parts thereof.

Quarterly financial reports are due not later than 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. If payment is on a reimbursement basis, financial reports may be submitted monthly, but not less frequently than 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter. Regardless of whether payments are on an advance or reimbursement basis, the final financial report is due not later than 90 days after the estimated completion date of the award. The Recipient must also comply with the USAID standard provision entitled “Reporting Host Government Taxes.”

F.3.2 Performance Reporting

The Recipient will be required to adhere to all reporting requirements listed below and in the resulting agreement. The recipient may consult with the AOR on the format and expected content of reports prior to submission. Periodic reporting through USAID/Nepal performance monitoring systems is required, which will be included in any resulting award. The reporting requirements of the resulting agreement will include:

- Annual Work Plan
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan
- Quarterly Reports
- Annual Reports
- Closeout Plan
- Final Report
- Reports required by the GON as related to Objective 3

A. Annual Work Plan - An initial annual Work Plan for the first year shall be submitted to the AOR within 60 days of award. The first work plan covers the implementation period from the award date to September 30, 2023. Subsequent Annual Work Plans shall be submitted annually no later than August 31. The work plan must include, at a minimum:

- All proposed activities over the year, including expected accomplishments and progress towards achieving results and performance measures tied to the indicators agreed upon within the MEL plan;
- A timeline for implementation of the year's proposed activities, including target completion dates;
- Information on how activities will be implemented over the year;
- Personnel requirements and consultancy needs during program implementation, including draft position descriptions and budget to achieve expected outcomes;
- Details of collaboration with other major partners;
- Baselines, targets and anticipated milestone indicators against which the recipient will be evaluated (jointly established with the AOR);
- Communication and outreach activities; and
- Budget.

The Work Plan shall also describe the Recipient's planned activities for the year, including a timeline with relevant milestones indicated, and include expected results tied to the Recipient's MEL Plan.

The Annual Work Plan shall be organized in a manner that describes overarching (performance management-based) intermediate results in connection with programmatic inputs (program activities), outputs (process-based results such as model iterations developed), and outcomes (transformative results reflecting changed behaviors, policies and strategies informed). Annual Work Plans will also describe how activities in a given year will lead to further activities and outcomes in subsequent/remaining years, as well as how activities are leading towards long-term sustainability of Program impacts.

Flexibility and Adaptive Management: The Recipient shall demonstrate flexibility and an ability to respond to immediate needs as well as adapt to uncertainties that may arise. As such, the Annual Work Plan and MEL Plan is a flexible document, and in coordination with the AOR, may be adjusted during the year in order to allow the Recipient and USAID to pause and reflect and then proceed after accounting for impediments that arise during implementation. It may also be revised based upon the Recipient's quarterly review of performance (see Quarterly Progress Reports below).

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the establishment of COVID 19 prevention and safety protocols. These include social distancing and lockdowns that have led to a non-traditional operating environment. The Recipient's response must reflect operating measures to address and mitigate expected challenges.

Co-Design Workshop: The Recipient shall facilitate an annual co-design workshop in order to obtain feedback in the development of the Annual Work Plan and MEL Plan. This workshop will be preceded by preparatory meetings to discuss workshop objectives, participants, roles and responsibilities, information needs, and logistics. The workshop will ensure that the Recipient, their partners, and USAID staff are operating from the same programmatic assumptions and sustainable solutions are identified.

The Recipient shall invite pertinent stakeholders to the workshop, including Government of Nepal stakeholders and also coordinate with other relevant donor partners as defined in coordination with the AOR. Work planning in coordination with other implementing partners that share common objectives and that work in the same provinces as this activity is also critical.

B. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan - The Recipient shall submit a draft MEL plan to the AOR for review and approval no later than 60 calendar days after award. The MEL plan will be effective for the life of the award and may be revised as appropriate if new activities are added. All revisions to the MEL plan must be conducted in close coordination with the AOR.

The MEL plan shall contribute to USAID/Nepal Mission Country Development Cooperation Strategy's results framework and must fold into the USAID/Nepal Mission-wide Performance Management Plan. The MEL Plan shall include the following:

- The results to be achieved by the activity;
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators, including USAID Standard Foreign Assistance indicators to track the program performance and impacts. Gender sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated, caste/ethnicity disaggregated data that track the program's contribution to gender quality and social inclusion must be reflected. These indicators must serve as the basis for the midterm and final evaluation of the program impact;
- Baselines and targets for each indicator by year;
- The data sources and method of data collection to be used to obtain the indicator data; and
- Potential evaluation questions for possible external evaluations⁴³.

In the MEL Plan, the Recipient shall involve strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management (CLA). CLA approaches to development include collaborating intentionally with stakeholders to share knowledge and reduce duplication of effort, learning systematically by drawing on evidence from a variety of sources and taking time to reflect on implementation, and applying learning by adapting intentionally. The Recipient shall reflect the dynamic nature of this activity and document how evidence-based adaptive management will be applied to adjust to new

⁴³ USAID/Nepal may also organize independent performance and/or impact evaluations (not funded or managed through this award), which will require coordination with external evaluators. The recipient shall cooperate with such evaluators by sharing information, providing briefing on interventions and results, coordinating on data collection, reviewing draft evaluation, and making staff available to answer questions related to the activity.

information, emerging opportunities, and changes in context. The Recipient shall identify how it will engage partners to reflect on progress, incorporate lessons, and adapt approaches, such as through partner meetings, portfolio reviews, and after-action reviews. These may focus on challenges and successes in implementation, changes in the operating environment or context, opportunities to better collaborate or influence other actors, and/or other relevant topics. The MEL plan shall include how the activity will distill learnings from using a human-centered design approach to feed into design of planned interventions at the municipal level.

The applicant is encouraged to use USAID Education Standard Indicators available at: <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/USAID-Education-Reporting-Guidance> or other applicable Foreign Assistance Standard Indicators.

The Recipient shall consult with the AOR in the development of the project MEL plan to ensure its consistency and contribution to the Mission's Results Framework and Mission PMP.

In compliance with USAID evaluation policy, rigorous evaluations are used to improve program management, justify assistance resources with empirical evidence and data, ensure accountability, and test the underlying development hypotheses. Proposed evaluation and learning activities by the recipient should consider: (1) GESI related research questions, (2) questions related to using a localized and human centered design approach, (3) questions related to testing assumptions and the theory of change, and (4) questions related to results of interventions on key activity outcomes and objectives outlined in Section A.

C. Quarterly Progress Reports - The Recipient shall submit to the AOR quarterly progress reports that summarize progress in relation to agree upon targets contained in the Annual Work Plan and will specify any problems encountered and indicate resolutions or proposed corrective actions; the status of activities and deliverables and the date of their completion/submission to USAID/Nepal; changes to personnel; progress on cost share contribution toward the minimum cost share requirement; any variances from planned expenditures and cost share contribution; and other relevant issues. The report shall list activities proposed for the next three months, noting where they deviate from the approved Annual Workplan.

The Recipient shall include a statement noting the status of any environmental compliance requirements or potential activities, which may require amendment to the Initial Environmental Examination (or Categorical Exclusion). The report will consist of both narrative and quantitative sections (indicator tables). The quarterly reports are required to be submitted within 30 calendar days after the end of each quarter, except the fourth quarter report. For the fourth quarter (July-September), the quarterly report must be combined with the annual performance progress report and must include a succinct presentation of activity achievements, objectives and targets in the previous year, an analysis of impact based on activities completed or in progress, a report on any success stories, and suggestions of resolutions to any outstanding issues. The fourth quarter report shall also include a statement noting the status of any environmental compliance requirements. The fourth quarter report shall be submitted by September 30 each year.

The Quarterly Reports shall include an Integration Reporting section that describe how the Recipient has incorporated integrated development approaches into its work and established platforms of

coordination and collaboration among other development partners and local stakeholders in the country to maximize impact and sustainability of the Activity objectives during the reporting quarterly period.

Appendix to Quarterly Progress Report: Activity Location Data:

Per ADS 579 (see <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/579mab.pdf>), the Recipient shall collect and submit Activity Location Data to indicate the geographic location(s) where the activity is implemented, according to the following requirements:

a. Level of Geographic Detail

The activity location(s) must be recorded at various levels (levels to be finalized in conjunction with the COR): National; Sub-national: Province; Local: Municipality; and Facility/ site level. When collected, latitude and longitude coordinates must be submitted in Decimal Degrees (hddd.ddddd) with at least five decimal places using the Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (GCS WGS 1984) spatial reference.

b. Data Submission Method

Activity Location Data shall be submitted to an Agency approved reporting tool or in a digital format according to the standards and procedures provided by USAID. If Activity Location Data exists in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) format: 1) it must also be submitted in a Shapefile (.shp) or GeoJSON (.geojson) file format. Geographic Data Files that are stored in other file formats that may be useful to end users can be voluntarily submitted in those file formats. For example, Geographic Data Files stored in a File Geodatabase (.gdb) or as a Web Map Service (WMS) can also be submitted; 2) use the Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (GCS WGS 1984) spatial reference; 3) include metadata ISO 19115 using the ISO 19139 XML implementation schema; 4) Geographic Data Visualization Files created using desktop GIS software will be submitted in Esri Map Document (.mxd) or QGIS Project (.qgs) file formats; 5) Geographic data visualization products that are finalized in separate desktop software or stored in a different file format can also be submitted if they may be of use to an end user. For example, when a data visualization product is stored as a Map Package or is finalized in Adobe Illustrator, the Map Package (.mpk), or Adobe Illustrator (.ai) file can be additionally submitted; 6) Geographic Data Visualization Files written in a programming language and used to generate web-based data visualization products will include an indication of the programming language (for example, a Python file would be .py, a Javascript file would be .js, etc.); and 7) Geographic Data Visualization Files will reference relative pathnames to the source of all Geographic Data Files that are displayed in the data visualization product.

