

Vietnam Request for Application (RFA) - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question 1: Country and Geographic Eligibility

Question 1: Can I propose research in countries other than Vietnam?

Answer 1a: No, this RFA is strictly targeting Vietnam. As stated in section 2 of the RFA, LASER PULSE “calls for innovative research and associated research translation focused on development challenges within three development sectors in Vietnam. These comprise: Air Pollution, Water Pollution and Small and Medium Enterprise Competitiveness.

Question 1b: Will LASER consider and accept Applications for research in countries outside Vietnam?

Answer 1b: LASER PULSE will only accept Applications focusing on Vietnam.

Question 1c: Are there other opportunities for research funding from LASER PULSE outside of Vietnam?

Answer 1c: There will be opportunities for funding in other USAID Interest Countries in the course of LASER’s period of performance. In particular, there is an anticipated global round opportunity in the year 2021. Details will be sent to LASER PULSE Network members.

Question 2: Eligibility and Leadership

Question 2a: What institutions are eligible to submit an Application for this call?

Answer 2a: As stated in the RFA in section 3.3, researchers based at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Vietnam and the United States (US) are eligible to submit an Application. Lead researcher(s)/Principal Investigator(s) (PIs) from institutions outside of Vietnam **must** partner with a researcher(s) in Vietnam.

There is an **exemption for Vietnam** such that Researchers based at government research institutes are eligible to apply. In Vietnam, government research institutes and public universities are considered quasi-government agencies. This means that their key personnel are appointed by the Government of Vietnam (GVN) and their office space (including some facilities) is provided by the GVN; however, they are allowed to implement grants/contracts from non-GVN sources to generate revenue for most of their staff/employees.

Note: All researchers **must** register in the LASER PULSE Network. Please [click here](https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect) (or go to <https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect>) to register in the LASER PULSE Network.

Question 2b: Can an individual researcher submit an Application?

Answer 2b: An individual researcher can submit an Application but he/she **must** be an employee at a higher education institution (HEI) or research institute in order to serve as the lead researcher or Principal Investigator (PI). Note: The lead researcher coordinating the research team and submitting the Application will be considered the PI by LASER PULSE. Additionally, the PI **must** partner with a development practitioner institution such as a non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society, the private sector, and/or local government entity as their translation partner. PIs will be required to provide a Letter of Commitment/(s) from the translation partner institution when submitting an Application.

Question 2c: How do I find a translation partner to meet the institutional eligibility requirements?

Answer 2c: It is up to the university lead researcher/principal investigator (PI) to find a translation partner. We encourage you to use your existing networks to identify a translation partner and consult the LASER PULSE network for practitioners that are registered LASER PULSE members at [this link](https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect) (or go to <https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect>). You must be a registered member to access the search functions.

Question 2d: Can Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in any other USAID Interest Country be a lead institution?

Answer 2d: Only HEIs in the United States and Vietnam can be lead institutions. The US institution must collaborate with an eligible research translation partner/development practitioner (e.g., a non-governmental organization, civil society, the private sector, or a local government entity) and/or a local research institution). Section 3.3 of the RFA states, “Only academic researchers based at Higher Education Institutions, (see definition of HEI in Appendix 3 in the RFA that includes exemption for Vietnam)”

Question 2e: Can I be a PI or Co-PI in more than one Application? Can a collaborator be included in more than one Application?

Answer 2e: You can only submit one Application as a lead researcher (PI) but can collaborate on as many Applications as you would like.

Question 2f: Can a researcher in a country other than Vietnam be a lead researcher/PI?

Answer 2f: The lead researcher/PI can be based in or in the United States. Lead researchers and research translation partners, from institutions other than PI's will be represented on a research team as Co-PIs. For the purposes of this RFA, a Co-PI is defined in Section 3.3. as “as a key member of the research team (who is not the PI) that also serves as the point of contact for their institution.” An institution having more than one team member will specify their designated Co-PI”.



