

Request for Concept Notes

Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Desk Review and Market Study (DRMS), Political Economy Analysis (PEA), and Secondary Data Analysis (SDA) for Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSa) in Madagascar

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - Responses in *Italics*

1. **Application Deadline and Project Timeline, and Deliverable Timelines**
 - 1.1. **Would USAID/BHA and LASER PULSE consider a short extension on submission of the concept note to allow offerors the opportunity to prepare all elements required for submission?** *Yes, USAID/BHA and LASER PULSE have extended the deadline to May 26, 2023. Please submit your concept notes by 5:00pm on Friday, May 26, 2023 ET.*
 - 1.2. **When is the application submission deadline?** *USAID/BHA and LASER PULSE have extended the deadline to May 26, 2023. Please submit your concept notes by 5:00pm COB on Friday, May 26, 2023 ET.*
 - 1.3. **Is there any flexibility with the overall timeline and deliverable schedule?** *There is no flexibility with the overall timeline and key deliverable schedule. For some milestones, the timeline can be discussed during co-creation.*
 - 1.4. **Can LASER PULSE confirm whether the October 28th deadline indicated for submission of report deliverables is for a first complete draft of the reports or the final draft and whether draft reviews should be incorporated in the anticipated milestones?** *The first complete draft report submission date for the DRMS and PEA reports is October 27, and for the SDA report is September 8.*
2. **Applicants and Application Procedures**
 - 2.1. **Is the call for concept notes restricted to Madagascar residents or anyone can apply?** *Anyone who meets the eligibility and qualification requirements stated in the [call for concept notes](#) can apply. Please refer to Section 2 of the call for the concept notes document (pages 4-6).*
 - 2.2. **Do we need a US-based university as a partner?** *No, you don't need a US-based university, but you are encouraged to partner with a higher education institution in USAID partner countries.*
 - 2.3. **Does one have to submit a bid for only one of the listed items or for all of them?** *You can submit a bid for one study or multiple studies (2 or 3).*
 - 2.4. **What do you mean by applications from "multidisciplinary teams of researchers and development professionals are preferable"? Does this mean that we can apply as a team of individual researchers with each person responsible for specific studies directly reporting to LASER PULSE?** *No, LASER cannot hire individual consultants for this kind of assignment. We can only sign sub-agreements with institutions registered on <https://sam.gov/content/home> and have a unique entity identifier (UEI) number provided by the U.S. government. Individual applicants may be considered if needed for match making purposes only. This may happen only if teams from SAM registered institutions with a UEI number need experts to complement their team.*

- 2.5. Do we need to apply under an umbrella organization under which we will serve as consultants?** *Yes, and this is the preferred option. Individual applicants have to go through an institution with the ability to receive federal funds, i.e., an institution registered on <https://sam.gov/content/home> and has a UEI number provided by the U.S. government or an institution in the process of registration on <https://sam.gov/content/home> to acquire UEI (please read the requirements in the call).*
- 2.6. Could a proposal cover all three components and LASER-PULSE decide to award only 1 or 2 to that specific group?** *Yes, we expect the concept note will cover all the three studies (SDA, PEA and DRMS). We will assess the aggregate qualities of concept notes, not individual components.*
- 2.7. Is it possible to win individual components?** *No. Offerors can submit concept notes for a specific study (i.e. SDA, DRMS, and PEA). However, due to time constraints, we will prioritize concept notes which include all three studies from a single institution or a consortium of institutions with a multidisciplinary team of researchers and development professionals.*
- 2.8. How should we indicate if we are open to pursuing any combination of the three?** *We encourage you to submit a concept note which covers all the three studies (SDA, PEA and DRMS).*