D. Closeout Plan - The Recipient shall submit a closeout plan to the AO 60 days prior to the end of the award. It shall include, at a minimum, a property disposition plan addressing all requirements for the agreement and local law for the transfer of property; close-out requirements for sub-recipients, a plan for the phase out of in-country operations; a delivery schedule for all reports or other deliverable required under the award; and a timeline for completing all required actions in the Closeout Plan, including the submission date of the final Property Disposition Plan to the Agreement Officer. The Property Disposition Plan will be completed in accordance with 2 CFR 200.313.

E. Final Report - The Recipient shall submit a draft final report to the AOR 30 days prior to the end of the award. Once comments are provided by the AOR, the final report will be submitted within 90 calendar days after the completion date of the Award. The Recipient shall submit one copy of a Final Report to the USAID AOR and one copy to the Agreement Officer (AO). In addition, one copy of the report shall be submitted to:

USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)

Online: <http://dec.usaid.gov>

For document submission questions: docsubmit@usaid.gov

This report shall contain an executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved; discussion of all activities conducted under the award, the results achieved, complete data from the performance monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan; an overall description of the activities and accomplishments; a summary of problems/obstacles encountered during implementation; an assessment of the performance in accomplishing the project's objectives; significance of these activities; findings; comments and recommendations; other pertinent information; and the impact of the activity. The Recipient shall submit the monitoring of and reporting on significant milestone events that would help demonstrate progress towards the description of activity success, including the final targets, data sources, collection methods, and baseline information or a timeline for collecting it. This should include narrative descriptions of success at the activity end. This report should not exceed 65 pages, although annexes may be appended.

This report should eliminate politically sensitive or proprietary information. Reports should incorporate as many graphics (maps, photos, charts, etc.) as possible and should include all project and evaluation tools and materials, in an annex.

F.4 PROGRAM INCOME

Program Income earned under the resultant award will be added to the Total Estimated Amount (exclusive of cost share) in accordance with 2 CFR 200.307(e)(2).

F.5 ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 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 Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) Parts 201.5.10g and 204 (<https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/agency-policy/series-200>), 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 recipient environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this NOFO.

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 shall govern.

No activity funded under this cooperative agreement will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Hereinafter, such documents are described as “approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.”).

An Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) number Asia-22-075 (Attachment 4 of this NOFO) has been approved for the Program funding this NOFO. The IEE covers activities expected to be implemented under this Cooperative Agreement. USAID has determined 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. The recipient shall be responsible for implementing all IEE conditions pertaining to activities to be funded under this award.

As part of its initial Work Plan, and all Annual Work Plans thereafter, the recipient, in collaboration with the USAID Cognizant Technical Officer and Mission Environmental Officer or Bureau Environmental Officer, as appropriate, will review all ongoing and planned activities under this Cooperative Agreement 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 must be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments.

Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation must be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.

The recipient shall:

- a) 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 recipient shall prepare an EMMP or M&M Plan describing 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 shall include monitoring the implementation of the conditions and their effectiveness;
- b) Integrate a completed EMMP or M&M Plan into the initial work plan;
- c) Integrate an EMMP or M&M Plan into subsequent Annual Work Plans, making any necessary adjustments to activity implementation in order to minimize adverse impacts to the environment.

F.6 OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (EPRP) (M.O. No. 304.1)

DISASTER READINESS

Nepal is exposed to multiple natural disasters, including floods, landslides, drought, fire, and earthquakes. Nepal is a seismically active zone and is considered at high risk of earthquakes. Minor tremors are not uncommon. Earthquakes are impossible to predict and can result in major devastation and loss of life. There are several websites focusing on earthquakes preparedness online. In the event of a major natural or manmade disaster, entities operating in Nepal must be prepared to be self-sufficient. To facilitate emergency preparedness, USAID requires the implementing partners to develop sound Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRP). USAID also requests the implementing partners to incorporate disaster risk reduction into their activities when applicable.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Addressing vulnerabilities to, and preparation for, anticipated and recurring natural hazards requires sound awareness and advocacy within the government, external development partners, civil society and the general public. The recipient is encouraged to promote disaster resilience and continually seek creative opportunities for incorporating disaster risk reduction into program activities. This includes such activities as awareness raising and advocacy for emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction with the central and local government institutions in Nepal, target beneficiaries, private sector partners, and relevant stakeholders as applicable. The recipient is expected to ensure that project training, where appropriate and as directed, include appropriate emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction elements.

IMPLEMENTER PREPAREDNESS

The recipient must develop an EPRP that prepares for the impact of a large-scale disaster on both staff and program implementation. After award, the recipient has 90 days to prepare and submit its EPRP. The EPRP will contain the following:

Table of Contents

1. Primary contacts within the recipient's organization and sub-partners, noting if back up communications (i.e., radio, satellite phone, etc.) are available.
2. Primary contacts with USAID/Nepal and their information. In the event of a major disaster, USAID wants to maximize the possibility of the recipient being able to contact USAID. This should include contact information and backup communications information of:
 - AOR and Alternate AOR;
 - Office Director and Office Deputy Director; and
 - Agreement Officer

3. Plans for awareness raising, information sharing and educating of staff and sub-partners, including drills and other practice in the event of an emergency. The recipient is expected to inform its staff about the contents of its EPRP through training and drills or other similarly effective methods.
4. Resource list identifying items on-hand and items necessary during an emergency. This may include solar-powered satellite phones with numbers, contents of go-bags and stay-bags, portable generators, essential survival equipment, first-aid and other medical resources, etc., and their locations. For example, the items should have mention of specific locations in an identified room, car, or other location in offices, work vehicles, or project locations which is understood by the entire staff and sub-partners.
5. Communications plan identifying the chain of communication for staff and their families, head office, field offices, and sub-partners.
6. Description of post-disaster recovery activities within the manageable interest of the partner which could be undertaken in the case of a natural disaster. The recipient should not dedicate resources beyond preparedness for responding to staff needs. However, the recipient should be prepared for contingencies, including the possibility that USAID may modify activities within the award as a result of a disaster.

The brevity required for the EPRP submission to USAID does not in any way restrict the recipient from developing a fuller emergency preparedness manual for use by project management and staff.

B. LOCAL TAXES

As per “Assistance Agreement [No. 367-013 (3670183.00)] between the Government of Nepal (GoN) and the Government of the United States Of America for USAID Foreign Assistance Programs (Assistance Agreement)” dated September 24, 2014 Section B.4(a), “General Exemption,” “[t]he Agreement and the assistance thereunder are free from any taxes imposed under laws in effect in the territory of the Grantee [Government of Nepal, acting through the Ministry of Finance].” Thus, the Assistance Agreement exempts any contractor, grantee, or other organization implementing USAID-financed activities under this Assistance Agreement in Nepal. The recipient must comply with local laws regarding the payment of the value-added tax (VAT) as required and exercise due diligence and best efforts for asserting and obtaining the necessary tax exemptions and reimbursements. Upon request, USAID/Nepal will provide available documentation to support allowable exemption from incurrence of host country taxes on project-related activities.

C. LIMITING CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES (AUGUST 2013)

- a) Construction is not eligible for reimbursement under this award unless specifically identified in paragraph d) below.
- b) Construction means —construction, alteration, or repair (including dredging and excavation) of buildings, structures, or other real property and includes, without limitation, improvements,

renovation, alteration and refurbishment. The term includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures.

c) Agreement Officers will not approve any subawards or procurements by recipients for construction activities that are not listed in paragraph d) below. USAID will reimburse allowable costs for only the construction activities listed in this provision not to exceed the amount specified in the construction line item of the award budget. The recipient must receive prior written approval from the AO to transfer funds allotted for construction activities to other cost categories, or vice versa.

d) Description: The below small-scale construction activities and as further described in the Program Description are allowed under this Agreement. Any construction activities other than those specified must not be performed as part of the Agreement.

