



People's Republic of China Standardization Collaboration with Developing Countries Call for Proposals

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research, Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER PULSE) at the Purdue Applied Research Institute, Global Development Innovation Division (PARI-GDI) seek proposals from multidisciplinary teams of researchers and professionals to conduct a rigorous review, in-depth research, and resultant recommendations regarding the People's Republic of China's collaboration with developing countries in standards development and the adoption of critical and emerging technologies.

Background

In May 2023, the White House launched the U.S. Government National Standards Strategy for Critical and Emerging Technology (NSSCET). The NSSCET sets four strategic objectives and eight Lines of Effort (LOE) that the U.S. Government should pursue to ensure the country remains competitive in critical and emerging technologies (CETs). See this [link](#) for details of objectives and LOEs.

Technical standards enable technology to be safe and interoperable. They also safeguard privacy, mitigate against risk, and ensure quality. As put in the NSSCET, "standards set the requirements that make it possible for mobile phones sold in different countries to communicate across the world, for bank cards issued in one country to be recognized at ATMs in another, and for cars to run on fuel purchased from any gas station."

The NSSCET recognizes that the United States faces challenges to its global leadership on international standardization and has concerns that strategic competitors may compromise the core principles of the international standardization system by seeking to influence international standards development to advance their objectives.

The People's Republic of China's (PRC) efforts in setting CETs appear to be aimed at either advancing their domestic industries' competitive advantage, pursuing economic, diplomatic, or military objectives through market access, and spreading their strategic influence by establishing a type of predominance over the international standardization ecosystem. Concerns then arise regarding the monopolization of benefits and the stifling of innovation when these standards frameworks are adopted. Under US policy and practice, technical standards are developed by consensus with the participation of the private sector and academia, with US government officials largely observing. This approach allows all stakeholders to participate in developing and critiquing proposed technical standards.

This research aims to understand the PRC's approaches, strategies, and collaboration patterns to influence USAID/USG-partner countries to advance its objectives under the Standards 2035 Plan for the CET standards development and adoption. The findings will help inform US policymakers, industry leaders, and USAID on addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the PRC's advancements with USAID/USG-partner countries.

The research should be conducted using both primary and secondary data collection methods, including interviews with key stakeholders in China and at least two USAID/USG-partner countries (please list) that have benefited from the PRC's cooperation on standards. The study should include case studies, analyzing specific examples of cases where Chinese cooperation has resulted in domestic adoption of Chinese standards and how/whether that has influenced the countries' international standardization activities. Applicants should list their proposed methodology in their proposal document, though this will be finalized and agreed upon during the co-creation period.

Research Question and Objectives

What methods, approaches, and collaboration patterns is the PRC using with the USAID/USG-partner countries to advance its objectives under the Standards 2035 Plan for critical and emerging technologies standards development and adoption?

The specific research objectives include:

1. **PRC CET Standardization:** Describe the PRC's strategic policies and initiatives, including the China Standards 2035 Plan, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the Digital Silk Road (DSR), for CET standardization, including strategic goals, objectives, strategies, standards and standard-setting processes, and operational plans.
2. **Analyze China's Influence:** Analyze the PRC's strategies, policy tools, and activities, along with their impacts and benefits, to persuade the USAID/USG-partner countries to adopt its technological standards and standard-setting processes.
3. **International Cooperation:** Analyze the contents and outputs of cooperation agreements and collaborative initiatives on standards and metrology between the PRC, USAID/USG partner governments, private industries, academic institutions, and international Standards Development Organizations (SDOs).
4. **Implications for Stakeholders:** Explain the implications of PRC's influence on the USAID/USG-partner countries' standards for USG, US manufacturers, and US and international SDOs, highlighting the impact on transparency and stakeholder participation.
5. **Human rights:** Explore the impact of China's standards on human rights, particularly in terms of surveillance and digital governance.
6. **Recommendations:** Make recommendations by which the USG can facilitate broad representation in standards development to counter PRC's influence, whether through technical assistance or other means. Recommend ways the USG can better position international standards or US-developed standards so USAID/USG-partner countries choose those over PRC standards.