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Question 2g: Our team comprises researchers from Vietnam in addition to a US researcher. Would it disadvantage the team if the lead researcher were from the US?

Answer 2g: No, a research team would not be disadvantaged due solely to the fact that they have a lead based in the US. US higher education institutions are eligible to apply. Furthermore, LASER PULSE will rate and select Applications on merit, according to how best they meet the two criteria of Broader Impacts and Research Merit.

Question 2h: Can we include students in a proposed research project?

Answer 2h: Yes, students can be included in a research project and can be members of a research team.

Question 3: Collaborators

Question 3a: Do applicants for this RFA need a partner in a US university?

Answer 3a: Applicants are not required to partner with US universities but may choose to do so if they have a need for partnership.

Question 3b: Will LASER PULSE initiate connections between applicants in Vietnam with other researchers in the US if they need such a partner?

Answer 3b: LASER PULSE Network is a searchable database that researchers can use to connect with potential partners (researchers and practitioners). One must be registered to access the search functions (Please refer to FAQs Q.2a and Q.2c).

Question 3c: Is there a requirement for interdepartmental collaboration? Otherwise, should a single department per institution propose a collaboration with a research translation partner?

Answer 3c: We encourage inter-departmental or multidisciplinary collaboration within an institution and across institutions but it is not a requirement. However, each Application should have only one lead PI.

Question 3d: Do we need a letter(s) of commitment from all Co-PIs and partner institutions?

Answer 3d: LASER PULSE only requires a letter(s) of commitment from a translation partner and does not require a letter of commitment from any additional partners. A template is provided as part of the RFA package.

Question 4: Addressing Gender

Question 4a: The research activities in my Application will impact men, women, and youth equally. How do I address the crosscutting theme of gender?

Answer 4a: All Applications are required to address the relationship between the proposed research activities and gender. Prior to developing the Application, please review the gender analysis guidelines in Appendix 2. Applications should clearly reflect that the research team is fully aware of the gender considerations that are relevant for the sectoral focus, and



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specifically those that have shaped the proposed research study.

Question 4b: Is gender analysis going to be scored?

Answer 4b: Gender is an integral part of USAID/LASER PULSE funded Applications. Thus, it is included in the evaluation criteria in Section 4.12 under the Broader Impact criterion.

Question 5: Funding, Indirect Cost Rate and Budget Template

Question 5a: Is there a maximum dollar amount per Application?

Answer 5a: As stated in the RFA in section 3.10: “LASER PULSE anticipates funding approximately 4-6 awards for a period of 12 to 24 months of research and translation for up to \$250,000.00 USD per award. For this RFA we expect to award \$1,000,000 in total funding across all awards”.

Question 5b: If successful, can the funds be delivered to the translation partner or is it only the PI from HEI?

Answer 5b: Purdue University will issue a sub-agreement directly to each partner involved in the research activities.

Question 5c: What indirect cost rate should we use?

Answer 5c: Purdue University uses a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) for sub-awards for indirect costs (IDC). A request for a higher indirect cost rate must have documented justification, such as an established NICRA. If the project has sub-awards, then indirect costs charged to your sub-awards are limited to be applied only to the first U.S. \$25,000 of costs.

Question 5d: What procedures should we follow if our institution requires indirect cost other than 10%?

Answer 5d: To request a higher IDC rate, the institution must provide documentation on an established NICRA rate above the 10%.

Question 5e: Is the 10% IDC rate also related to the indirect costs on our project sub-awards (from the host institution)? Does it relate to the IDC rate for the host institutions direct costs?

Answer 5e: In granting awards to lead institutions, Purdue University, allows 10% IDC or the established NICRA rate on MTDC, with IDC on sub-award amounts from the lead to other institutions limited to the first \$25,000 of that sub-award. The IDC rates charged by sub-awardees to the lead institution are negotiated between the lead institution and the sub-awardee institution.

Question 5f: Do I need to submit the Application through my institution's official representative with financial authority? Do they need to sign off on the budget?