1. Construction of school latrines 20 units in Madhesh Province and 16 units in Karnali provinces

e) The recipient must include this provision in all subawards and procurements and make vendors providing services under this award and subrecipients aware of the restrictions of this provision.

[END OF PROVISION]

[END OF SECTION F]

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

G.1 NOFO POINTS OF CONTACT

1. Ms. Nalinee Wichetthumsak
Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
Email: nwichehthumsak@usaid.gov
2. Ms. Robyn Bertholon
Agreement Officer
Email: rbertholon@usaid.gov
3. Ms. Maria Televantos
Agreement Officer
Email: mtelevantos@usaid.gov

G.2 ACQUISITION AND ASSISTANCE OMBUDSMAN

The A&A Ombudsman helps ensure equitable treatment of all parties who participate in USAID's acquisition and assistance process. The A&A Ombudsman serves as a resource for all organizations who are doing or wish to do business with USAID. Please visit this page for additional information: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/acquisition-assistance-ombudsman>

[The A&A Ombudsman may be contacted via: Ombudsman@usaid.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@usaid.gov)

[END OF SECTION G]

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, should mark the cover page with the following:

“This application includes data that must not be disclosed, duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made 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}.”

Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following:

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

This NOFO contains the following attachments:

Attachment 1: Standard Provisions

Attachment 2: Phase 2 Application Format and Content

Attachment 3: Phase 2 Application Budget Template

Attachment 4: Initial Environmental Examination No. Asia 22-075

[END OF SECTION H]

ATTACHMENT 1: STANDARD PROVISIONS

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa> and <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab>). 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 either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations. The award will also contain the following “required as applicable” Standard Provisions:

Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.

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

Required	Not Required	Standard Provision
TBD		RAA1. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PREDETERMINED (NOVEMBER 2020)
TBD		RAA2. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PROVISIONAL (Nonprofit) (NOVEMBER 2020)
TBD		RAA3. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE - PROVISIONAL (Profit) (DECEMBER 2014)
TBD		RAA4. INDIRECT COSTS – 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 FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (NOVEMBER 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. RESERVED
✓		RAA30. PROGRAM INCOME (AUGUST 2020)
	✓	RAA31. NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY (NOVEMBER 2020)

REQUIRED AS APPLICABLE STANDARD PROVISIONS FOR NON-U.S. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Required	Not Required	Standard Provision
TBD		RAA1. ADVANCE PAYMENT AND REFUNDS (NOVEMBER 2020)
TBD		RAA2. REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENT AND REFUNDS (DECEMBER 2014)
TBD		RAA3. INDIRECT COSTS – NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA) (NOVEMBER 2020)
TBD		RAA4. INDIRECT COSTS – CHARGED AS A FIXED AMOUNT (NONPROFIT) (JUNE 2012)
TBD		RAA5. INDIRECT COSTS – DE MINIMIS RATE (NOVEMBER 2020)
✓		RAA6. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (NOVEMBER 2020)
✓		RAA7. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (NOVEMBER 2020)
✓		RAA8. SUBAWARDS (DECEMBER 2014)
✓		RAA9. TRAVEL AND INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORTATION (DECEMBER 2014)
✓		RAA10. OCEAN SHIPMENT OF GOODS (JUNE 2012)
✓		RAA11. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (JUNE 2012)
	✓	RAA12. PATENT RIGHTS (JUNE 2012)
✓		RAA13. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
	✓	RAA14. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
✓		RAA 15. COST SHARE (JUNE 2012)
✓		RAA16. PROGRAM INCOME (AUGUST 2020)
✓		RAA17. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
	✓	RAA18. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)
	✓	RAA19. PROTECTION OF HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS (JUNE 2012)

	✓	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. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
	✓	RAA24. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
	✓	RAA25. CONDOMS (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	✓	RAA26. PROHIBITION ON THE PROMOTION OR ADVOCACY OF THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING(ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	✓	RAA27. LIMITATION ON SUBAWARDS TO NON-LOCAL ENTITIES (JULY 2014)
✓		RAA28. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
✓		RAA29. CONTRACT AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)
✓		RAA30. RESERVED
	✓	RAA31. NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY (NOVEMBER 2020)

[END OF ATTACHMENT 1]

ATTACHMENT 2: PHASE 2 APPLICATION FORMAT AND CONTENT

NOTE: USAID IS NOT REQUESTING THIS INFORMATION AT THIS TIME. THE APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT WILL BE REQUESTED BY USAID TO SUBMIT A PHASE 2 APPLICATION FOLLOWING THE EVALUATION OF TECHNICAL APPLICATION AND THE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION CO-DESIGN PHASE.

1. Phase 2 Technical Application Instructions

The format and content of Phase 2 Technical Application will be informed by the unique Phase 1 Technical Application of the most highly-rated Applicant and the subsequent co-design process. It is expected that by the end of the co-design process there will be a finalized and mutually agreed-upon program description, which will be based on the Applicant's Phase 2 Technical Application.

The Applicant will be expected to expand upon the management and staffing approach to describe its team composition (including technical staff, non-technical staff) with an appropriate balance of skills and expertise needed to contribute to successful implementation, including a detailed description of how the team will manage and execute the objectives described in the Technical Application and sustainably achieve the results in an efficient and effective manner. The Applicant should also propose an organogram, which reflects proposed roles and responsibilities; the lines of authority and reporting within the Activity (including any consortium partners or subrecipients); and the proposed physical location/duty station of key personnel and senior technical personnel.

2. Phase 2 Cost Application Instructions

The Cost Application must contain the following sections:

- a) Cover Page
- b) SF 424 Forms
- c) Budget and Budget Narrative
- d) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407
- e) Approval of Subawards
- f) Unique Entity Identifier and SAM.gov Registration
- g) History of Performance
- h) Required Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Recipient
- i) Branding Strategy & Marking Plan
- j) Funding Restrictions
- k) Environmental Compliance

Prior to award, Applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the Applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.205. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

Detailed instructions are as follows:

- a) Cover Page

The Cost Application Cover Page must contain the same information as the Technical Application Cover Page.

b) SF 424 Forms

The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically at www.grants.gov or <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-mandatory-family.html>

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

c) Budget and Budget Narrative

The Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file (MS Office 2000 or later versions) with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year, including itemization of the federal and non-federal (cost share) amount. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make award, and may result in a rejection of the cost application. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID's determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

1. Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the Applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the Activity.
2. Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's Activity and are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.
3. Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the Activity.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

- 1) Personnel – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. Direct salaries, wages and allowances must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors. Allowances, when proposed, should be broken down by specific type and by position. Allowances should be in accordance with the applicant's policies and the applicable regulations and policies. Explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative. If the organization has standing policies across all projects for annual salary escalations that exceed current inflation rates, those policies and the effective date of those policies must be provided with the application. The Applicant must also confirm that the policy applies to all staff across all projects.

- 2) Fringe Benefits – (if applicable) If the Applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the Applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an Applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the Applicant must propose a rate and explain how the Applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown, comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.
- 3) Travel and Transportation –Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant’s normal travel policies. When appropriate please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.
- 4) Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.
- 5) Subawards – Specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the applicant’s budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.
- 6) Construction – If applicable
- 7) Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the Activity proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the Activity, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.
- 8) Indirect Charges – Applicant must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs, please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200.414. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only

Eligibility: Any applicant

Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA

Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. If your NICRA was issued by an Agency other than USAID, provide the contact information for the approving Agency. Additionally, at the Agency's discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See [USAID's Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations](#) for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)

Eligibility: Any applicant that does not have a current NICRA

Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200 for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged As A Fixed Amount

Eligibility: Non U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO.

Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:

- Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
- Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year
- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across all programs and activities of using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

- 9) **Cost Sharing (if any)** – The applicant should estimate the amount of cost-sharing resources to be provided over the life of the agreement and specify the sources of such resources, and the basis of calculation in the budget narrative. Applicants should also provide a breakdown of the cost share (financial and in-kind contributions) of all organizations involved in implementing the resulting award.
- d) **Prior Approvals** in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed 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. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

e) Approval of Subawards

The applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- UEI 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)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

f) Unique Entity Identifier and SAM Requirements

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (UEI)(formerly known as DUNS number) created in SAM.gov . 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 unique entity identifier for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients;
4. 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.sam.gov).
5. 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 registration early in the process using the [Registering to Work with USAID: Main Step-by-Step Guide](https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/trainings-how-work-usaid/how-work-usaid-registering-to-work-usaid) available on <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/trainings-how-work-usaid/how-work-usaid-registering-to-work-usaid>. 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. SAM registration: <http://www.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.sam.gov.

g) History of Performance

The apparently successful Applicant must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed three years as follows:

- Name of the Awarding Organization;
- Award Number;
- Activity Title;
- A brief description of the activity;
- Period of Performance;
- Award Amount;
- Reports and findings from any audits performed in the last three years; and
- Name of at least two (2) updated professional contacts who most directly observed the work at the organization for which the service was performed with complete current contact information including telephone number, and e-mail address for each proposed individual.