Deliverables

Deliverables	
1	A 3-10 page Research Design document detailing the research methodology and analysis to be used in creating the project’s final report(s)
2	Final Research Report, Presentations, or Policy Brief(s)
3	Presentation/Webinar, to be agreed upon with USAID during co-creation stage

The winning team will engage in a co-creation and refinement round with USAID at the outset of the project, which will result in a signed Program Description that discusses and clarifies the project plan and the deliverables that will be developed. This co-creation time is allowable for budgeting purposes but will impact the final budget.

Schedule

USAID and LASER estimate that research and deliverables should follow a project schedule of 1 year from the signing of the project’s Program Description and completion of any consulting agreements.

Who Should Apply

We invite applications from teams based at higher education institutions and other research institutions, including researchers and practitioners across the social sciences, Chinese studies, economics, and related fields.

Applicants should join the LASER Pulse [Network](#) before submitting their application. They are also encouraged to take the training on Gender and Research Translation and integrate its concepts into their proposals.

Application Process and Selection Process

USAID and LASER PULSE seek applications from teams that meet the qualifications, expertise, and experience identified in this call for proposals.

Teams must apply under an umbrella institution that can receive U.S. federal funds, i.e., an institution registered on <https://sam.gov/content/home> with 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. Applicants with an active SAM.gov registration will be given priority, though applicants with a SAM.gov application in process will also be considered.



Applicants should submit a complete proposal using the format below. Proposals must be in English, with narrative portions prepared in Microsoft Word or Open Office format, using Calibri font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing. They must include the following sections:

- **Title Page**
- **Contact details:** List full name, position, institution, and contact information for the project team. The remaining details should be included on the team's spreadsheet
- **Research Narrative** (max. 5 pages) detailing the approach to addressing the research questions and objectives. Project methodology should be clearly discussed, including data collection and analysis methods and procedures, and a description of the intended research outputs.
- **Budget Outline** for project expenses, not to exceed \$294,000.
- **Organization Profile(s)** (max. 2 pages per organization).
- **Work Plan and Timeline** for project completion, discussing how the team will complete proposed activities, including the project's management structure and research outputs. After team selection, a co-creation process with USAID will clarify the deliverables, and while time invested in this process is allowable, this will impact the final budget. A project timeline of 12 months is recommended, beginning after the Program Description (SOW) document and any consulting agreements are signed, but is open to discussion.
- **Team Background and Relevant Expertise** completed via [this worksheet](#) with the following information:
 - Tab 1: Completed for each member of the Project Team
 - Tab 2: List publications or outputs that demonstrate experience relevant to the request in this call for proposals. Research outputs should involve primary or secondary data collection. Outputs may include peer-reviewed publications, conference papers, presentations, working papers, policy documents, or other media and publications.

Proposal submission information and deadline

- Applicants should submit their (1) Proposal and (2) Project Team background and relevant expertise through Qualtrics [at this link](#).
- Prospective applicants can submit any questions concerning the call for proposals. Questions should be sent to laserpulse@purdue.edu with the Subject Line: "Questions for LASER PULSE, PRC Influence in Standardization." Questions should be received by January 15, 2025, at 5:00 pm US Eastern time. Replies will be posted to the LASER Pulse website by January 22, 2025.
- Applications are due on February 7, 2025, at 5:00 pm US Eastern time.
- The announcement of the selected team will be released on February 28, 2025.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:



- **Relevance:** Does the proposal plan address the project's research objectives?
- **Innovation:** Does the proposal include novel or innovative approaches?
- **Research Team Credibility:** Does the research team have the background, skills, publication history, and relationships necessary to succeed in this project?
- **Feasibility:** Are the proposed activities feasible within the given time frame and budget?
- **Impact:** How will the proposed research and its translated research products further the US' understanding of standard settings and help the US engage the rest of the world around standards?
- **Methodological Rigor:** Does the proposal demonstrate sound methodological approaches that are appropriate for the research questions, particularly sociotechnical, participatory, or ethnographic methods?