FY 2021, 1st Quarter Business Forecast Questions and Responses
November 19, 2020

Background

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Business Forecast is an informational resource on potential funding and partnership opportunities at USAID. It is an advanced look at grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements that USAID is in the process of developing and plans to issue in the coming year. Organizations interested in working with USAID can use this tool to plan for proposal or application submissions.

General Business Forecast Questions

1. **Beta.SAM.gov:** In the design of Beta.SAM.gov that replaced FBO.gov, the second-tier procurement offices (i.e. missions) were omitted from Beta.SAM.gov migration. GSA has announced departments/agency must load the second-tier procurement offices into Beta.SAM.gov? Can USAID load the second-tier procurement offices (missions)? It would greatly improve the search capabilities of Beta.SAM.gov?

   USAID Response: This is not a term used within beta.SAM.gov. All USAID Activity Address Codes (AAC) were migrated and are currently available in beta.SAM.

2. **Beta.SAM.gov:** What kind of training has USAID provided to staff for use of Beta.SAM.gov to ensure all information is entered and in appropriate fields? It does seem some information is truncated or missing in the Beta.SAM.gov solicitations.

   USAID Response: Basic functionality from FBO.gov was migrated to beta.SAM.gov and there were no significant changes. USAID provided information resources to staff on how to use beta.SAM.gov, including the GSA quick reference guides. Finally, M/OAA System Support team provided additional support if there were any issues using the new system.

3. **Posting of Funding Opportunities:** USAID seems to be moving away from the USG mandated central portals to post solicitations (Grants.gov and Beta.SAM.gov) to using Twitter and newsletters. This causes a lot of extra work to search, monitor and causing confusion as to USAID's involvement, applicable regulations, and version control. What can be done to bring the agency back to use of central portals for posting solicitations?

   USAID Response: USAID is not moving away from the USG mandated central portals, Grants.gov and Beta.SAM.gov, in publicizing new/existing procurement activities. In order to promote competition, diversify its partner base and to attract small businesses (US and local partners of each Mission), USAID uses social media, newsletters, local print and electronic media as well. All these additional publicizing actions provide a link to Grants.gov and or Beta.SAM.gov as applicable.

4. **Business Forecast:** For opportunities that USAID doesn't believe will be released, it would be better that a notification be put that the opportunity is being reconsidered or is on back burner. This is better than taking it down completely and then reinstating it. Related to this is another suggestion, perhaps for every opportunity there could be a persistent link (URL). You see when USAID takes down an opportunity and then reinstates it, a new URL is generated. Hence the suggestion to have persistent URL makes sense.

USAID Response: We will look to better identify ways to communicate if an opportunity will be canceled or be put on hold for a period of time. USAID has created the unique A&A Plan ID, which allows partners to track an opportunity if it is removed from the Forecast or changed. If/when a new opportunity is readded to the Forecast, the A&A Plan ID would still be the same.

5. **Changes to the Forecast:** Could USAID please highlight any changes to the business forecast Q&A document so that bidders can track what changes have been made?

   USAID Response: In early 2021, USAID will be releasing a new update to the Forecast will help partners to identify changes to the Forecast. This change log will allow partners to see what fields have been most recently updated.

6. **Missing Items from Forecast:** We understand over 100 previously-posted opportunities were removed from USAID's Business Forecast between October 3 rd and October 4 th due to a fiscal year-end technical glitch. Has USAID fully resolved this glitch?

   USAID Response: Yes, this issue has been addressed. Nearly all opportunities have been added back to the Forecast.

7. **New Not Previously Forecasted:** Does USAID plan to include the identification of "New Not Previously Forecasted" opportunities in the forecast?

   USAID Response: In early 2021, USAID will be releasing a new update to the Forecast will help partners to identify changes to the Forecast. This change log will allow partners to see what fields have been most recently updated.

8. **TBD on Award Type:** We have noted an increased use of "TBD" in the Award/Action Type field on the Business Forecast. As of October 30th, 64 of the 217 list opportunities are classified as "TBD". While we of course understand that sometimes this information comes later in the award cycle, it does make planning difficult--especially when the mechanism switches back and forth between assistance and acquisition several times before the solicitation is released.

   USAID Response: We understand that this determination would help further with respect to planning. We are cautious to avoid a switch in instrument type if one is selected on the business forecast. If for some reason you do see a disconnect with the business forecast and the solicitation or have questions in general, please feel free to contact the POC for the award.

