

NPI Webinar Questions and Answers

Questions submitted during the November 26, 2019 Webinar

Programmatic and Award Type Questions

1. Which countries is USAID New Partnerships Initiative focused on?

Answer: The New Partnerships Initiative will have a global focus. Any country in which USAID implements activities may be included in NPI. For a full list of countries that USAID works, please visit: <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work>

2. How will NPI roll out? Will it primarily be applied to standalone NPI APSs or other mechanisms OR can we anticipate it would be incorporated broadly into solicitations across USAID operating units and Missions?

Answer: NPI will roll out in a variety of different ways, from standalone annual program statements to the incorporation of NPI approaches into other solicitations. The strategic intent of NPI is to support field operations and meet the needs of specific USAID missions or other operating units in targeted ways. NPI uses both assistance and acquisition mechanisms to achieve development objectives. In addition to the mandatory posting on grants.gov and/or beta.sam.gov, USAID will use [USAID.gov/NPI](https://www.usaid.gov/NPI) and the [NPI email distribution list](#) to alert organizations of new funding opportunities.

3. The NPI sounds very similar to the USAID Forward initiative of a few years ago. We found that with USAID Forward there has been a great deal of capacity building required to the local partners (OCAs, etc). Is this new program taking the lack of local capacity into the implementation?

Answer: NPI builds on USAID Forward, but seeks to broaden both the kinds of organizations that USAID work with as well as how USAID works with them. When it comes to local capacity building, NPI seeks to work with local entities and locally established partners, either directly or indirectly through subawards. NPI has an explicit focus on strengthening local actors and local systems through facilitative partnering and mentorship and, in some cases, encouraging transition awards. Building the capacity of local partners to lead in their own development is a key component of the Journey to Self-Reliance. This is not the same as the “capacity to manage USAID awards” that was emphasized under USAID Forward. USAID will more often rely on our experienced partners to help improve local performance through subawards that strengthen local partner capacity along with providing technical oversight and compliance support.

4. What are the specifics in past performance for a new partner to be considered for funding?

Answer: Past performance specifics will depend on each specific funding opportunity. Funding opportunities posted on grants.gov or beta.SAM.gov would list any specific past performance requirements for a new or underutilized partner, if any.

5. Is there a way to connect with experienced primes to demonstrate capacity to become a sub-awardee. Are primes required to offer their own “RFPs?”

Answer: USAID encourages new and underutilized partners to connect and engage with USAID’s existing partners to create new partnerships. In the coming year, USAID will host a series of partner events, such as the Overseas Small Business conference (to be held in Frankfurt March 2-4), at which we expect this to take place. Additionally, we hope that connections between new and experienced partners could organically occur during a co-creation when a funding opportunity uses multiple NPI partnering modalities.

6. Will NPI be applied to both contracts and cooperative agreements (particularly the emphasis on percent of work going to new and underutilized subs)?

Answer: Yes, NPI will look at both acquisition (contracts) and assistance (grants and cooperative agreement) with a focus on the strategic use of sub-awards for both types of instruments.

7. During the EPPR listening tour, you heard from partner organizations that USAID’s award requirements were too onerous. Is USAID proposing changes to the award requirements to simplify implementation for organizations with less experience and established capacity to manage USAID awards? If so, what are these changes?

Answer: Generally, in recent years, Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs) have been used for first-time recipients of USAID funding. Those who receive direct awards under NPI will likely receive FAAs, which are a less onerous instrument type.

Questions on NPI Definitions

8. Does having received USAID/ASHA funding for commodities and renovations count as receiving USAID funding? I ask because there might be a difference between technical implementation vs. commodity support.

Answer: Yes, ASHA funding would be considered USAID funding.

9. For a locally established partner, am I correct in understanding the criteria for “underutilized” refers to USAID budget managed *in the country* in which a partner is locally established?

Answer: The eligibility requirements for determining underutilized partners refer to all USAID funding received by the applicant in the prior five year period, not just the funding managed in a given country.

10. For the definition of underutilized Partner, does the \$25 million received from USAID in the last five years mean:
- Estimated total value of the award (as stated in the cooperative agreement)?
 - Funding obligated?
 - Expenditures incurred?

