



**Bidders' Meeting with interested applicants to
USAID/DCHA/CMM's Annual Program Statement (APS)
Solicitation #M/OAA/DCHA/DOFDA-09-857**

Summary of Questions, Answers and Issues Discussed

May 12, 2009

****Updated May 22, 2009***

Note: This document reflects the Questions and Answers discussed at the May 12th Bidders' Meeting. USAID will post additional Questions and Answers as they are received. Please check this website regularly for updates. If you would like to receive email updates, please send your name and email address to Jacob Toukhy (jtoukhy@usaid.gov) to have your name added to our distribution list.

Where can I obtain a copy of the APS?

The full APS announcement and all amendments are posted at www.grants.gov and can be accessed via the following website: <http://www07.grants.gov/search/agency.do>. Click on "U.S. Agency for International Development" (bottom of 2nd column) and you will find this APS listed with the name "USAID/DCHA/CMM Annual Program Statement for Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation Programs and Activities"

Can applicants not present at the May 12th Bidders' Meeting still submit applications for funding under this APS?

Yes. The goal of the "bidders' meeting" is to facilitate communication between interested applicants and the USAID/West Bank-Gaza Mission, and to improve the overall transparency of the application and review process. All information discussed at the "bidders' meeting" will be made available to all interested applicants, irrespective of whether or not they attended the meeting on May 12th, via the USAID/West Bank-Gaza Mission website at www.usaid.gov/wbg/. (See page 5 of the APS.)

Is there new emphasis and direction compared to last round?

Yes, compared to last year's APS, the 2009 APS includes West Bank-Gaza guidelines (in Attachment 1) and a reference to relating applications to a theory (or theories) of change (in Attachment 2). Also, the selection criteria in this year's APS includes innovation and gender considerations.

How do the three Israel/West bank-Gaza-specific guidelines relate to scoring and evaluation criteria? Do applications need to meet all 3 guidelines?

The APS specifies that applicants *must* take into account country-specific guidelines following the country list in Attachment 1 of the APS. The country-specific guidelines for USAID/West Bank-Gaza are to be seen as a “lens” through which applicants should define “best practices”, “innovation”, and “sustainability” in the selection criteria. Failure to respond to the mission-specific guidelines will result in a lower score – potentially rendering an application uncompetitive. (See pages 6 and 25 of the APS.)

With regards to “Evaluation Criteria” on page 19 of the APS, I have a question about the first criterion, which deals with the people-to-people programmatic approach (item “A.i”). The APS states that 30 points will be allocated “based on the extent to which proposed activities demonstrate a realistic plan to do one or more of the following”, and then lists 4 bullets. Do applications need to address all 3 bullets to obtain the 30 points, or just one of the three?

The 30 points will be distributed based on the extent that your proposal demonstrates a plan to do one or more of the three. An application that provides a very compelling argument to how it will accomplish one of the three bullets is equally eligible for the 30 points as an application that addresses two of the bullets.

With regards to “Evaluation Criteria” on page 20 of the APS, item “B.i”, which deals with impact and sustainability, states that 8 points will be allocated based on the extent to which the application describes the sustainability of the proposed activity, and then lists 4 bullets. Do applications need to address all 4 bullets in order to obtain the 8 points, or just one of the four?

In this case, the APS states that bullets “a, b, c and d are considered equal”. This means that the 8 points will be distributed equally among the 4 components, or 2 points per bullet. In other words, your application must meet all 4 criteria in order to obtain the full 8 points. **Please note that this differs from what was stated at the May 12th Bidders’ Meeting. This interpretation supersedes the one presented at the conference.*

Has USAID looked into collaborating with experts in the people to people community on program evaluation and best practices? Upon what assumptions are USAID’s proposal evaluation criteria based?

DCHA/CMM has partnered with academic institutions and think tanks (including George Mason University and the Woodrow Wilson Center). DCHA/CMM ensures that its programmatic approach, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are based on the latest research and best practices. The FY-09 APS has information on “Theories of Change” – or identification of theories to be ‘tested’ in the activity and an M&E plan that ties inputs to outputs and outcomes.

