



USAID | VIETNAM

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ANNOUNCEMENT

USAID/VIETNAM CALL FOR CONCEPT PAPERS

UNDER EXISTING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT APS No.: APS-OAA-14-000001

PLEASE NOTE: This is an addendum to an existing announcement. All interested organizations should carefully review both this addendum AND the full announcement, which can be found here: <http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/opportunities-funding/global-development-alliance-annual-program>. Important information contained in the full worldwide announcement is not repeated in this specific addendum.

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

Through this Addendum to the FY2014 Global Development Alliance (GDA) Annual Program Statement (APS), No. APS-OAA-14-000001 (the GDA APS), USAID/Vietnam is making a special call for the submission of Concept Papers from eligible organizations as defined in the GDA APS. **The objective is to stimulate innovation in higher education through public-private alliances, and to drive broader innovation supporting more inclusive, sustainable growth in Vietnam, specifically in areas relevant to USAID's 2014-2018 Country Development Strategy.**

USAID may allocate up to **\$9,000,000** to fund a portfolio of partnerships with funding for individual partnership proposals estimated in the **range of \$3 - 9 million**. The proposed period of performance can be four (4) to five (5) years. Unless otherwise stated herein, all terms and conditions of the GDA APS FY 2014 apply (<http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/opportunities-funding/global-development-alliance-annual-program>).

I. Introduction

USAID/Vietnam is seeking applications that stimulate innovation in and through higher education to produce skilled and workforce-ready graduates, and through public-private alliances in Vietnam. As described in USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Vietnam, through its intermediate result (IR 1.3), "USAID activities on higher education will be primarily focused on fields/sectors that will make a direct contribution to our overall development objectives in Vietnam, in a way that is synergistic and leverages the Mission's other existing and planned activities. This IR will advance Vietnam's approaches to higher education and leverage partnerships with the private sector to enhance skills of Vietnamese youth to innovate in Vietnam's economy. This IR will use GDA and other models to ensure that higher educational systems produce workforce ready graduates." Academic areas of particular interest, when they intersect with CDCS priorities, include law,

legislative studies, the STEM fields, and environmental fields.

II. Higher Education Background

Vietnam's rapid economic growth over the past 20 years has lifted Vietnam from a low income country to a lower-middle income country. Although enrollment in tertiary education has grown, the education system faces challenges in responding to the employment needs of a rapidly changing economic landscape, which requires a more skilled labor force. The demands of the highly competitive global economy require a mix of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are not consistently being developed by Vietnam's higher education system. Various studies conducted by Vietnamese and international organizations have identified numerous challenges – slow institutional reform and limited autonomy, lack of qualified instructors, limited application of modern, proven instructional methods, insufficient adoption of new curriculum standards, and others – that limit the system's ability to produce 21st century leaders and a workforce capable of supporting broader economic growth and international competitiveness. One report has noted that “sweeping governance reforms are the key to improving Vietnamese higher education.”

The GVN has acknowledged many, if not most, of these problems and is making an effort to address them. Education sector priorities have been clearly set in the Vietnam Education Development Strategic Plan 2008-2020 (Resolution 14 – 14/2005/NQ-CP), which calls for a “fundamental and comprehensive renovation of higher education.” The GVN has further elaborated on its goals for higher education in its “Higher Education Reform Agenda” (HERA) which shows commitment to improving the higher education system in a rapidly changing economic and social environment through: (i) improving the quality of teaching and research, with a view to integration into the increasingly globalized economy; (ii) extending the autonomy of higher education institutions, especially in academic and administrative matters, with a view to improving responsiveness to the needs of beneficiaries; and (iii) increasing private sector investment, vital to the fiscal sustainability of an expanding sector.

A key higher education concern in Vietnam is that the curriculum used for instruction is not sufficiently relevant and tends not to be systematically upgraded; students graduate without adequate skills to enter the workplace. Low quality and lack of sufficient relevance are considered to result from several factors, including weak systems for curriculum development and student assessment; shortages of well-qualified staff at all levels; lack of linkages with industry in public vocational training and higher education; low enrollment in skill areas in high demand; and little emphasis on non-cognitive skills.

Vietnam has also not benefited from the insights and demands of prospective employers to develop skills-based competencies. Employers are concerned about the relevance of what students learn in universities and vocational schools. Employers struggle to find workers with the right skill mix for these modern jobs. The country's education and workforce landscape is changing rapidly and requires strong collaboration between the government, private sector, and universities for a modern economy. Vietnam's education system must also foster inclusive access to these skills and opportunities across gender, ethnic and other socioeconomic dimensions.

III. Strategy

The over-arching goal of USAID's CDCS is Vietnam's continued transformation into a responsible, more inclusive partner. The Goal Statement recognizes challenges that Vietnam faces to be a responsible international player due to limitations in its system of governance, and also recognizes that Vietnam is in a period of great change and transformation, having achieved middle income status by 2011.

Under the Development Objective of Governance Enhanced to Facilitate Broader-Based, Sustainable Growth, Intermediate Result (IR) 1.3 is Innovation Stimulated through Public-Private Alliances. This IR recognizes the potential of partnerships and alliances to open and enhance governance through GVN collaboration with domestic and foreign universities and companies, and to deepen Vietnam's connections with the United States. This last point is particularly relevant to the CDCS overarching goal of strengthening U.S.-Vietnamese partnership.

