



USAID | BENIN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Ladies and Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: Solicitation for a Personal Services Contractor (PSC) – Development Outreach
Communication Specialist, USAID/Benin

Solicitation No.: 680-08-006
Issuance Date: February 20, 2008
Closing Date: March 17, 2008
Closing Time: 12:00 noon local time

USAID/BENIN is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage all qualified candidates to apply. Persons with disabilities will be assisted and receive reasonable accommodation.

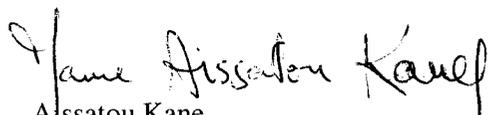
The United States Government, represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Benin is seeking applications (Optional Form 612 or Standard Form 171) from qualified, U.S. Citizen Resident Aliens or Cooperating Country Nationals (CCNs), interested in providing the services described below.

Any questions as well as submission of applications in responses to this solicitation must be directed to:

Cosmas Apedo, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
USAID/Benin
Office of Procurement
Rue Caporal Anani Bernard
American Embassy
01 BP 2012
Phone (229) 21-300-500, ext. 2112
Cotonou, Republic of Benin
Email address: capedo@usaid.gov

USAID/Benin anticipates awarding one (1) Resident U.S. Citizen, or a Cooperating Country National (CCN) PSC contract as a result of this solicitation, subject to availability of funds. USAID/Benin reserves the right not to award a contract as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not represent a commitment on behalf of USAID. The US Government is not obligated to make an award or to pay any costs associated with the preparation and submission of an application in response to this solicitation.

Sincerely,


Aissatou Kane
Senior Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
USAID/Benin, Cotonou

SOLICITATION INFORMATION

1. SOLICITATION NUMBER: PSC 680-08-006
2. ISSUANCE DATE: February 20, 2008
3. CLOSING DATE: March 17, 2008 12:00 noon Local Time.
4. POSITION TITLE: Development Outreach Communication Specialist.
5. MARKET VALUE: GS-12 (US \$57,709 to US \$75,025) or FSN Grade- 9
6. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: 36 months with option to extend
7. PLACE OF PERFORMANCE: Cotonou, Republic of Benin.
8. SUPERVISION: USAID/Benin Program Officer.
9. AREA OF CONSIDERATION: Only U.S. Citizens Resident Alien or Cooperating Country Nationals (CCNs).

I. PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this solicitation is to obtain services to develop and implement a development outreach and communications strategy for the USAID/Benin program which complies with USAID norms and standards. The incumbent will also coach staff in written and oral communications skills in English and manage contracts for communications or language services as needed.

II. BASIC FUNCTION OF THE POSITION

The United States Agency for International Development Mission to Benin, USAID/Benin, with an annual program budget of approximately \$27 million, includes program objectives in basic education, health and support for women's justice and empowerment. In December 2006 Benin was named as a Presidential Malaria Initiative (PMI) country. The PMI program will account for approximately half of the USAID/Benin program budget. The USAID program includes a strong cross-cutting themes in all of its program activities. There include a focus on good governance to promote transparent and accountable management of public resources, emphasis on HIV/AIDS and the importance of gender considerations.

USAID is staffed with two US Direct Hire Foreign Service Officers, one US Personal Services Contractor, two TCN Personal Service Contractors and 31 Beninese nationals.

The Communications Specialist is responsible for all aspects of development outreach and communications for the USAID/Benin program. S/he is the principal Mission advisor on communications and works with Mission staff to ensure that communications are effective and well tailored to the interests of various audiences. S/he ensures that communications about the USAID/Benin program reflect best practices and comply with standards established by the USAID Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs and the US Department of State. The Communications Specialist also assists the Mission in transferring communication skills to Mission staff. S/he works with staff on quality control of written communications and on improving skills for effective communications, especially writing.