Answer: The \$25 million dollars received refers to actual payments made by USAID to the applicant in the five years prior to the date of the application submission.

11. The definitions (3) under the New Partnerships Initiative seem to have changed over the past few months, shifting to a more broader and subjective definition. What organizations are excluded from the definitions?

Answer: Definitions such as locally established partner and new or underutilized partner were codified in USAID’s operational policy (ADS 303) in April 2019 and have been applied consistently since then. NPI partnering modalities also remained the same during this period, but for presentation purposes may be consolidated or simplified.

12. Is it correct that the new and underutilized organization terms define eligibility for awards while the local/locally established partner terms are more criteria on which you evaluate application submissions?

Answer: Yes, as a general rule. However, some NPI solicitations have restricted eligibility to organizations that meet the local entity and/or locally established partner definitions. Eligibility requirements in all cases must be met before submissions will be evaluated. Evaluation criteria will vary per funding opportunity.

13. If an INGO has worked in partnership with USAID in one country (e.g. Rwanda), but not in another (e.g. Malawi), would it be considered a new partner?

Answer: As long as the organization has previously partnered with USAID within the last five years, they are not considered a new partner. In other words, the criteria is based on all prior USAID funding, not on the location of implementation of previous USAID funding within a five-year period. This partner may of course be eligible as an underutilized partner, even if it is not a new partner.

14. By “majority-owned,” does this refer to individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country that is receiving assistance from USAID? How "owned" is defined is not very clear.

Answer: Yes, per the USAID operational policy (ADS 303). Any questions regarding ownership would be resolved by the agreement officer during the pre-award process.

15. On the NPI, does it apply only for a new partner and underutilized partner working in the host country, how about the new partner based in the USA?

Answer: US-based partners may also be considered new and underutilized partners (NUPs) under NPI if they meet the monetary threshold(s) for NUPs.

Submission and Review Process Related Questions

16. Can you please explain what is required to become a partner of USAID?

Answer: Generally speaking, to become a partner of USAID an organization must submit a proposal or application to USAID to a specific funding opportunity that is posted on Grants.gov or beta.SAM.gov. In a very limited number of circumstances, USAID accepts “unsolicited proposals” by which we provide funding to an organization. You can learn more about how to work with USAID here: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/how-to-work-with-usaid>

17. How does “co-creation” take place?

Answer: Co-creation varies by funding opportunity, so please pay close attention to those. Co-creation can take many forms, from large roundtable brainstorming sessions with many stakeholders, to direct partner to USAID (one-to-one) co-creation, and everything in between. Co-Creation can also occur prior to a solicitation or funding opportunity being released, when USAID is conducting consultations or workshops to help with problem identification or definition, or it can occur after an award has been made, during the creation of a work plan, as part of adapting an activity to changing circumstances. .

18. Where should we submit the concept papers? To DC HQ, OAA, or the Mission?

Answer: Each stand alone funding opportunity will stipulate where concept notes should be submitted.

19. Is it possible to contact program directors and ask questions directly prior to submitting a grant.

Answer: In most circumstances, USAID will give organizations an opportunity to ask questions before concept notes are due. Each specific funding opportunity, when posted on grants.gov or beta.SAM.gov, will provide instructions for submitting questions to USAID.

20. Does USAID assist in reviewing concept paper and budget and giving feedback before submitting?

Answer: During an active solicitation/application process, USAID will not provide specific feedback on a concept note or budget to an organization. If the solicitation includes a co-creation process and an organization is invited to participate in co-creation prior to award, then USAID can provide specific feedback prior to submission of a full application.

21. Under NPI, when submitting a concept note (before the co-creation process), is this concept note solely for the work our small organization is seeking funding or do we need to include a larger prime partner in that concept note?

Answer: An organization's concept note submission strategy (such as including a large prime partner) depends upon on a number of factors, the most important of which is responding to the requirements of the funding opportunity. Make certain that your concept note is responsive to the funding opportunity. It is up to each organization to determine if they want to include other partners as a part of their submission.