How collaborative is the APS proposal review process? Does the review panel consist of multi-disciplinary team members?

The APS includes a description of the selection process. The “Step 1” review occurs at the USAID/West Bank-Gaza Mission, while DCHA/CMM conducts the “Step 2” review. The combined steps include Technical Evaluation Committee panels, which are

comprised of officers with multi-discipline areas of expertise from different parts of the U.S. Government– The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, The U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, the USAID/West Bank-Gaza Mission, and regional and technical officers at USAID/ Washington. Each proposal is read thoroughly by several people, carefully scored and thoroughly discussed.

Is there a preference for joint Israeli-Palestinian projects, or for projects that focus solely on one side?

No, there is no preference for Israeli-Palestinian versus intra-Israeli or intra-Palestinian applications. All proposals are evaluated separately on basis of their individual merits, strengths and weaknesses. The bottom line for any target group or subject is that you have to make a strong argument for the applications relationship to the APS goal for people to people programs, reconciliation and conflict mitigation.

Can you award infrastructure projects?

As long as proposed project is meeting the APS guidelines, it will be considered. For example, the Mission might support an agriculture program that contributes to peace, as well as improves lives of Palestinians. EcoPeace-Friends of the Earth Middle East implements environmental projects and often addresses infrastructural needs that impact communities on both sides of the border – wastewater treatment and sanitation. In this example, infrastructure projects are necessary for bringing both sides together to solve a joint problem.

What are the minimum and maximum amounts of time for the duration of projects under this APS?

The APS states that projects in Israel and West Bank-Gaza can have a duration of up to 36 months. There is not a minimum timeframe for projects.

Do I need to complete my registration with Grants.gov prior to submitting my proposal on or before June 5th?

All organizations must obtain a DUNS number. Organizations can request a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet via a web form at the following link: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. If your organization already has a DUNS number, you do not need to obtain a new one.

The APS provides step by step guidance on the Grants.gov registration process in Attachment 6. The first step to getting your organization registered at Grants.gov is to request a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet via the above mentioned web form and then to register in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) system at the following link: <http://www.ccr.gov/>

Registration with Grants.gov is not mandatory. USAID strongly recommends registration in Grants.gov. Grants.gov is the single access point for over 900 grant programs offered by the 26 Federal grant-making agencies that allows organizations and individuals to electronically find and apply for competitive opportunities from all Federal

grant-making agencies. Furthermore, if any amendments are made to this APS registered organizations will receive email alerts.

(See pages 11, 16 and 17 of the APS, and Attachment 6.)

What does the pre-award survey involve?

The pre-award survey involves a review of procurement policies, personnel policies and financial management as part of the pre-award responsibility determination required by ADS 303.3.9. Only successful prime organizations that are selected will undergo this survey. However, as part of the responsibility determination the Agreement Officer may consider the responsibility of major sub-awardees (sub-awardees who receive \$300,000 or more per year). Keep in mind that major sub-awardees will be subject to for an audit which will review 100% of the sub-awardees locally incurred costs so the due diligence of the prime awardee in selecting sub-awardees is important. We ask that you cooperate with reviewers and make your records and pertinent documents available so that you can be approved and the award can be made. For more information on the pre-award survey, you can read USAID's Automated Directives System Series 303.3.9.1, which outlines USAID's pre-award survey policy at the following website:

<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>.

Can you tell us more about the branding and marking plan requirement?

The successful applicants will be requested to submit a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan in accordance with USAID's Marking and Branding Regulations as defined in ADS 320 and 22 CFR 226.91. These can be accessed through the following links as well:

- <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf>
- http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2006/aprqtr/22cfr226.91.htm

Further guidance will be provided by the Agreement Officer following selection.

What other requirements are recipients bound to?