If the Applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, it may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. The applicant should not provide general information on its performance. USAID reserves the right to obtain from any sources relevant information concerning an Applicant's history of performance and may consider such information in its review of the Applicant's risk. The Agency may request additional information and conduct a pre-award survey if it determines that it is necessary to inform the risk assessment.

h) Required Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Recipient

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy with their application:

- (1) "Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" document found at <http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mav>.
- (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).

Please note that these certifications are required for both the applicant and all sub-grantees. 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).

i) 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 AO and incorporated into any resulting award.

j) Funding Restrictions

USAID may authorize pre-award costs only to the apparently successful applicant to participate in the co-design process. The Agreement Officer must provide prior approval to the apparently successful applicant for the specific pre-award costs. USAID will not consider reimbursement of any other pre-award costs.

USAID policy is not to award profit under assistance instruments to the Prime recipient. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the agreement program and are in accordance with applicable cost principles under 2 CFR 200 Subpart E. of the Uniform Administrative Requirements may be paid under the anticipated award.

Construction may be authorized under this award.

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.4 of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

k) Environmental Compliance

The environmental compliance requirements are outlined in Section F.5 and the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) – see Attachment 4.

USAID anticipates that environmental compliance and achieving optimal development outcomes for the proposed activities will require environmental management expertise. The Apparently Successful Applicant should therefore include as part of their Phase 2 application their approach to achieving environmental compliance and management, to include:

- The Applicant’s approach to developing and implementing an IEE or EMMP or M&M Plan
- The Applicant’s approach to providing necessary environmental management expertise, including examples of past experience of environmental management of similar activities.
- The Applicant’s illustrative budget for implementing the environmental compliance activities. For the purposes of this solicitation, applicants should reflect illustrative costs for environmental compliance implementation and monitoring in their cost proposal.

3. Pre-award Responsibility Determination and Risk Assessment

Upon consideration of award or during the discussions leading to an award, the Applicant may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer (AO) to make an affirmative determination of responsibility.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The Applicant should not submit the information below with their Technical Application submission. The information in this section is provided so that the Applicant may become familiar with additional documentation that may be requested by the AO before award in order to make the responsibility determination:

These documents may include, but are not limited to:

1. Audited financial statements for the past three (3) years that have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID;
2. Bylaws, constitution, and articles of incorporation, if applicable;
3. Copies of organizational travel, procurement, financial management, accounting manual and personnel policies and procedures, especially regarding salary, promotion, leave, differentials, etc., and indicate whether such policies and procedures have been reviewed and approved by any agency of the Federal Government. If so, provide the name, address, and phone number of the cognizant reviewing official;
4. Other documentation, as required by the Agreement Officer, to substantiate that the Applicant:
 - Has adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the Cooperative Agreement;
 - Has the ability to comply with the award's terms and conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the Applicant, nongovernmental and governmental;
 - Has a satisfactory record of performance. Past relevant unsatisfactory performance is ordinarily sufficient to justify a finding of non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance;
 - Has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics;
 - Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive a Cooperative Agreement/Grant under applicable laws and regulations (e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity Laws).

An award may be made only by the Agreement Officer upon his/her signature only after she/he makes a positive responsibility determination that the Applicant possesses, or has the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence in planning and carrying out assistance programs, and specifically the proposed Activity, and that it will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided by USAID.

For organizations that are new to working with USAID or for organizations with outstanding audit findings, or otherwise at USAID's discretion, USAID may perform a pre-award survey to assess the Applicant's management and financial capabilities. If notified by USAID that a pre-award survey is necessary, the Applicant must prepare, in advance, the required information and documents. See ADS 303.3.9.1 at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303.pdf> for more information on pre-award surveys. Please note that a pre-award survey does not commit USAID to make any award.

[END OF ATTACHMENT 2]

ATTACHMENT 3: PHASE 2 APPLICATION BUDGET TEMPLATE

The budget is the financial expression of the Activity. The following template represents an example of what USAID anticipates receiving in an Activity budget with Phase 2 technical application submission.

NOFO No. 72036722RFA00003

USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion

Summary Budget:

Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total Amount (USD)
Personnel						
Fringe Benefits						
Travel and Transportation						
Equipment and Supplies						
Construction						
Subawards/Contractual						
Other Direct Costs						
Total Direct Charges						
Indirect Charges						
Total Costs						
Cost Share (if any)						
Total Activity Costs plus Cost Share						

[END OF ATTACHMENT 3]

ATTACHMENT 4 INITIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EXAMINATION



Asia 22-075

INITIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EXAMINATION

Project/Activity Data

Project/Activity Name:	USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion
Geographic Location(s) (Country/Region):	Nepal/Asia Region
Amendment (Yes/No), if Yes indicate # (1, 2...):	N/A
Implementation Start/End Date (FY or M/D/Y):	FY2023-FY2028
If Amended, specify New End Date:	N/A
Solicitation/Contract/Award Number(s):	To be determined
Implementing Partner(s):	Pre-award; to be determined
Bureau Tracking ID:	
Tracking ID of Related RCE/IEE (if any):	Asia 20-042
Tracking ID of Other, Related Analyses:	N/A

Organizational/Administrative Data

Implementing Operating Unit(s): (e.g. Mission or Bureau or Office)	USAID/Nepal, Education Development Office (EDO)
Other Affected Operating Unit(s):	
Lead BEO Bureau:	Asia Bureau
Funding Account(s) (if available):	USAID/Nepal
Original Funding Amount:	\$20 million
If Amended, specify funding amount:	
If Amended, specify new funding total:	
Prepared by:	Laura Parrot and Raj Kumar Dulal, Education Development Office
Date Prepared:	Mar 21, 2022

Environmental Compliance Review Data

Analysis Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Examination	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferral
Environmental Determination(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Categorical Exclusion(s) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative Determination with Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Positive Determination <input type="checkbox"/> Deferred (per 22 CFR 216.3(a)(7)(iv))	
IEE Expiration Date (if applicable):		
Additional Analyses/Reporting Required:	EMMP	
Climate Risks Identified (#):	Low <u> X </u> Moderate <u> 1 </u> High <u> # </u>	
Climate Risks Addressed (#):	Low <u> X </u> Moderate <u> 1 </u> High <u> # </u>	

THRESHOLD DETERMINATION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

PROJECT/ACTIVITY SUMMARY

With an expected life of 5 years, USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity is a cooperative agreement with a \$20 million total estimated contribution from USAID. The purpose of this activity is to improve equitable education outcomes for marginalized and underserved youths in grades 6-10. The activity will support local governments in bringing out-of-school children into school, support retention of learners through grade 10, and ensure equitable and quality learning opportunities. The project is expected to begin on or around November 2022. The specific objectives of the activity are to: 1) reduce barriers to access and retention in grade 6-10; 2) improve the quality of education for marginalized students in grade 6-10; and 3) ensure quality implementation of disbursement linked indicators related to equity and inclusion activities under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology's School Education Sector Plan.

The activity will be implemented in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces and will support all community schools that have grade 6-10 classes, approximately 1,790 schools. Karnali and Madhesh Provinces were selected based on the fact they have the lowest educational outcomes and enrollment compared to the rest of the country. However, the barriers to education vary greatly between regions and municipalities. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will take into account these differences and present contextually appropriate, adaptive, data-driven solutions for each province.

To achieve the first objective of the activity, the IP will target financial barriers to access and retention in school in grades 6-10; decrease financial and other pressures to enter the formal and informal labor market early; address harmful socio-cultural norms that lead to early dropout using evidence-based interventions. At a minimum, these interventions are expected to reduce child marriage, improve Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH), and the provision of safe, clean, private and hygienic school facilities, and decrease discrimination and bias. Under this objective the IP will increase knowledge, engagement, and demand for education among parents, caregivers, and communities, and provide accelerated learning opportunities for adolescents to re-enter the formal school system. To achieve these objectives, the activity is anticipated to provide training to 200 child protection committees and provide positive parenting sessions on how to be a good parent and value girls to 700 parents and community members. Additionally, to achieve these objectives, the activity will likely provide training to students and teachers on non discriminatory behaviors, and set up informal schools for girls in a community center for accelerated learning. All activities will be implemented through training or providing financial incentives to parents to send their children to school.

To achieve the second objective of the activity, the IP will provide support to improve the quality of the learning environment as measured by the Prioritized Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMECs); improve the quality and relevance of education by responding to specific pedagogical challenges teachers are experiencing and employ evidence based best practices to improve teaching; and provide additional supportive learning opportunities for students who are falling behind in the classroom, such as remedial or catch up classes. To achieve this objective, it is anticipated that the activity will provide training to teachers in half of the municipalities in Karnali and Madhesh province and construct a maximum of 22 latrines and WASH facilities at schools.