The Communication Specialist reports to the Program Officer and collaborates closely with Mission staff and implementing partners. S/he also collaborates with the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer (PAO) to ensure that USAID complies with State Department guidance on communications. S/he serves as principal liaison with the USAID Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

III. MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Leads Mission staff to formulate and implement out a development outreach and communications strategy to inform key audiences about the USAID program in Benin. Works with USAID staff and partners as needed to ensure that messages are well targeted, coherent and consistent. 60%)

1. Serves as Mission expert and focal point on USAID guidance and requirements related to development outreach and communications. Stays informed of guidance issued by the Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs and keeps USAID staff and partners informed of communication policies.
2. With input from Mission staff, develops and implements a communications strategy that promotes a better understanding of and support for USAID programs in Benin to various audiences. Explores, recommends, and applies a variety of formats for promoting Mission programs and activities. Identifies communications strategies for key audiences. Develops an annual workplan and ensures that roles/responsibilities are understood and executed as planned. Conducts quarterly reviews and updates with input from supervisor and other Mission staff. Participates in field trips to visit Mission activities. Monitors reports in local media concerning USAID programs.
3. Coordinates the production of communications materials about the USAID/Benin program. This includes reviewing and commenting on speeches, webpage narrative, press communiqués, and briefing materials which are produced in draft by program staff. Coordinates Mission-wide quarterly reviews of the website and ensures that content is updated as scheduled. Collaborates with computer systems support staff to maintain the Mission website. With input from Mission staff, prepares and updates at least semi-annually a standard information package on the USAID program in Benin for briefings and for distribution to the public and the media. Obtains clearance from the Public Affairs Officer for speeches, press communiqués and briefing materials as necessary.
4. Establishes a network of key development outreach and communications contacts. Works closely with the Public Affairs Officer of the US Embassy to organize and coordinate public events such as project inaugurations, signing ceremonies, and partner meetings. Facilitates contacts among members of the local media and USAID implementers to encourage press coverage of USAID programs. Maintains contacts with staff in USAID/Washington, including backstops for the communications and outreach function in the Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs and the Africa Bureau.

5. Assists USAID/Benin in planning and executive of site visits for high-level visitors such as members of Congress and/or their staff.
6. Shares responsibility with the Office of Procurement for ensuring compliance with USAID guidelines on branding and marking of events, services, and products.

B. Provides quality control for Mission communications and works with Mission staff to improve English skills, especially writing. (30%)

1. Serves as Mission editor for communications materials. Proof reads and edits key documents such as annual reports, written copy for the USAID/Benin website, country profiles, speeches, and other briefing materials. Works with staff to ensure that documents meet USAID style requirements and conform to recommended best practices. Reviews and provides clearance on key reporting and briefing documents.
2. Works with Mission staff to build skills in oral and written communications. Establishes an in-house coaching and training program to improve skills in written communications in various formats addressed to a wide variety of audiences. Reviews documents in progress and works with staff members to introduce appropriate edits. Coaching may include a combination of group sessions, on-line computer training, and individual coaching. Ensures that goals for improving skills are appropriately tailored to requirements for individual positions.

C. Provides other program support (10%)

1. Stays informed about new initiatives in the field of communications for development
2. Participates in program planning and design of activities, especially when these entail a communications component. Reads and provides feedback on activity planning and design documents.
3. Manages support services for language, media, and communications such as translation, graphic design, website maintenance, filming, or photography. This may include conducting research, writing specifications for statements of work, developing evaluation criteria, and managing contracts.
4. Performs other tasks within the Office of Program Coordination as assigned by the Program Officer.
5. Ensures activities or actions for which s/he is primarily responsible are properly documented and files are maintained according to USAID standards.

IV. REPORTS AND WORK PLANS

Within 45 days of signing the contract, the contractor will prepare work objectives for the first year of the contract.

V. PERIOD OF SERVICE

The Contractor's period of service shall be approximately three years from the effective date of the contract. The contract may be further extended on an annual basis subject to satisfactory performance, program needs and availability of funds. The contractor is expected to be able to successfully perform the full range of duties within one year.

VI. SECURITY AND MEDICAL CLEARANCE

US Citizens must be able to obtain a valid Security Clearance from State Department as well as a medical clearance from State M/MED if selected.

VII. QUALIFICATIONS

A. Education

Minimum requirement is completion of an undergraduate university degree (bachelors degree or equivalent), preferably in an area relevant for international development programs. A master's degree is highly desirable. Training or certification in English as a second language is also highly desirable.