This GDA APS Addendum seeks applications that stimulate innovation in higher education through public-private alliances, and drive broader innovation supporting more inclusive, sustainable growth in Vietnam, specifically in areas relevant to USAID's CDCS. In all programming efforts, priority is placed on sustainable institutional change and strong partnerships that last beyond the conclusion of USAID funding.

In order to source new ideas and a diverse set of partners in this effort, USAID is launching this call for concept papers. The Agency invites organizations to submit ideas for partnering with USAID. USAID is focused on building partnerships³ that address one or more of the following objectives:

Objective 1: Strengthen policies for innovation

A recent World Bank-OECD report related to innovation in Vietnam cites the importance of creating conditions for innovation and public governance, strengthening the human resource base for innovation and supporting policies and programs that foster innovation linkages. USAID supports strengthening the policies in higher education that would drive broader innovation to support more inclusive, sustainable growth. This would include support for policies that significantly reduce inequities in education access.

Objective 2: Strengthen institutional capacity for improved learning outcomes

USAID supports strengthening the institutional capacity of higher education institutions and the development of professors, lecturers, teachers, and instructors who are able to employ effective teaching methodologies and practices to improve learning outcomes. Higher education management and administration that supports the development, delivery and sustainability of quality teaching and research is essential to improving the quality of higher education. Quality higher education depends, in part, on the ways management develops and implements policies and practices. Strengthening governance reforms in higher education management and administration and the development of faculty should help foster human and institutional capacity that is vital to the delivery of quality higher education that is responsive to the needs of marketplace.

Objective 3: Improved private sector-university collaboration and alignment on the development of student skills that meet market demands

USAID encourages innovative partnerships that would involve employers in the setting of standards (including accreditation at international standards), the development and adoption of relevant curriculum, and the formulation and collaborative delivery of instructional and training approaches. Partnerships would interweave the private sector together with universities and/or vocational schools in the drive to provide quality higher education and bring greater dynamism to the higher education system.

IV. Evaluation Criteria

Proposed alliances will be evaluated based on the general criteria set forth in the GDA APS in Section VI: Concept Paper Evaluation Criteria and Considerations. As stated in APS No. APS-OAA-14-000001, USAID expects to receive alliance proposals that mobilize and leverage private sector resources at a minimum of 1:1. Preference will be given to alliances that include private sector partners who demonstrate long-term commitment and partnerships that creatively address and demonstrate relevance to the USAID/Vietnam CDCS.

Proposed alliances should be consistent with USAID legal and policy restrictions, including those set forth in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) and in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

V. Application Instructions and Review Process

USAID/Vietnam will be responsible for the review process and management of any awards issued under this addendum. Applicants are required to follow the Concept Paper instructions set forth in the GDA APS and submit Concept Papers using the Concept Paper Template (available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/opportunities-funding/global-development-alliance-annual-program-0>). Information provided in Section I.E of that Template should address the objectives and criteria presented above.

Applicants should become familiar with the mission strategy and priorities and consult with the mission prior to submitting a concept paper. The mission can discuss the extent to which a proposed idea is appropriate and aligns with USG goals in Vietnam. Prospective applicants can reach the mission regarding this Addendum to the GDA APS at VietnamGDA@usaid.gov. For inquiries and consultations with USAID/Vietnam, please indicate in the e-mail subject line "USAID/Vietnam GDA APS Consultation."

In addition, prospective applicants should connect the prospective applicant's private sector partners with USAID prior to submitting a concept paper. Under the GDA APS, USAID can have robust and extensive discussions with prospective private sector partners with regard to potential alliance ideas and activities, so long as that partner is not seeking to receive and manage award funding from USAID. Such discussions help foster the co-creation that is core to the Global Development Alliance approach.

The completed Concept Paper (including the required Supporting Information) should be

submitted to VietnamGDA@usaid.gov. **Concept papers will be due on April 9, 2015.** For Concept Paper submission, please indicate in the e-mail subject line “USAID/Vietnam GDA APS Concept Paper Submission.”

While USAID/Vietnam will review concept papers on a rolling basis, applicants under the GDA APS will receive an initial response from USAID by May 25, 2015.

USAID/Vietnam may respond to some concept papers prior to this date; however, applicants are asked to wait until May 25, 2015 before inquiring about the status of their concept paper.

After a Concept Paper is reviewed by USAID, the Agency will inform the applicant whether further alliance development discussions are warranted, and, subsequent to those discussions, whether a full application will be requested. Concept Papers must be submitted by the deadline in order to be considered.

VI. Questions and Further Assistance

Questions regarding the substance and objectives of this addendum should be directed to VietnamGDA@usaid.gov.

Questions regarding the substance and terms of the 2014 – 2015 GDA APS should be directed to Ken Lee at kenlee@usaid.gov, with copy to gda@usaid.gov.

For additional information regarding guidelines and procedures to submit a concept paper, please refer to the GDA APS which can be found at the following website: <http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/opportunities-funding/global-development-alliance-annual-program>. Additional information on alliances can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/get-grant-or-contract/opportunities-funding/global-development-alliance-annual-program-0>.