Similarly, to achieve the third objective of the activity, the IP will provide technical support to the MOEST and its entities to enhance the quality and relevance of overall school education. This support will ensure a minimum learning achievement for each child and equitable access, to and participation of, all children, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, from marginalized groups, and/or with disabilities. Cooperating development partners will develop a Joint Financing Arrangement and associated Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). Milestones under the DLIs will be jointly financed through results-based financing mechanisms. To achieve this objective, the implementing partner will provide on-site training and support to all municipality officials.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS

The USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity has been divided into 7 sub activities. Six sub activities qualify for a Categorical Exclusion as they have no “effect on the natural or physical environment” (22 CFR 216.2(c)(1)(i) and consist of education, technical assistance, and/or research. After examining potential effects on the natural environment and social attributes of remaining activities, one of the sub-activities qualifies for Negative Determination with Conditions (NDC). The sub-activity has not been determined to rise to the level of requiring a Scoping and a full Environmental Assessment, but will require specific conditions of implementation, including preparation and implementation of a comprehensive Environmental Management and Mitigation Plan (EMMP), and climate risk screening as a condition of maintaining the NDC. Upon approval of this document, the Categorical Exclusion and NDC determinations become affirmed Threshold Decisions, per Agency regulations (22CFR216). The following table summarizes the environmental determinations applicable to the specific projects/activities:

TABLE 1: ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS

Projects/Activities	Categorical Exclusion Citation (if applicable)	Negative Determination With Conditions	Positive Determination ⁴⁴	Deferral ⁴⁵
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

⁴⁴

⁴⁵

⁴⁶

CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT

CRM screening for this activity provided a low to medium climate risk rating. The intervention's low rating does not require the development of specific climate change mitigation plans. However, activities related to providing support to improve the quality of the learning environment as measured by the PMECs sub activity 1.1 were given a moderate climate risk rating, which require the development of a mitigation or adaptation plan. Hence, the implementing partner shall conduct climate risk screening for identified locations and have sufficient technical and financial resources to prepare EMMP, address CRM measures, and shall be integrated into activity implementation. The IP shall comply with GON laws, regulations, standards and obligations under international treaties, agreements, conventions, including WHO, WMO, ILO, etc.) . See Annex 1 for the complete CRM table.

BEO SPECIFIED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

IMPLEMENTATION

In accordance with 22 CFR 216 and Agency policy, the conditions and requirements of this document become mandatory upon approval. This includes the relevant limitations, conditions, and requirements in this document as stated in Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the IEE and any BEO Specified Conditions of Approval.

1. **IP Briefings on Environmental Compliance Responsibilities.**

USAID/Nepal shall provide each implementing partner (IP) with a copy of this IEE. The IP shall be briefed on their environmental compliance responsibilities by their AOR. Such briefings will identify the IEE conditions applicable to each IP's activities.

2. **Development of an EMMP.**

For the activities which qualify for an NDC in Section Three of this IEE, the IP shall submit to the AOR for review and approval an Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) that clearly documents how their project will implement and verify all IEE conditions and mitigation measures that apply to their activities. These EMMPs shall identify how the IP will ensure that IEE conditions that apply to activities supported under sub-contracts and sub-grants are implemented. The EMMPs shall be reviewed and cleared jointly by AOR and MEO/CIL.

3. **Integration and implementation of EMMP.**

Each IP shall integrate their EMMP into their project work plan and budgets, implement the EMMP, and report on its implementation and findings as an element of regular project performance reporting. The IP shall ensure that sub-contractors and sub-grantees integrate implementation of IEE conditions, where applicable, into their own project work plans and budgets, and report on their implementation and findings as an element of sub-contract or grant performance reporting.

4. **Integration of compliance responsibilities in prime and sub-contracts and grant agreements.**

a. The AOR shall ensure that any future contracts or agreements for implementation of a project, and/or significant modification(s) to current contracts/agreements shall reference and require compliance with the conditions set out in this IEE, as required by ADS 204.3.4.a.6 and ADS 303.3.6.3.e.

b. The IP shall ensure that future sub-contracts and sub-grant agreements, and/or significant modification(s) to existing agreements reference and require compliance with relevant elements of these conditions.

5. **Assurance of sub-grantee and sub-contractor capacity and compliance.** The IP shall ensure that sub-grantees and sub-contractors have the capacity to implement the relevant requirements of this IEE. The IP shall, as and if appropriate, provide training to sub-grantees and sub-contractors on their environmental compliance responsibilities and on environmentally sound design and management (ESDM) of their activities.

6. **New or modified activities.** As part of its work plan and all annual work plans thereafter, the IP, in collaboration with the AOR, shall review all ongoing and planned activities to determine if they are within the scope of this IEE. If any IP adds new activities or makes substantial modifications to existing activities, an amendment to this IEE addressing these activities shall be prepared for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to formal approval of this amendment. Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.

7. **Compliance with Government of Nepal Requirements.** Nothing in this IEE substitutes for, or supersedes IP, sub-grantee, and sub-contractor responsibility for compliance with all applicable Nepali laws and regulations. The IP, sub-grantees, and sub-contractors must comply with Nepali environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID; however, in case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

INITIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EXAMINATION

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1.0 PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE IEE

The purpose of this document, in accordance with Title 22, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 216 ([22 CFR 216](#)), is to provide a preliminary review of the reasonably foreseeable effects on the environment of the USAID intervention described herein and recommend determinations and, as appropriate, conditions, for these activities. Upon approval, these determinations become affirmed, and specified conditions become mandatory obligations of implementation. This IEE also documents the results of the Climate Risk Management process in accordance with USAID policy (specifically, [ADS 201mal](#)).

This IEE is a critical element of USAID's mandatory environmental review and compliance process meant to achieve environmentally sound design and implementation. Potential environmental impacts should be addressed through formal environmental mitigation and monitoring plans (EMMPs) and/or Environmental Assessments (EAs), if needed.

1.2 PROJECT/ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

With an expected life of 5 years, USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity is a cooperative agreement with a \$20 million total estimated contribution from USAID. The purpose of this activity is to improve equitable education outcomes for marginalized and underserved youths in grades 6-10. The Activity will support local governments in bringing out-of-school children into school, support retention of learners through grade 10, and ensure equitable and quality learning opportunities. The project is expected to begin on or around November 2022. The activity will be implemented in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces and will support all community schools that have grade 6-10 classes, approximately 1,790 schools.

1.3 PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

While Karnali and Madhesh Provinces both have low educational outcomes and enrollment compared to the rest of the country, the barriers to education vary greatly between regions and municipalities. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will take into account these differences and present contextually appropriate, adaptive, data-driven solutions for each province. The specific objectives of the activity are: 1) Reduce barriers to access and retention in grade 6-10. 2) improve the quality of education for marginalized students in grade 6-10. 3) ensure quality implementation of disbursement linked indicators related to equity and inclusion activities under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology's School Education Sector Plan.

To achieve the first objective of the activity, it will target financial barriers to access and retention in school in grades 6-10; decrease financial and other pressures to enter the formal and informal labor market early; address harmful socio-cultural norms that lead to early dropout using evidence based interventions to, at a minimum, reduce child marriage, improve MHH and the provision of safe, clean, private and hygienic school facilities, and decrease discrimination and bias; increase knowledge, engagement and demand for education among parents, caregivers, and communities; and provide accelerated learning opportunities for adolescents to re-enter the formal school system.

To achieve the second objectives of the activity, it will provide support to improve the quality of the learning environment as measured by the PMECs; improve the quality and relevance of education by responding to specific pedagogical challenges teachers are experiencing and employing evidence based best practice to improve teacher practices; provide additional supportive learning opportunities for students who are falling behind in the classroom such as remedial or catch up classes.

Similarly, to achieve the third objective of the activity, it will provide the technical support to MOEST and its entities to enhance the quality and relevance of overall school education and ensure minimum learning achievement in each child ensuring equitable access to and participation of all children, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities. The activity will also support achievement of objectives under this plan, the Development Partners will develop

a Joint Financing Arrangement and associated Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). Milestones under the DLIs will be jointly financed through results-based financing mechanisms.

Major Challenges: Access and retention in the education system at the higher grades (upper basic and lower secondary; grades 6-10) remains a challenge overall, and, even more so, for the youth from most marginalized communities. Below are the common major challenges that describe inequalities from all sides demonstrating the many barriers youth face, and the many stumbling blocks to reducing inequalities, such as gender, caste, socioeconomic, cultural, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and geography.

- Lack of prioritization on keeping adolescents in school and addressing disparities
- Child Marriage
- Harmful Socio-Cultural Norms
- Pressure to enter the formal and informal labor market early
- Inequalities widen during shocks to the system

Theory of Change: USAID posits that:

If local governments reduce barriers to accessing education for marginalized youth; and
If the quality and relevance of education for marginalized and youth improves;
Then equitable education outcomes for marginalized youth will improve.