3. Studies, Study Provinces, IRB and Related

- 3.1. LASER/USAID specifies that each study will target two provinces yet to be determined. Does USAID anticipate that these will be the same two provinces for all three studies, or will these be selected independently for each study?** *Each study will document the general country context and the context in the two selected provinces (to be determined). The two provinces will be the same for the three studies.*
- 3.2. For the Secondary Data Analysis, LASER/USAID specifies R and Stata as language options to improve replicability of findings. Would LASER/USAID be open to other widely used and open source tools like Python data analysis and visualization libraries?** *Yes, you can use Python but make sure you will have good documentation (data, process, code, metadata, etc.) to someone who would like to replicate your analysis or use the code in the future.*
- 3.3. Have LASER PULSE and BHA determined whether local research ethics review in Madagascar will be required in addition to IRB review by the study team's institution?** *Yes, we need ethical review and approval from both the study team's institution and in Madagascar.*
- 3.4. Section 10 of the concept note template states "as part of the work plan, the selected applicant will be asked to develop, in a 2-page written brief, an overview of the research team's ethical framework for the project." Can LASER PULSE clarify what information on research ethics should be included in the concept note itself?** *We are not expecting applicants to include the research team's ethical framework in the concept notes. The selected team will develop the ethical framework and the description of the standards on scientific research ethics should be included in the work plan later (Please refer to the second paragraph of Section 10. Standards on Scientific Research Ethics on page 13 in the call for concept notes).*

4. Application Documents Related Questions

- 4.1. May offerors submit a concept note for only one of the reports listed in the Request for Concept Notes?** *Offerors can submit concept notes for a specific study (i.e. SDA, DRMS, or PEA).*

However, due to time constraints, we will prioritize concept notes which include all three studies from a single institution or a consortium of institutions with a multidisciplinary team of researchers and development professionals.

- 4.2. Can LASER PULSE confirm that the concept note submission does not include a budget at this stage?** *We expect a high-level budget plan showing the allocation of resources for each study to ensure you are able to properly allocate enough budget to activities to successfully complete the work. All detailed, final budgets will be created during the co-creation process. Please see the estimated fund allowances for each study on pages 3-4 of the Call for Concept Notes document.*
- 4.3. Please confirm that the required organogram will not be counted toward the one-page limit for the Team Roles and Responsibilities section.** *Yes, we confirm that the required organogram will not be counted toward the one-page limit.*
- 5. Budget and Payment Related Questions**
 - 5.1. How will the final budget be determined and at what point will this occur?** *The estimated budgets are provided in the specific studies' program descriptions attached in the call for concept notes. All proposed budgets must be within those estimates. Detailed budgets will be created after the team is selected i.e. during the co-creation process. LASER PULSE/Purdue University will work with the selected research team to prepare the detailed budget, but USAID will have the final approval.*
 - 5.2. Could you please clarify whether the resulting sub-award can be structured in a way that is inclusive of contract fee (cost plus, time and materials, or fixed price)?** *We do have some flexibility in the types of awards to an extent of which will ultimately be approved by USAID. This will be negotiated during the co-creation process and program description development stage. For instance, fixed price can be an option with the assumption the intent is not to create profit. As stated in the original RFP for LASER PULSE's cooperative agreement, "USAID policy is not to award profit under assistance instruments. 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."*
 - 5.3. We wanted to confirm that proposed budgets are not to be included with the concept notes? When would these documents be requested and finalized?** *We expect a high-level budget plan showing the allocation of resources for each study to ensure you are able to properly allocate enough budget to activities to successfully complete the work and remain within the estimated availability of funds. All final budgets will be created during the co-creation process.*
 - 5.4. Is travel an allowable cost, especially given the request for interviews and FGDs?** *Yes, travel is an allowable cost. Travel should be budgeted if it is required to complete the activities being proposed in order to satisfy the desired outcomes.*
 - 5.5. What will be the budget approval process if a concept note is successful?** *All final budgets will be created after the team is selected i.e. during the co-creation process. The budget will be based on the activities described and provided budget in the call for concepts. LASER PULSE/Purdue University will work with the selected research team to prepare the detailed budget, but USAID will have the final approval on all budget and program documents after thorough review and feedback.*

5.6. Could Purdue please confirm how payments would be made, e.g., per a payment schedule linked to deliverables, per monthly invoices of incurred costs, etc.? *The payments will be dependent upon the structure of the subaward and will be determined based on the applications received as each partner may have differing needs. The typical arrangement is a monthly cost reimbursement. If necessary, we have the ability to engage in advance payment or milestone arrangements which will be negotiated with the apparently successful applicant.*