Answer 5f: Each institution has its own regulations governing budgeting and related financial authorization. From Purdue University's LASER PULSE perspective, if permitted by the Applicant institution, the signature on the Application budget may be that of the PI. However, the signature on the Application budget must be that of an official institutional representative with financial authority.

Question 6: Research Translation

Question 6a: How does LASER PULSE define "research translation"?

Answer 6a: LASER PULSE's model of research translation is called Embedded Research Translation, defined as, "*an iterative co-design process among academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders in which research is intentionally applied to a development challenge*".

Question 6b: Are Applicants required to focus on specific types of translation products? Additionally, is there a specified number or products or a threshold that determines successful research?

Answer 6b.(i): Sections 1.3 and 3.9 of the RFA states that: translated research should result in a **tangible product that is** a required output of research translation. This could be a tool/device, report or document, multimedia product, or IT platform. This product should contain a **policy brief or recommendation** that leads to changes in legal, constitutional, funding, accountability, feasibility, or implementation mechanisms or a **practice recommendation**. Products could include a new agricultural production or processing method, education curriculum, guidebook, technical manual, training module, and planning tool.

Applicants are encouraged to focus on specific types of translation products as outlined in the LASER PULSE research translation overview and training module.

For more details, please click [this link](#) (or go to

https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Translation_Overview.pdf

Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, abstracts, and traditional methods-focused posters **are not** considered to be translated products. Products must be tailored to an audience and designed for use by an end-user.

Answer 6b.(ii): There are no restrictions on how many and/or specific number of products required; however, a proposed product (policy, or practice) should align with the scope of the research. In some cases, a single, well-developed product with an audience and communication strategy is sufficient. In others, the project team might need to explore multiple channels at multiple levels with corresponding products for each.

Question 6c: How do I anticipate what translation and dissemination will look like at the end of the project?

Answer 6c. Planning and budgeting processes for translation and communication start at the beginning (when research activities commence) of a project. You can make much headway before your research has been completed. Work with your local partners to map out stakeholder group/s and figure out who you need to target. Some research on whom your audiences comprise will be beneficial in helping you figure out what their preferences and needs are. You can even engage them directly in your research process and provide updates as your research progresses.

Question 6d. How do I anticipate the budget for translation and dissemination?

Answer 6d: As you plan and design your research project, please consider what costs will go into implementing your research translation strategy. Do you need a dedicated staff member to manage and implement this process? How many stakeholder workshops will you convene and what types of costs may be required to hold them? Do you need a specialist to work with you on design and content? What experience do your partners have with budgeting for translation and dissemination? What materials do you anticipate producing and how much would those cost to produce, print, and distribute? Does the product that you are planning on have costs associated with it? Do you need to factor in travel to support dissemination? Consider these questions among your team to make sure you can accurately plan and budget for your translation and dissemination expenses.

Question 6e: Can one engage more than one translation partner?

Answer 6e: The LASER PULSE requirement is for *at least* one translation partner. However, the research team can engage more than one translation partner based on their needs. Please note that we will need a letter of commitment from each translation partner for each submitted Application.

Question 6f: Would a university count as a translation partner? For instance, if a researcher wants to work with youth on an agro-entrepreneurial curriculum development program?

Answer 6f: University partners are not considered as translation partners. Please see FAQs Q.6 and RFA Section 1.3 for examples of translation partners.



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Question 7: Required Training

Question 7a: Are courses described in the RFA mandatory for all the Applicants? When is the deadline for completing the two training courses?

Answer 7a: There are two courses: LASER PULSE Introduction to Embedded Research Translation and Gender Analysis in Research and Application. PI and co-PI(s) identified in the Application must have taken and passed both on-line trainings before submitting the Application. Other team members are also encouraged to take these training courses as they explain important concepts needed to develop a successful Application.

Question 7b: Must all research team members take the gender course or only the principal investigator?

Answer 7b: see question 7a above.



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