There are two major requirements. First, every year, the General Accountability Office (GAO) is required by law to review the Mission's compliance with Executive Order 13222-Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism. The Mission has established its policies and procedures to comply with that requirement and the Executive Order in Mission Order No. 21. We do a lot of training in ensuring that we and our partners are compliant with that, because the repercussions are severe. The Mission Order covers the requirement to "vet" non-U.S. organizations and individuals who receive USG funds, and contains mandatory clauses and certifications which are required for both prime and sub-awardees. You need to read and fully understand Mission Order 21 because you will be held accountable to it. In addition to regular reviews of partners files for compliance with this Mission Order, the Regional Inspector General and GAO conduct frequent audits of all the Mission's programs to ensure compliance with vetting and inclusion of anti-terrorism clauses in prime awards and sub-awards that are signed. Within the Mission Order, there

is a clause entitled “Restriction on Facility Names” which may not seem appropriate to include in your awards, however it is required.

This and other Mission-specific policies and directives can be referenced at the following website: <http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/PartnersResources.html>.

Second, all locally incurred costs will be audited by the USAID Regional Inspector General (RIG). The auditors will look at your books and ensure that every dollar has been spent in accordance with all the rules and requirements that are out there. They contract through local accounting firms who carry out the audits on the RIG’s behalf. We say this to let you know that if you receive an award, the auditors will come at some point and you will be asked to sign documents and prepare files in advance of their arrival. You will be expected to cooperate with them to implement recommendations and findings. . The auditors conduct financial audits and they also review the partners’ compliance with the Agreement terms and conditions, as well as the organization’s internal control structure. Among other items, they specifically review the partners’ compliance with 22 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 226.52 “Financial Reporting” and 22 CFR 228 “Rules of Source, Origin and Nationality for Commodities and Services Financed by USAID”. If you would like additional information, you can reference the CFRs at the following website: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/cfr.html#22>.

The audit is often during the active period of the award. It is possible to be audited in the middle of implementation and then again after the award has expired.

What are the policies specific to Gaza vetting, contact, and material support?

USAID programs under this APS can support activities in Gaza, but applicants are cautioned about the difficult and restricted operating environment in Gaza. Grants may assist civil society organizations and others that encourage peace dialogue. USAID implementing partners working in Gaza must minimize security risks and adhere to the U.S. Government “contact policy” that prohibits contact with Hamas and other designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). For more information on this policy, you may review the “Contractors/Grantees Notices” section of the USAID/West Bank-Gaza Mission website at <http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/PartnersResources.html>. (See page 26 of the APS.)

We do not believe that we will have enough time to successfully meet the June 5th deadline. Can the proposal deadline be extended?

June 5th at midnight is a hard deadline and will be enforced. Please anticipate the unanticipated. Organizations that wait until the last minute to submit proposals may encounter technical problems and risk being disqualified. Only electronic submissions are accepted. Two electronic files—technical and budget – must be sent via email to conflict@usaid.gov, eramirez@usaid.gov and clafargue@usaid.gov. Submission through Grants.gov is optional and does not preclude these requirements.

Will there be another time that we can apply for funds this year?

USAID anticipates issuing one round for this APS during fiscal year 2009 (10/1/08-9/30/08). The APS may be amended to establish subsequent rounds and new submission deadlines, based on funding availability. It is also important that interested organizations sign-up for e-mail updates with Grants.gov, so that if any amendments are made to this APS they will receive email alerts. (See page 17 of the APS.)

Do the criteria for consideration of “follow-on awards” apply only to organizations that received previous USAID awards, or too all previous work completed by the organization, regardless of the fund source?

Follow-on award criteria are based on previous USAID awards. Proposed projects from an organization that already received a USAID award must differ in geographic area and/or scope in order to be considered under this APS.

Where can I get more information on USAID activities, including past CMM awards? The Democracy & Governance Office section of the USAID/West Bank-Gaza website includes the Results Framework for our office, as well as fact sheets on all of our programs, including CMM awards. These can be accessed through our website:

www.usaid.gov/wbg/ then go to "Democracy and Governance", then go to "Fact Sheets", and the CMM programs are the ones that all include the words "conflict management and mitigation" in their title. Alternatively, these links will direct you to the fact sheets for the Mission's 3 ongoing CMM - funded projects from earlier cycles.

http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/FS_DGO_1.html

http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/FS_DGO_3.html

http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/FS_DGO_9.html

Where did the list of Theories of Change originate?