B. Prior Work Experience

A minimum of two years proven relevant experience is required. This includes experience in teaching or training in a professional setting and experience in preparing communications geared toward a variety of target audiences. Candidates must be familiar with or have professional experience in a developing country, preferably in Africa. Previous experience must demonstrate ability to function at a fully successful level within 12 months.

C. Post Entry Training

USAID courses in Development Outreach and Communications, Acquisitions and Assistance, and Activity management. Incumbent will receive a combination of classroom based training, along with in-house coaching and supervision. Incumbent is expected to be proactive in identifying opportunities to learn and apply skills relevant to the position. This includes seeking out internet-based training opportunities and reading key USAID documents. Incumbent will be expected to learn about core USAID business systems and the role of USAID in administering US foreign assistance. Incumbent may be requested to attend conferences and meetings organized by USAID or other development partners on matters related to his/her professional responsibilities.

D. Language Proficiency

Level IV Fluency in English is required. At Level IV, which is a US government standard for language proficiency, a person has full professional proficiency and is able to use language fluently and accurately on all levels, including spoken and written, normally pertinent to professional needs. S/he can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of own personal and professional experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary. S/he can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations and makes only rare errors of pronunciation and grammar. S/he can handle informal interpreting from and into the language. S/he can write and edit documents with a high degree of grammatical accuracy and in the appropriate style and tone for a variety of audiences. Level V, fluency in English, is preferred.

Level II fluency in French is required. At Level 2, which is a US government standard for language proficiency, a person has limited working proficiency and can satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. S/he may need help with difficulties but can understand what is being communicated and participate in most conversations on non-technical subjects. Ability to read newspapers, routine correspondence and partner reports is required. Fluency beyond Level II in French and ability to write in French is desirable.

E. Abilities and skills

Must have demonstrated, relevant creative, analytical and oral/written presentation skills. This includes the ability to craft information targeted for a variety of audiences in various media formats, such as press releases, websites, feature articles, reports or briefing papers. Must have basic analytical skills to assess language skills and assist staff in developing and accomplishing appropriate learning goals, to analyze policies and guidelines and be able to take or recommend appropriate actions. Must have demonstrated ability to manage complex tasks, juggle multiple priorities, meet deadlines and deliver products that meet professional standards. Must have demonstrated strong interpersonal skills, including an ability to build a network of professional contacts, work collaboratively with junior and senior colleagues on complex tasks in a multicultural setting and provide leadership in areas of competence. Knowledge of the development context within Benin is highly desirable.

Must have good computer skills. Experience using Microsoft Office programs including Word, Excel and Outlook is highly desirable. Must be able to conduct research on the internet.

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation criteria are listed in increasing order of importance.

Education (10%)

Initial screening is Yes/No scoring. An applicant will not be considered if s/he does not meet the minimum requirements. Education and training beyond the minimum requirement will be assessed from review of candidates' applications and through interview questions.

Minimum requirement is completion of an undergraduate university degree (bachelors degree or equivalent), preferably in a relevant area, for example Communications, English, or a social science. A master's degree is highly desirable. Training or certification in English as a second language is also highly desirable.

Languages (20%)

Initial screening is Yes/No scoring. Applicants who do not include a discussion of English and French language fluency in the application will not receive further consideration. Fluency in French and English will be assessed from review of candidates' applications, during interviews and as part of a written test.

Level IV Fluency in English is required. At Level IV, which is a US government standard for language proficiency, a person has full professional proficiency and is able to use language fluently and accurately on all levels, including spoken and written, normally pertinent to professional needs. S/he can understand and participate in any conversations within the range of own personal and professional experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary. S/he can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations and makes only rare errors of pronunciation and grammar. S/he can handle informal interpreting from and into the language. S/he can write and edit documents with a high degree of grammatical accuracy and in the appropriate style and tone for a variety of audiences. Level V, fluency in English, is preferred.

Level II fluency in French is required. At Level 2, which is a US government standard for language proficiency, a person has limited working proficiency and can satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. S/he may need help with difficulties but can understand what is being communicated and participate in most conversations on non-technical subjects. Ability to read newspapers, routine correspondence and partner reports is required. Fluency beyond Level II in French and ability to write in French is desirable.