Critical Assumptions: The following are a list of critical assumptions and known factors that will affect the equitable education outcomes of the activity that should be taken into account in design and implementation of the activity:

- The federal structure and the frequent transfer of government personnel necessitate the need for periodic or multiple training refreshers during implementation to accommodate new government personnel.
- School closures are possible as Nepal is still in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nepal is also one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to natural disasters which could cause further disruption to the school year. Approaches will incorporate educational strategies and management practices to adaptively manage and operate during normal and emergency situations.
- Barriers to accessing education and factors impacting quality of education service delivery will vary greatly between provinces and municipalities; as such, adaptive and context specific solutions will need to be utilized.

Geographic Focus and Target Populations: The activity will be implemented in Madhesh and Karnali Provinces and will support all community schools that have grade 6-10 classes, approximately 1,790 schools⁴⁷. While Karnali and Madhesh Provinces both have low educational outcomes and enrollment compared to the rest of the country, the barriers to education vary greatly between regions and municipalities. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion must take into account these differences and present contextually appropriate, adaptive, data-driven solutions for each province.

For the purposes of this activity, USAID/Nepal defines marginalized youth in grades 6-10 who are currently enrolled in school or not enrolled in school but of the school going age for grades 6-10. This may include girls and boys from extremely poor families and remote areas, learners from marginalized castes and ethnicities especially Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesi other castes and Muslims, child brides, boys and girls participating in child labor, LGBTQI+ youth, non-binary youth, and youth with disabilities.

Similarly USAID recently conducted a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE) in 2021 for its planned education Early Grade Learning (EGL) Activity. The purpose of the EGL is to strengthen the capacity of national, provincial, and municipal government entities to improve learning outcomes in grades 1-3 through . It will build on previous USAID investments in the education sector to scale up tested evidence-based practices that achieve EGL Activity objectives. Interventions will focus on supporting the national, provincial, and

⁴⁷ EMIS 2020 Flash 2 Report

municipal level governments in their efforts to ensure continued quality implementation in early grades, technical assistance to identify and remediate learning gaps through training, workshops, meetings, education analysis, and studies. Similarly, teacher professional support, coaching and mentorship to ensure continuity to teaching and learning both during emergencies. The interventions also include implementing small to medium sized school grants to be used to support learning reforms, classroom improvements (such as improved pedagogy, print rich environment, book corners) and in implementing blended learning. The EGL activity is expected to be awarded by 2022 and will be implemented in all of Madesh and part of Karnali province. This USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity will complement the work of the EGL program.

USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will coordinate closely with all Education Development Office (EDO) led interventions and build off previous successes and lessons learned, in addition to the EGL activity mentioned above. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion will build off lessons learned from the USAID Reading for All activity in disability inclusive education. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion must complement USAID's Government to Government (G2G) support through the Multi-Donor Joint Financing Arrangement (JFA) to support implementation of the GON's associated Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). The Activity will also support the JFA's interventions of supporting the MOEST to plan, budget, and implement these associated DLIs related to equity and inclusion. The Activity will also closely coordinate with the USAID Local Systems Strengthening for Reducing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) activity, which provides technical assistance to municipalities to plan, budget, implement, and measure reducing child marriage within their communities. R-CEFM works in six palikas in Madhesh Province and is developing a Palika guidance document on reducing CEFM.

TABLE 2: DEFINED OR ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES AND SUB-ACTIVITIES

Will this project/activity involve construction⁴⁸ as defined by ADS 201 and 303? Yes No

While implementing activities like construction of toilets and water infrastructure, the implementing partner shall follow environmental and WASH-specific best practices for small scale activities such as <https://www.usaid.gov/environmental-procedures/sectoral-environmental-social-best-practices/sector-environmental-guidelines-resources#co> and the most recent guidance and best practice on WASH at : <http://www.washplus.org/>

⁴⁸ **Construction, as defined by ADS 201 and 303**, includes: construction, alteration, or repair (including dredging and excavation) of buildings, structures, or other real property and includes, without limitation, improvements, renovation, alteration and refurbishment. The term includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures. In the box below, describe any construction planned for this project/activity. Refer to [ADS 201maw](#) , [ADS 303](#) and [ADS 312](#) for required Construction Risk Management procedures.

2.0 BASELINE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

2.1 LOCATIONS AFFECTED AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT (ENVIRONMENT, PHYSICAL, CLIMATE, SOCIAL, Threatened and ENDANGERED species)

Nepal - Madhesh Pradesh and Karnali Pradesh.

Topography: There are three ecological regions in Nepal. These are: the Terai, low lying plains bordering the northern belt of India; the mid-hill areas running north-south at altitudes ranging between 2,000 to 4,500 meters; and the mountainous areas that include the Himalayan mountain ranges in the north. This activity implementation aims to cover all ecological regions.

Deteriorating air quality, drying up of water sources and depleting groundwater, pollution of surface and groundwater, overexploitation of natural resources, deforestation, unmanaged solid waste, increase in emission of toxic pollutants, loss of biodiversity, unscientific agricultural practices, and harmful land use changes have been some of the major causes of environmental degradation. Some of the root causes of rapid environmental degradation are weak monitoring and enforcement, weak institutional capacity, scarce resources in public institutions, and inefficient interagency coordination.

Climate: In northern Nepal summers are cool and winters are severe, while in Madhesh Pradesh, summers are very hot while winters are mild to cold. In addition to the continuum from tropical warmth to cold comparable to polar regions, average annual precipitation varies from as little as 160 millimeters in its narrow proportion of the rainshadow north of the Himalayas to as much as 5,500 millimeters on windward slopes, the maximum mainly resting on the magnitude of the South Asian monsoon. Nepal ranks 4th in terms of climate risk according to the Global Climate Risk Index and ranks 11th in terms of global risk for earthquake occurrence and impact. The country is in the top 20 of all multi-hazard countries in the world. The Environment Protection Council, the Climate Change Council, the Parliamentary Committee for Natural Resource Management and Environment, and the Ministry of Forest and Environment (MOFE) are the apex agencies responsible for formulating national environment policies, programs, and regulatory frameworks for safeguard enforcement. Provincial governments address forest and environment protection through their dedicated ministries. The federal governance system has given authority to local bodies to implement certain sizes of infrastructure development projects. They can raise taxes for the use of natural resources, such as extraction of riverbed aggregates and resourceful and capable forest products. However, these local bodies do not have an environmental and social safeguards section to ensure that the natural resources are sustainably used, and that the infrastructure development works are carried out in full compliance with environmental requirements.

Nepal is vulnerable to various natural disasters, including floods, droughts, and seismic hazards. The 2015 Gorkha earthquake and its aftershocks caused over \$7 billion in loss and damages and resulted in nearly 9,000 lives lost, mostly in the hilly and mountain regions. Detailed information on Nepal's environmental statistics, disaster risk reduction and environmental institutional framework are available here⁴⁹.

Socioeconomic Status: Karnali and Madhesh Provinces both have low educational outcomes and enrollment compared to the rest of the country, the barriers to education vary greatly between regions and

⁴⁹ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/Compendia/Nepal_Environment%20Statistics%20of%20Nepal_2019.pdf
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CDCS-NEPAL-DECEMBER-2025-EXTERNAL_030821.pdf
<https://www.usaid.gov/environmental-procedures/biodiversity-tropical-forest-analyses>
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/677231/climate-risk-country-profile-nepal.pdf>
https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/fileadmin/Dokumente/2018/180112_NMA_CC_PF.pdf
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/68230_6nepaldrmstatusreport.pdf
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32645/139924.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

municipalities. USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion must take into account these differences and present contextually appropriate, adaptive, data-driven solutions for each province.

Fecal sludge management practices : Most hill and mountain populations collect their household fecal sludge in septic pits with open bottoms and drywall masonry. If properly located away from water sources and taps, the pit effluent can be safely treated by drainage through the subsoils. In the flatlands where the groundwater is high, the population is encouraged to fully plaster the interior of their pits but compliance to this guidance is uncertain. A small percentage of households and some commercial and institutional entities have made septic tanks, with reinforced concrete slab bases and fully plastered masonry or concrete sides, depending on size. Manual and mechanical emptying is practiced and the most common disposal is to illegally dump it in a river body, on fields or in a forest area. With 95% of Nepali households having access to sanitation but almost no households or institutions having access to safe sanitation with proper disposal, Nepal is at risk of a new sanitation crisis.

2.2 APPLICABLE AND APPROPRIATE PARTNER COUNTRY AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS (E.G. WHO), ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL LAWS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The Government of Nepal (GON) has a policy of enforcing all environmental legislation, but the previous centralized GON never had sufficient work force for consistent enforcement. Nepal has now transitioned to a federal state, with enforcement of such codes and legislation being mandated to the municipal governments. While they have the potential for high interest and ownership of such tasks, they are still lacking in capacity. The legislation includes the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines 1993⁵⁰; Environmental Protection Act 1997⁵¹; Environmental Protection Rules 1997 (amended in 1998 and 1999)⁵². The Guidelines, Act, Rules, and other regulations provide the basic legal framework for all environmental assessments in Nepal with the aim:

- To manage natural and physical resources efficiently and sustainably,
- To balance development efforts and environmental conservation to fulfill the basic needs of the people in a sustainable manner,
- To safeguard national heritage,
- To mitigate the adverse environmental impacts of development projects and human actions, and
- To integrate the environment and development through appropriate institutions, adequate legislation and economic incentives, and sufficient public resources.