22. Does USAID have a template that can be used for concept paper and budget?

Answer: Look at the requirements as outlined in specific funding opportunities. While some funding opportunities might have a concept paper and budget template, others may not. At the point of full application/proposal, there may be a mandatory template; however, this is dependent upon the design of the specific solicitation.

23. Would USAID employ defined criteria/priority organizational aspects when selecting new partners, or would the criteria be specific to each call for proposals?

Answer: Funding opportunities under NPI would have to use the basic NPI review criteria, such as definitions that are in USAID policy (e.g. ADS 303), but could add or adapt additional criteria.

24. Who is going to determine that the organization provided more than they received from USAID?

Answer: The criteria for new or underutilized partners that are also locally established partners may include the requirement that the organization provides more in non-USG overseas development funding than they received from USAID in the previous five years. (This may apply to organizations that are registered in the U.S. or other countries, and are not “local entities” but operate locally per the definition in ADS 303.) During either co-creation or full application/proposal stage, USAID personnel would verify eligibility if the NPI solicitation is applying this criterion.

25. Is it possible to submit multiple proposals from our different programs?

Answer: Yes.

26. With such high interest in NPI, can you please give some guidance on how to make our concept stand out?

Answer: Read the funding opportunity requirements carefully and ensure that your submission is compliant, clear and concise. USAID is always looking for innovative ideas that leverage resources.

Funding Opportunity Questions

27. We would like to apply to USAID for funding. How do we proceed?

Answer: The first step is to submit a concept note to an open funding opportunity.

28. Where will funding opportunities be posted?

Answer: All funding opportunities are posted on beta.SAM.gov and Grants.gov. In addition, to make things easy for the partner community, opportunities will be posted to www.usaid.gov/npi. Additionally, these opportunities will usually be listed in advance on the USAID Business Forecast.

29. How can organizations access the Palladium funding, i.e., become a partner?

Answer: USAID's NPI EXPAND award to Palladium is in the process of identifying countries in which to implement, responding to need from USAID missions. Sub-partners identified in these countries will receive technical and/or organizational capacity building support and/or sub-grants. Sub-partners will be identified by Missions, by landscaping analyses, or through existing networks, and their participation solicited through Requests for Applications or other mechanisms.

30. Do all of USAID funded projects need to have an international component or can we also target poor and rural areas in the United States?

Answer: USAID only supports efforts that contribute to development outcomes outside of the United States.

31. In light of the additional investment necessary to participate in co-creation, and the potential for sharing competitively sensitive information and intellectual property with other applicants before identification as apparently successful, has (or would) USAID considered providing a small (\$20k-\$40k) fixed obligation grant or similar to fund participation in co-creation?

Answer: Under its current practice, USAID does not provide funding to organizations during the co-creation process. It is important to note that NPI's co-creation approach is greatly streamlined and tailored for the organizations involved. In addition, USAID tries to use technology available to minimize costs. It is not USAID's intention that a participant in a co-creation process should incur significant costs.

32. Is there a portal to see all projects funded by NPI? (e.g. if I was looking for WASH-related projects funded through NPI could I find those somewhere?)

Answer: USAID will be setting up a page under [USAID.gov/NPI](https://www.usaid.gov/NPI) to track all awards made under NPI. Please check back on the website for future updates.

NPI Incubator Questions

33. Is the NPI eligibility self-assessment tool available? If not, when can we expect it to become available?

Answer: We have examined a variety of self-assessment tools that have been used by the Agency and other organizations historically. From this analysis, we have worked to develop a simple, yet comprehensive industry-standard survey that can be used by

organizations seeking to partner with USAID. We anticipate that the tool will be beta tested in January by selected new and underutilized partners, and an open source final version will be available soon.

34. How can we apply to be apart of the NPI Incubator?

Answer: The NPI Incubator is working to lower barriers for new and underutilized organizations to access and partner with USAID, build capacity of USAID staff to work with such partners, and to mentor and build the capacity of select organizations as directed by USAID operating units. There are tools available to organizations, such as the self assessment tool that will be available soon at no cost to partner organizations.

35. Where can I learn more about the NPI Incubator

Answer: USAID will be adding additional information about the Incubator on the [NPI website](#).