The theories of change examples provided in the APS are the distillation of various theories of change that have been identified from academic literature and programmatic reports and evaluations. These theories of change represent only a sample of the broad theories of change than could underlay conflict mitigation and reconciliation programs that have been collected by USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. As stated in the APS, this list is not meant to be a comprehensive listing of possible theories of change, but rather is illustrative of some of the broad categories of possible theories of change.

Are we limited to the "theories of change" hypotheses referenced in Attachment 2 of the APS? Are some given priority over others?

Applicants must identify the Theories of Change that underlie the proposed activity. If the Theory of Change used is not listed in Attachment 2 of the APS, further description must be provided. The illustrative list of hypotheses is not comprehensive or in any way prescriptive for APS applications. The two theories grouped in Family 3 (Healthy Relationships) are perhaps the most consistent with the aim of this APS, which is to promote understanding, mutual respect and reconciliation through active participation of opposing groups. Programs in Families 2 (Attitudes Toward Peace) and Family 4 (Peace Process) would qualify as long as the focus is on bringing together those on opposite sides of ethnic, religious, political, cultural, economic, regional or other divisions.

Programs or activities that build on theories from other families may be harder to justify as being consistent with the aim of this APS. (See pages 3, 6 and 29 of FY-09 APS.)

How does the effective start date (July 1-Sep 30, 2009) take into account "slippage" and delays, as past experience has shown?

The APS states that applications should have an effective start date for initial program activities to commence anytime after July 1, 2009 and before September 30, 2009. While your applications must conform to this requirement, we acknowledge the unlikelihood of awards being made within that timeframe. (A November/December 2009 start date is more realistic.) Based on past experience, we strongly recommend maintaining flexibility and planning for this contingency. Delays may be due to any number of reasons, including pre-award negotiations, pre-award reviews and surveys of new USAID partners, and other factors which are out of our control. We are working to ensure a shorter award timeframe this year. Please note that when awards are made later than the intended start date, the applicant must modify the award timeline to accommodate the actual start date. Funds cannot be retroactively applied to a date before an award is signed by USAID's Agreement Officer. (See page 4 of the APS.)

Could you expand on the delays that took place last year? Why did it take so long to find out whether our proposals were or were not successful?

Last year's delays were extremely long. Our Mission and USAID/Washington were each asked to evaluate applications within 30 days, and we did that very well. The delays that took place were due to factors that were outside of USAID's control.

Is this APS seeking cross-border activities, or multi-country ones?

Wherever you are asked to indicate if your application is multi-country or cross border, you should indicate cross-border for work in West Bank/Gaza and Israel. USAID's Office for Middle East Programs (OMEP), which is based in Cairo, receives regional multi-country programs. Organizations may submit unsolicited proposals to the USAID/West Bank-Gaza Mission and/or to OMEP at any time. Please note that the FY-09 APS only supports proposals in the Middle Eastern countries of Israel-Gaza-West Bank, as well as Yemen. Multi-country proposals that support work in any other countries are not responsive to this APS. (See pages 1 and 25 of the APS.)

Can we re-submit a proposal that was unsuccessful under a previous APS solicitation?

If you re-submit a proposal that was unsuccessful under a previous APS, we recommend that you address the issues outlined in your debrief letter before resubmitting. Please also note that this year's APS is not the same as last year's APS. There are new country-specific guidelines for Israel, West Bank & Gaza, requirements about specification of theories of change and gender considerations, language concerning innovation, and new guidance for Performance Management Plans. Applications received under this year's APS will be evaluated under the criteria outlined in the APS solicitation. Please read through it carefully.

What are Key Personnel?