Environment Protection Act, 2076 (2019): Repealed the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1997 and Environment Protection Regulations (EPR) of 1997. The Act requires any development project, before implementation, to pass through environmental assessment, which may be either Initial Environment Examination (IEE) or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) depending upon the location, type and size of the projects. The Act recognizes the interdependence between development and the environment and shows the concerns for minimizing the impacts of environmental degradation on people, animal, and plant species and their physical surroundings. The Act explicitly authorizes the government to set standards to reduce and regulate emission, hazardous waste, pollution emitted by vehicles, equipment, industries, hotels, restaurants and other institutions or activities.

Forest Act, 1993: The use of forestland subject to forest law and regulation. The Act requires decision makers to take account of all forest values, including environmental services and biodiversity, not just the production of timber and other commodities. The Forest Act, 1993 (amendment, 1998) contains several provisions to ensure the development, conservation, management and sustainable use of forest resources, based on an approved work plan. It also recognizes the importance of forests in maintaining a healthy environment. Sections 68 of the

⁵⁰ http://moste.gov.np/legal_documents/Regulation

⁵¹ <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/documents/2015/08/environment-protection-act-2053-1997.pdf>

⁵² http://www.mope.gov.np/download/environment_protection_rules.pdf.0551f34673f96fbd99c87be482a27c7f

Forest Act, 1993 empowers the government in case of no alternatives, to provide parts of any types of forests for the implementation of a national priority plan with assurance that it does not adversely affect the environment significantly. Section 49 of the Act prohibits reclaiming lands, setting fires, grazing, removing or damaging forest products, felling trees or plants, wildlife hunting and extracting boulders, sand and soil from the national forest without prior approval.

2.3 COUNTRY/MINISTRY/MUNICIPALITY ENVIRONMENTAL CAPACITY ANALYSIS (AS APPROPRIATE)

Nepal has ratified several national and international treaties and conventions regarding environmental issues and has arranged for the corresponding national legislative instruments, policies and institutional infrastructure to uphold its commitments. Nepal has attempted to incorporate environmental concerns into development processes by promulgating the National Environment Policy and Action Plan 1993, the Environment Protection Act 2019, and the Environment Protection Regulation 2020.

Nepal's constitution guarantees every Nepali the right to live in a clean and healthy environment (Article 30(1)) and confers a right of compensation to anyone whose health is affected by environmental pollution or degradation (Article 30(2)). The 15th National Development Plan Approach Paper (2020–2024) mentions a "healthy and balanced environment" as one of its goals. It also addresses "hydropower and green economy," well managed and modern urbanization, access to transportation and communication networks, and quality tourism which are related to air quality. The Plan has also listed one indicator and target related to air pollution control and clean environment - reducing the average PM 2.5 level from 53 micrograms per cubic meter in 2017/18 to 40 micrograms per cubic meter by 2023/24. However, the sector faces challenges related to weak institutional capacity and inter-agency coordination to handle issues relating to air quality, environment and climate change, as well as inadequate means and resources to address these problems.

The Government of Nepal (GON) subscribes to the World Health Organization (WHO) standards and guidelines for environmental sanitation and the recipient will be required to follow the appropriate WHO standards. Prior to beginning field implementation, the Recipient will be required to submit to USAID/Nepal for format approval, their Environmental Screening Form, by which they will screen sites for selection of water sources and latrines, a Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) that will be their means of ensuring compliancy of all project activities with process. Recipients will ensure that sub-implementing partners have sufficient capacity to complete the environmental screening process and to implement mitigation and monitoring measures.

USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion activity will not be hampered by national legislation.

3.0 ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

PROJECT/ACTIVITY 1: USAID EDUCATION: EQUITY AND INCLUSION

TABLE 3A. POTENTIAL IMPACTS – PROJECT/ACTIVITY 1

Project/Activity	Potential environmental and social impacts
Project/Activity 1: USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion	<p>One of the five components of Prioritized Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC) is separate girls and boys toilets plus water in each school. The activity is supporting schools in construction of latrines and WASH facilities. The following would be the potential environmental and social impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Construction activities may contribute to environmental impacts including removal of vegetation and trees, erosion and sedimentation, fuel, and oil releases from equipment and machinery, fugitive dust emissions, noise and increased traffic. ● Improper site assessment and selection, poor latrine or tap design or lack of proper operations and maintenance may increase transmission of vector borne disease. Contaminant water supplies or cause ecological damage to groundwater water system quality or potentially sensitive terrestrial or aquatic areas near the proposed project site. Improper latrine design or construction could be dangerous for users through structural collapse. Poorly sited latrine facilities may interfere with future land use capability. If waste is not properly handled and treated during or after servicing latrines such can transmit disease to other locations. ● With regard to water infrastructure, improper siting and lack of ground drainage may result in muddy conditions that are unsafe, breed mosquitoes, and promote erosion. <p>With proper implementation of the mitigation activities referenced below, the activities in this project will not have an adverse effect on the natural or physical environment.</p>
	No associated environmental or social impacts.
	No associated environmental or social impacts.

	No associated environmental or social impacts.
	No associated environmental or social impacts.
	No associated environmental or social impacts.
	No associated environmental or social impacts.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS

4.1 RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS

The following table summarizes the recommended determinations based on the environmental analysis conducted. Upon approval, these determinations become affirmed, per 22 CFR 216. Specified conditions, detailed in Section 5, become mandatory obligations of implementation, per ADS 204.

TABLE 4: ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATIONS

Projects/Activities	Categorical Exclusion Citation (if applicable)	Negative Determination	Positive Determination ⁵³	Deferral ⁵⁴
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

⁵³

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	☒			
	☒			
	☒			
	☒			

4.2 CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT

CRM screening for this activity showed low to medium climate risk rating. The intervention’s low rating does not require the development of specific climate change mitigation plans. However, activities related to providing support to improve the quality of the learning environment as measured by the PMECs sub activity 1.1 showed moderate climate risk rating, which require the development of a mitigation or adaptation plan. Hence, the implementing partner shall have sufficient technical and financial resources to address CRM measures and shall be integrated into activity implementation. IP shall comply with GON laws, regulations, standards and obligations under international treaties, agreements, conventions, including WHO, WMO, ILO, etc.) . See Annex 1 for the complete CRM table.

5.0 CONDITIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

5.1 CONDITIONS

The environmental determinations in this IEE are contingent upon full implementation of the following general implementation and monitoring requirements, as well as ADS 204 and other relevant requirements.

5.1.1 During Pre-Award:

- 5.1.1.1 Pre-Award Briefings: As feasible, the design team and/or the cognizant environmental officer(s) (e.g., MEO, REA, BEO) will provide a pre-award briefing for potential offerors on environmental compliance expectations/responsibilities at bidders’ conferences.
- 5.1.1.2 Solicitations: The design team, in coordination with the A/CO, will ensure solicitations include environmental compliance requirements and evaluation criteria. A/CO will ensure technical and cost proposal requirements include approach, staffing, and budget sufficient for complying with the terms of this IEE.
- 5.1.1.3 Awards: The AOR, in coordination with the A/CO, will ensure all awards and sub-awards, include environmental compliance requirements.

5.1.2 During Post-Award:

- 5.1.2.1 Post-Award Briefings: The AOR and/or the Mission Environmental officer (MEO) will provide post-award briefings for the IP on environmental compliance responsibilities.