Experience (30%)

Initial screening is Yes/No scoring. An applicant will not be considered if s/he does not meet the minimum requirements. Depth and relevance of prior experience with respect to position requirements will be assessed from review of candidates' applications and through interview questions

A minimum of two years relevant experience is required. This includes experience in teaching or training in a professional setting and experience in preparing communications geared toward a variety of target audiences. Candidates are required to be familiar with or have professional experience in a developing country, preferably in Africa. Previous experience must demonstrate ability to function at a fully successful level within 12 months.

Abilities and Skills (40%)

Applicants who do not include a discussion of all skills and abilities in the application materials will not receive further consideration. Applicants are encouraged to expand on skills and abilities in a cover letter as part of the application. Depth and relevance of abilities and skills will be assessed by a review of candidates' applications, interviews and a written test.

Applicants must have demonstrated, relevant creative, analytical and oral/written presentation skills. This includes the ability to craft information targeted for a variety of audiences in various media formats, such as press releases, websites, feature articles, reports or briefing papers. Must have basic analytical skills to assess language skills and assist staff in developing and accomplishing appropriate learning goals, to analyze policies and guidelines and be able to take or recommend appropriate actions. Must have demonstrated ability to manage complex tasks, juggle multiple priorities, meet deadlines and deliver products that meet professional standards. Must have demonstrated strong interpersonal skills, including an ability to build a network of professional contacts, work collaboratively with junior and senior colleagues on complex tasks in a multicultural setting and provide leadership in areas of competence. Knowledge of the development context within Benin is highly desirable.

Must have good computer skills. Experience using Microsoft Office programs including Word, Excel and Outlook is highly desirable. Ability to conduct internet research is desirable.

IX. POSITION ELEMENTS

A. Supervision Received

Incumbent works with minimum direction from the supervisor, who provides overall objectives, may suggest approaches to consider, and reviews completed reports and other assignments. Incumbent is expected to use self-initiative and sound judgment in planning and carrying out assignments and to function with substantial independence. S/he is expected to be able to plan work for a time horizon of up to one year. Work is evaluated for effectiveness of results, quality of insights and analysis, professionalism, and compliance with prevailing policies, regulations, directives and objectives.

B. Available Guidelines

USAID policies in the Automated Directives System and Handbooks, Mission Orders and Mission Notices, Embassy Notices, Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAR), USAID Primer. USAID guidelines on Development Outreach and Communications.

C. Exercise of Judgment

The need for quick response in situations where priorities may have to be adjusted quickly requires the incumbent to exercise discretion and good judgment and to operate with high levels of autonomy, responsibility and authority.

D. Authority to Make Commitments

Incumbent does not have authority to make commitments on behalf of USAID/Benin. However, his/her recommendations and assessments are given substantial consideration when policy decisions or actions are taken. The supervisor clears all major written communications to parties outside the Mission. The incumbent does not have the authority to make a financial commitment on behalf of the U.S. government. S/he must have a thorough understanding of the limits of her/his authority and know when to refer a final decision to a supervisor or contracting officer.

E. Nature, Level, and Purpose of Contacts

For work in coaching English, the incumbent seeks guidance from the staff of the Training Division of USAID's Office of Human Resources, the Director of the English Language Center or information from other local providers of language teaching services. Incumbent inquires about availability and costs of services such as teaching, testing or translating. Incumbent provides technical guidance and oversight to service providers. For work in communications, incumbent regularly seeks input and guidance from other USAID or USG officials such as the US Embassy Public Affairs Officer, senior Public Affairs advisors in the Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs and the Africa Bureau. Maintains frequent contacts are with supervisors and staff of the USAID Mission in order to plan work, set objectives, review progress and make recommendations. Incumbent also provides technical guidance. Has limited contact with local media representatives. Goes through Public Affairs Office to arrange media events. Will have limited contact with heads of agencies or diplomatic Missions mainly to convey basic information about procedures or facts about the program. Incumbent does not have authority to give interviews or publicly comment on policy issues.

F. Supervision Exercised

Exercises no administrative supervision, but the incumbent provides technical guidance related to language training and communications to Mission staff, particularly professionals who work in program and support offices and their supervisors. The incumbent is expected to coordinate with Mission staff and partners in producing communication materials.