Key Personnel are individuals within the organization that have a substantial role in implementation and success of the program. If it is so specified in a cooperative agreement award, USAID may approve up to 4 individuals that we feel are key to the success of the program. Designation of Key positions and individuals is subject to the Agreement Officer's approval. (See APS Amendment 2.)

Could you describe the Congressional process for APS?

USAID is required by law to notify Congress before any awards can be made public.

We know what “building consensus” means on the Israeli side. With regards to the Palestinian side, we run into the anti-terrorism question. How do we build consensus between Fatah and Hamas and comply with USAID’s anti-terrorism policies and procedures, as outlined in Mission Order 21?

With regards to the Mission-specific guidelines in Attachment 1, USAID intends a much simpler idea than what you are getting to. When the goal is to achieve cross-border dialogue and increased understanding among people on both sides of a conflict, it is much better that participants agree on the goal of the dialogue before coming together. Examples have been programs that select an issue of mutual interest, and help people within different communities understand that to get what they want on that particular issue, cross-border dialogue would be helpful.

If our activity is only in Israel borders and focuses on work with Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs, is that viable?

Absolutely, and we have made an award to an organization that worked in the education sector in Israel in the past that illustrates this point.

If there is a program that does not deal with cross-border dialogue, but deals with dialogue within the Palestinian community alone, is this viable?

Yes, if your application demonstrates that it is bringing together people with opposing viewpoints.

Can for-profit organizations apply to APS? For-profit organizations may apply to the APS, but they must forego any profit made via the proposed activity. Guidance is provided in the APS.

Could you provide more information about cost share requirements? There is language in the APS about cost-share and public-private partnerships, which are encouraged. You will have to account financially for funds that are USAID funds versus other funds. That is to say, you cannot “mingle” USAID monies with those of other donors or sources. There are rules in 22 CFR 226 (see link above) about accounting for cost share. USAID will not seek other sources of funds to add to the Federal share (USAID’s funds) allocated to your program. USAID encourages you to find additional sources of funds (via cost-share and public-private partnerships) to boost program coverage and sustainability.

Is the timeline always this short? This is always an arduous process. Is there any possibility to ask for an amendment for a prolonged period or extension to the submission date? No. The submission deadline for FY-09 CMM proposal relates to the timing of the US fiscal year and the timing of the availability of funds. In short, the deadline cannot and will not be extended.

May we apply for an award if we are a small, new organization that has never worked with USAID before? Absolutely. USAID respects the work that you do, and we want to support it if we feel that it furthers the objectives of the APS. USAID worldwide has processes in place (e.g., the pre-award survey) that will give assurance to Agreement Officers that when awards are signed, funds will be appropriately managed and accounted for and that the Recipient is worthy of receiving USAID funds. USAID does not want organizations to be in a situation where they are not able to comply with rules, and have to forfeit the funds they were granted. A small organization may consider seeking an amount below the \$1 million maximum so that they do not “bite off more than they can chew”, so to say.

May local governments apply?

The first paragraph of the APS cites the types of organizations that are eligible to apply. A government entity can be a benefiting entity or a cost-sharing entity, but cannot be the applicant. For example, an NGO can receive a grant to conduct trainings for municipal officials in Israel, but funds cannot be given to the municipality.

Can a municipality be a co-funder?

Yes, a municipality can be a co-funder.

In terms of partnering and NGOs working together, what are the rules about whether NGOs can apply together? Does one need to be sub-grantee of another? If there is such an arrangement, do the processes of the pre-award survey trickle down to the sub-grantee?

The prime-sub relationship is preferred. If you have a joint application, you need legal document that makes both parties liable. Unless the two organizations are already in a serious joint venture, we recommend pursuing the prime-sub relationship. The prime organization will undergo the pre-award survey, which will include an analysis of its ability to manage its sub-awardees.

Can we submit more than one application?

Organizations can submit multiple applications. However, each one will be evaluated as separate, standalone activities. The success of the proposed work should not be dependent on another application also being awarded.

Can participants attend events in a 3rd country? The APS responds to this question and yes, international travel to a 3rd country as a neutral ground for dialogue may be considered.