- 5.1.2.3 Work Plans and Budgeting: The AOR will ensure the IP integrates environmental compliance requirements in work plans and budgets to comply with requirements, including EMMP implementation and monitoring.
- 5.1.2.4 Staffing: The AOR, in coordination with the IP, will ensure all awards have staffing capacity to implement environmental compliance requirements.
- 5.1.2.5 Records Management: The AOR will maintain environmental compliance documents in the official project/activity file and upload records to the designated USAID environmental compliance database system.
- 5.1.2.6 Host Country Environmental Compliance: The AOR will ensure the IP complies with applicable and appropriate host country environmental requirements unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. However, in the case of a conflict between the host country and USAID requirements, the more stringent shall govern.
- 5.1.2.7 Work Plan Review: The AOR will ensure the IP verifies, at least annually or when activities are added or modified, that activities remain within the scope of the IEE. Activities outside of the scope of the IEE cannot be implemented until the IEE is amended.
- 5.1.2.8 IEE Amendment: If new activities are introduced or other changes to the scope of this IEE occur, an IEE Amendment will be required.
- 5.1.2.14 USAID Monitoring Oversight: The AOR or designee, with the support of the cognizant environmental officer(s) (e.g., MEO, REA, BEO), will ensure monitoring of compliance with established requirements (e.g., by desktop reviews, site visits, etc.).
- 5.1.2.16 Environmental Compliance Mitigation and Monitoring Plan: The AOR will ensure the IP develops, obtains approval for, and implements Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plans (EMMPs) that are responsive to the stipulated environmental compliance requirements.
- 5.1.2.17 Environmental Compliance Reporting: The AOR will ensure the IP includes environmental compliance in regular project/activity reports, using indicators as appropriate; develops and submits the Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Reports (EMMRs); and completes and submits a Record of Compliance (RoC) describing their implementation of EMMP requirements in conjunction with the final EMMR or at the close of sub activities (as applicable). And where required by Bureaus or Missions, ensure the IP prepares a closeout plan consistent with contract documentation for AOR review and approval that outlines responsibilities for end-of-project operation, the transition of other operational responsibilities, and final EMMR with lessons learned.
- 5.1.2.18 Corrective Action: When noncompliance or unforeseen impacts are identified, IPs notify the AOR, place a hold on activities, take corrective action, and report on the effectiveness of corrective actions. The AOR initiates the corrective action process and ensures the IP completes and documents their activities. Where required by Bureaus or Missions, ensure Record of Compliance is completed.

5.2 AGENCY CONDITIONS

- 5.2.1 Sub-award Screening: The AOR will ensure the IP uses an adequate environmental screening tool to screen any sub-award applications and to aid in the development of EMMPs.
- 5.2.2 Other Supplemental Analyses: The AOR will ensure supplemental environmental analyses that are called for in the IEE are completed and documented.

5.2.3 Compliance with human subject research requirements: The AM, AOR shall assure that the IP and sub-awardees, -grantees, and -contractors demonstrate completion of all requirements for ethics review and adequate medical monitoring of human subjects who participate in research trials carried out through this IEE and ensure appropriate records are maintained. All documentation demonstrating completion of required review and approval of human subject trials must be in place prior to initiating any trials and cover the period of performance of the trial as described in the research protocol.

5.3 MITIGATION MEASURES

The mitigation measures presented in this section constitute the minimum required based on available information at the time of this IEE and the environmental analysis in Section 4. These measures shall provide general direction for completing the project/activity Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP) and/or the EA and PERSUAP, if required.

While implementing activities like construction of toilets and water infrastructure, the implementing partner shall follow environmental and WASH-specific best practices for small scale activities such as <https://usaidgems.org/bestPractice.htm> and the most recent guidance and best practice on WASH at : <http://www.washplus.org/>

The recipient is required to assure that the designs for all institutional latrines and water supply projects conform to applicable standards, codes, and requirements of the Government of Nepal for construction, as well as to follow water, sanitation and hygiene procedures which are in accordance with USAID and WHO guidelines (<http://www.who.int/water sanitation health>).

PROJECT/ACTIVITY 1: USAID EDUCATION: EQUITY AND INCLUSION

TABLE 5A. SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES FOR PROJECT/ACTIVITY 1

Project/Activity	Mitigation Measure(s)
Project/Activity 1: USAID Education: Equity and Inclusion	<p>The plan to scale should preventative include the following was to reduce possible indirect impacts</p> <p>Procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distribution – Import and distribute systems in bulk where possible ● Waste minimization – through elimination, recovery, reuse, recycling, or remanufacturing, of product packaging such as product shipping boxes. ● Waste reduction – prioritize reusable materials. For non-reusable wastes, seek ways to confine and condense these wastes to minimize the space required for their final disposal. Promote disposal of wastes in government established or approved landfills. <p>Withdrawals from or discharges to surface, drinking, or groundwater</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● aQysta pumps lift water for surface water sources, such as streams and rivers. aQysta pumps do not pump underground water from boreholes or aquifers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Assess discharge rates during investigation and confirm upon commissioning of the system.● Site watering points a safe distance from any waste dumps or chemical or pesticide storage sites● Monitor and repair leaks from cracked or broken pipes, faulty valves, etc. to avoid creating new entry points for contamination <p>Excavation of, placing of fill into, or removing gravel from a river, stream, or lake, Channeling water source</p> <p>Barsha pumps are plug-and-play devices that can be installed without any alteration to the river or canal where it is installed. Any alterations to the banks of a watercourse is subject to the following mitigation measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● No construction activities within or on the banks of a watercourse● Minimize footprint to area of works● Secure and stabilize work areas to ensure no erosion occurs● Follow construction guidelines.● Ensure that systems can withstand the projected impacts of climate change.● Perform an assessment of the watersheds to prevent over-pumping and contamination for long-term sustainability● Evaluate and manage environmental flows, particularly in the context of climate change
	<p>This activity will not have significant adverse impacts on the physical environment or social conditions.</p>
	<p>This activity will not have significant adverse impacts on the physical environment or social conditions.</p>
	<p>This activity will not have significant adverse impacts on the physical environment or social conditions.</p>
	<p>This activity will not have significant adverse impacts on the physical environment or social conditions.</p>
	<p>This activity will not have significant adverse impacts on the physical environment or social conditions.</p>
	<p>This activity will not have significant adverse impacts on the physical environment or social conditions.</p>

6.0 LIMITATIONS OF THIS INITIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EXAMINATION

The determinations recommended in this document apply only to projects/activities and sub-activities described herein. Other projects/activities that may arise must be documented in either a separate IEE, an IEE amendment if the activities are within the same project/activity, or other type of environmental compliance document and shall be subject to an environmental analysis within the appropriate documents listed above.

Other than projects/activities determined to have a Positive Threshold Determination, it is confirmed that the projects/activities described herein do not involve actions normally having a significant effect on the environment, including those described in 22 CFR 216.2(d).

In addition, other than projects/activities determined to have a Positive Threshold Determination and/or a pesticide management plan (PERSUAP), it is confirmed that the projects/activities described herein do not involve any actions listed below. Any of the following actions would require additional environmental analyses and environmental determinations:

- Support project preparation, project feasibility studies, or engineering design for activities listed in §216.2(d)(1);
- Affect endangered and threatened species or their critical habitats per §216.5, FAA 118, FAA 119;
- Provide support to extractive industries (e.g. mining and quarrying) per FAA 117;
- Promote timber harvesting per FAA 117 and 118;
- Lead to new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or renovation work per §216.2(b)(1);
- Support agro-processing or industrial enterprises per §216.1(b)(4);
- Provide support for regulatory permitting per §216.1(b)(2);
- Lead to privatization of industrial facilities or infrastructure with heavily polluted property per §216.1(b)(4);
- Research, testing, or use of genetically engineered organisms per §216.1(b)(1), ADS 211
- Assist the procurement (including payment in kind, donations, guarantees of credit) or use (including handling, transport, fuel for transport, storage, mixing, loading, application, clean-up of spray equipment, and disposal) of pesticides or activities involving procurement, transport, use, storage, or disposal of toxic materials. Pesticides cover all insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, etc. covered under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act per §216.2(e) and §216.3(b).

7.0 REVISIONS

Per 22 CFR 216.3(a)(9), when ongoing programs are revised to incorporate a change in scope or nature, a determination will be made as to whether such change may have an environmental impact not previously assessed. If so, this IEE will be amended to cover the changes. Per ADS 204, it is the responsibility of the USAID AOR to keep the MEO/REA and BEO informed of any new information or changes in the activity that might require revision of this environmental analysis and environmental determination.

ATTACHMENTS:

Annex 1: Climate Risk Management Summary Table for Activity (use for Activity level IEE)

Annex 1. **Activity** Climate Risk Management Summary Table

Tasks/Defined or Illustrative Interventions	Climate Risks ⁵⁶	Risk Rating ⁵⁷	How Risks are Addressed ⁵⁸	Opportunities to Strengthen Climate Resilience ⁵⁹
	Selection and preparation of construction site may have impacts leading to erosion and siltation of water resource affecting vulnerability to climate change	Moderate Risk	No construction activities within or on the banks of a watercourse; minimizing footprint to area of works and securing and stabilizing work areas to ensure no erosion occurs.	Follow best practices for construction and source protection Periodically inspect area around the supply for changes in land use
	NA	Low	Not applicable	Not applicable
	NA	Low	Not applicable	Not applicable
	NA	Low	Not applicable	Not applicable
	NA	Low	Not applicable	Not applicable
	NA	Low	Not applicable	Not applicable
	NA	Low	Not applicable	Not applicable

⁵⁶ List key risks related to the defined/illustrative interventions identified in the screening and additional assessment.

⁵⁷ Low/Moderate/ High

⁵⁸ Describe how risks have been addressed in activity design and/or additional steps that will be taken in implementation. If you chose to accept the risk, briefly explain why.

⁵⁹ Describe opportunities to achieve multiple development objectives by integrating climate resilience or mitigation measures

[END OF ATTACHMENT 4]

[END OF THE NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER 72036722RFA00003]