G. Post Entry Training

Orientation to USAID for new employees. Introduction to Automated Directives System. Development Outreach and Communications course. Trainings toward CTO certification. Any other Agency-mandated training as appropriate.

H. Time Required to Perform Full Range of Duties

Twelve months

X. LOGISTIC SUPPORT:

The logistic support provided by USAID/Benin includes office space and equipment, transportation in country for official meetings, work related travel arrangements/tickets and secretarial and translation services.

XI. APPLYING

Consideration and selection will be based on evaluation of the qualifications and evaluation criteria by a recruitment committee. Applicants may submit a CV, OF-612, or SF-171 and are strongly encouraged to write a brief narrative to demonstrate how their previous experience and skills are suited for this position. Applicants must provide names and contact information for at least three references. USAID may seek additional contacts for reference check as appropriate or determine necessary.

After candidate applications have been initially reviewed, only those which give evidence of meeting minimum requirements for education, professional experience and relevant skills will receive further consideration. The recruitment committee will identify a short list of candidates who will be invited to complete a written exam and interview. After reviewing all results, the recruitment committee will make a determination of candidates which have the requisite qualifications and experience to successfully fulfill the position. The references for these candidates will be contacted. Information from reference checks will be included in the final recommendation and ranking of candidates submitted to the contracting officer. These candidates may be invited to return to USAID for additional interviews.

Application forms: Standard Form 171 can be obtained from http://www.jobs.bpa.gov/How_To_Apply/forms/sf171.pdf and Optional Form 612 can be obtained from the USAID website <http://www.usaid.gov/forms/of-612.doc> or at federal offices.

Applicants should retain for their record copies of all enclosures that accompany their proposals. Please reference the number of this solicitation when sending your application. Submissions made via e-mail MUST be Microsoft Office Word 2003 SP2 or PDF format. Electronic submissions will be accepted.

N.B.: Mark submissions "PSC 680-08-006". Late applications will not be accepted. Applicants are requested to provide their full mailing address and contact information (including fax, telephone and/or e-mail where available). **No response will be sent to unsuccessful applicants.**

XII. COMPENSATION

The position has been classified at a GS-12 for U.S. citizens and at Grade FSN-9 for CCNs. Final compensation will be negotiated within the range of the market value at GS-12 for U.S. citizens and at Grade FSN-9 for CCNs, based upon the candidates past salary, work history, experience and educational background. Salaries over and above the market value will not be entertained or negotiated.

AS A MATTER OF POLICY, AND AS APPROPRIATE, A USPSC IS NORMALLY AUTHORIZED THE FOLLOWING:

Only benefits listed below will be paid for the life of the contract.

Benefits:

1. Employee's FICA contribution*
2. Contribution toward Health and Life Insurance
3. Pay Comparability Adjustment
4. Annual Salary Increase
5. Annual and Sick Leave
6. Eligibility for Worker's Compensation
7. Medevac insurance

**Note: For US citizen, the contractor's salary will be subject to employee's FICA and Medicare contribution.*

***Other than the benefits listed above, no other benefits or allowances will be paid to the selected candidate.**

XIII. CONTRACT INFORMATION BULLETINS (CIBs) OR ACQUISITION AND ASSISTANCE POLICY DIRECTIVES (AAPDs) PERTAINING TO PSCs.

AAPDs/CIBs contain changes to USAID policy and General Provisions in USAID regulations and contracts. Please refer to this website http://www.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/cib/subject.html to determine which AAPDs/CIBs apply to this contract.

XIV. LIST OF REQUIRED FORMS FOR PSCs:

1. Standard Form 171 or Optional Form 612
2. Contractor Physical Examination For children 11 years and under (DS-1622)**
3. Contractor Physical Examination For children 12 years and over (DS-1843)**
4. Questionnaire for National Security Positions (SF-86)**,
5. Authority for Release of Information (AID 610-14)**
6. Foreign Residence Data (AID 6-85)**
7. Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970, As Amended**
8. Notice Required by The Privacy Act of 1974 **
9. Fingerprint Cards (FD-258)**.

** The forms listed 2 through 9 shall only be completed upon the advice of the Contracting Officer that an applicant is the successful candidate for the position.