Are there any strategic objectives or intermediate results to which the application should refer? Most Missions have a country strategy and we articulate the objective of what each program is, and what we can accomplish with the whole suite of activities. In this instance, the Democracy and Governance Office has a strategic framework that captures the goal of our portfolio of activities, and we will post it on the Mission website. Know, however, it is not necessary that your application relate to our office's strategic framework. USAID does a lot of work outside of the DG office. For example, earlier in this meeting, our Mission Director cited an example of an environment activity. Don't limit yourself. In short, we do appreciate you relating your project to what else USAID is doing, but it is not a hard requirement.

Research or highly academic projects will not be responsive to the APS. What is meant by "highly academic projects" not being eligible?

This language was used to make sure people understand that research projects are not the intent of the APS. The intent of the APS focuses very prominently on bringing people together from opposing sides and on activities that facilitate this type of exchange and peace building. This is different in many ways than academic research for research sake. Does this mean there is no data collection, thinking or analytical study as part of the program? No. But that research or analysis should be part of carrying out an effective people-to-people reconciliation program. Regarding monitoring and evaluation (M&E), a strong M&E plan will strengthen your proposal. However, the M&E plan should not be the main goal of the program.

Do the Anti-Terrorism Certification (ATC) and Programmatic Initial Environmental Exam need to be signed with the submission of the application?

The ATC does need to be submitted with the application. The documents and instructions are included as an attachment to the APS. You will have to scan and submit as PDF. The IEE will be submitted once selection is officially made.

Because criteria focus on reconciliation, is there openness to working with children and addressing stereotypes and racism.

Yes, we will consider proposals that address this idea. Be sure to consider the Mission-specific guidelines. If you can relate how combating stereotypes and prejudice among children relates to theories of change and conflict mitigation, we can consider that. I can give no indication for how strongly we consider working with children versus other target groups, but we have made such awards in the past, and we receive a lot of applications whose target beneficiaries are children.

Does this also cover issues related to children's health?

The bottom line for any target group or subject is that you have to make a strong argument for the applications relationship to the APS goal for people to people programs, reconciliation and conflict mitigation.

What is meant by Environmental Compliance?

Basically, anytime USAID makes an award, there needs to be an initial analysis or assessment as to how the environment might be impacted negatively. A lot of the

activities are CMM activities are eligible for “categorical exclusion”. Training people probably is not harming the environment, for example. This examination has to be completed before any award can be made.

How should an application address income generation or profit?

There is specific language about cost sharing in the APS, and it tells you what you need to do with profits. Program generated income should be added back into the program. You may take this into account when building the budget.

What is the DCHA/CMM Office in Washington? How does it relate to the APS?

DCHA/CMM is USAID’s Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. DCHA/CMM’s mission is to mainstream conflict-sensitive programs, including peace-building, in all areas of USAID work. For example, DCHA/CMM, through rigorous analysis, will assess the underlying drivers of the conflicts and recommend ways to mitigate them. The underlying conflict drivers must be addressed in order for improvements in other areas – e.g. health and education - to be sustained. DCHA/CMM has 12 staff members that service all USAID Missions worldwide. DCHA/CMM provides analytical support to Missions via conflict assessments, and also manages the Peace and Reconciliation fund grants and cooperative agreements through the APS. The awards are finalized and managed by the USAID Missions in each country.

Will applicants be notified upon completion of the Step 1 review process whether or not their proposals are unsuccessful?

USAID/West Bank-Gaza wishes to clarify and finalize this issue, which was raised at the May 12th bidder’s meeting. As occurred last year, Step 1 declination letters will be transmitted simultaneously with the ones from Step 2. This means that all applicants will learn whether or not their proposals were successful at the same time. Please note that this policy differs from the one stated in the APS and only applies to applications for work in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

Closing note to all applicants from USAID

USAID is very excited that we had this opportunity to meet and address your questions and concerns. We hope you submit outstanding applications. We look forward to reviewing them.