6. Research Team Organization and Project Coordination Related Questions

6.1. Does LASER/USAID prefer or anticipate that each of the three studies are conducted by three research teams working independently within an organization/consortium? *Yes, LASER/USAID prefer or anticipate that each of the three studies are conducted by three research teams working independently within an organization/consortium. This is partly due to the expertise and/or qualifications each study may require and timing factors. Teams may structure their leadership so there is one project manager overseeing the three studies, but this is for the research teams to determine based on their management structure and need. Ideally, the three teams will collaborate. For example, the SDA may inform the DRMS.*

6.2. Can study teams have control over the structure and organization of the study teams such that the researchers have more direct control and leadership roles? *This could take the form of multiple co-PIs to ensure a more flat and cohesive project management structure if our bid is successful? Yes, you can determine the leadership structure that makes the most sense for the team and the project descriptions. We are open to the model that works best and will work with teams during the co-creation process to discuss the best leadership structure..*

6.3. We have seen slowdowns in USAID co-creation during some summer months due to travel for missions and PTO of key agency staff. How will the project deal with this given the tight timelines? *Both LASER and USAID points of contact will be available for co-creation and throughout the project period.*

7. Contract or sub-agreement Related Questions

7.1. Can Purdue kindly confirm whether the contract for this assignment will be held by Purdue or USAID or another entity? *The contract for this assignment will be held by LASER PULSE/Purdue University. The selected team will sign a sub-agreement with Purdue University, which is the lead institution implementing LASER PULSE under a cooperative agreement with USAID. Therefore, the sub-agreement will be issued to the selected team under the terms of the cooperative agreement.*

7.2. What is the anticipated contract type to be awarded for this requirement? *This will be a sub-award under an existing cooperative agreement mechanism. The selected team will sign a sub-agreement with Purdue University, which is the lead institution implementing LASER PULSE under a cooperative agreement with USAID. The terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement will flow down to all sub-recipients. ADS 303 and 2 CFR 200 is applicable for this agreement, as well as geographic code 935.*

7.3. What terms and conditions and Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and USAID Acquisition Regulation (AIDAR) clauses will be associated and incorporated into the subsequent award? *This will be a sub-award under an existing cooperative agreement mechanism. The terms and*

conditions of the cooperative agreement will flow down to all sub-recipients. ADS 303 and 2 CFR 200 is applicable for this agreement, as well as geographic code 935.

8. Institutional Recusal and Non-Disclosure Agreement Related Questions

8.1. To whom we should address the Institutional Recusal form? Please address to:

*Yeuhwern Yih, Ph.D.
Academic Director, LASER PULSE
Professor, School of Industrial Engineering
Purdue University*

8.2. If awarded, are we recusing ourselves from all BHA RFSA work regardless of country or only for Madagascar? *No, only for the FY 24 Madagascar RFSA*

8.3. If an activity we designed isn't solicited until FY25, would we be recused even though it isn't an RFS in FY23 or FY24"? *It is expected that the Institution and its Affiliates and its employees may not participate in any way as a prime or sub-awardee/subcontractor or otherwise in any matters regarding the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance's (BHA) "Solicitations for Madagascar Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs) in FY 2024" if it accepts a sub-award under the USAID/BHA/TPQ RFSA Activity Design Studies Buy-In program." The institution may not participate in RFSA solicitations for Madagascar in FY2024. After FY2024, the applicant is no longer bound by the institutional recusal.*

8.4. Is it possible to narrow the scope for institutional recusal -- ie, prohibiting WFPC/DCID or specific individuals named in the concept note from submitting under the solicitations? *BHA is open to such recusal requests and asks applicants to submit a revised version of the institutional recusal for consideration.*

8.5. Can Purdue confirm that only full-time staff of the prime implementer would be precluded from participating in future RFSA opportunities, and that short-term international and local consultants or local enumerators would not be precluded from participating in future RFSA opportunities and therefore are not required to sign the individual NDA? *Every individual who will be involved in these studies is required to sign an NDA. In addition, all institutions selected for these studies are required to sign an institutional recusal, which will preclude the institution from participating in the FY24 RFSA in Madagascar.*

8.6. Is it possible to strike the trade secrets terms from the NDA for institutions that do not accept trade secrets? *No*

9. Registration on LASER PULSE

9.1. Is registration on LASER PULSE required before submission or before award? *Before submission.*