9. **Category Management:** The entries in the new columns of the USAID Business Forecast vary widely from one activity to another. Would USAID provide a guide to standardize the various Category Management Contract Vehicles descriptors?

   USAID Response: Since the list of Category Management (CM) contract vehicles changes often as new vehicles are added and changes are made to existing vehicles, it is impossible to standardize the response to this question. The response to this question will be the name of a CM contract vehicle such as OASIS, HCaTS, Alliant, etc.

10. **Category Management:** What does "Category Management Contract Vehicle" mean and how should we interpret the "tiers"?

    USAID Response: Category Management Contract Vehicle refers to contracts designated as

Tier 3, 2, or 1 under Category Management (CM). For more information on CM, please see OMB Memo M-19-13 and GSA's page on CM. The list of GSA's Best-in-Class (BIC)/Tier 3 contracts is here: GSA BIC contracts.

11. **Category Management:** Some of the activities on the USAID Business Forecast classifies the Category Management Contract Vehicle as "N/A" or "none" among others. Would USAID explain what is meant by "N/A" or "none" as the vehicle for an activity?

    USAID Response: If the Award/Action Type is a kind of Assistance award, then Category Management (CM) does not apply, and the answer "N/A" or "none" would be appropriate. If the Award/Action Type is a kind of Acquisition award, but the CO determines not to use a CM solution for the procurement (ie, the award will be a stand alone contract or a TO under a USAID IDIQ), then "N/A" or "none" would be an appropriate answer.

12. **Category Management:** Would USAID consider changing activities with their Category Management Contract Vehicles listed as "GSA OASIS 1 SB" to "Small Business Set-Aside" categories? Example: Global Waters Communication and Knowledge Management II, with its A&A Plan ID: AA-311791, and the Operating Unit being the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS).

    USAID Response: The response to Category Management Contract Vehicle of "GSA OASIS 1 SB" is indeed a Small Business Set-Aside in accordance with FAR Part 19. More information on OASIS SB is here: OASIS

13. **Category Management:** Does USAID consider IQCs or IDIQs as Tier 0 or Tier 1 for Category Management purposes?

    USAID Response: Category Management (CM) Tiers are defined by OMB Memo M-19-13. GSA also has a CM resource page and a list of CM Best-in-Class (BIC)/Tier 3 contracts here. Contract type does not put a contract into any of the CM Tiers. A contract (including IDIQs) must be specifically designated as Tier 3, 2, or 1 by OMB. An IDIQ could therefore be any of the Tiers (3, 2, or 1), or could not be aligned with CM at all and would therefore be Tier 0.

14. **Co-Creation:** Could USAID please indicate the expected duration of a co-creation process, from the outset? Note: We are currently engaged in two co-creation processes that have now lasted 15 months, with no expected completion date, and several stretches of weeks or months with no news, but continued encouragement from USAID that the process will eventually reach a positive conclusion. If we had known it was going to take this long, we would have more accurately estimated our personnel and our costs.

    USAID Response: Co-creation is unique for each activity and can occur at various points throughout the lifecycle of the activity. At USAID, we recognize that co-creation can have frustration points and be uncomfortable or sometimes take longer than anticipated. You are encouraged to continue to reach out to your cognizant CO on the status and to understand the full expectations of your role(s) in the co-creation. In effort to obtain industry feedback for future iterations of its Co-creation Field Guide you may share your experience with AALab@usaid.gov.

15. **Co-Creation:** We noticed Missions are increasingly using co-creation phases that require substantial resources from implementing partners and their respective consortium members in advance of award. Would USAID please encourage Missions utilizing co-creation to be cognizant

of resource constraints and plan with smaller groups (less than 5 people), or hold co-creation post-award?

USAID Response: Co-creation has to be managed, designed, and facilitated. Co-creation can involve substantial time, human capital, and financial resources, and we have encouraged both Missions and implementing partners to think strategically about whether the use of co-creation is right for them and the project. We will continue to emphasize this in messaging around the use of co-creation. In effort to obtain industry feedback for future iterations of its Co-creation Field Guide you may share your experience with AALab@usaid.gov.

16. **Co-Creation:** The USAID forecast includes a new column indicating when "co-creation" will be part of the process; how is use of "co-creation" determined or who determines that?

USAID Response: Each Mission and operating unit as part of their procurement planning will make the determination of whether co-creation is appropriate for their activity and note it when they add data to the forecast. USAID is now tracking the use of co-creation as a metric. Additionally, anyone considering the use of co-creation can take a survey to determine whether or not co-creation is right for them. You should also refer to the 5Ws of Successful Co-creation and What is Co-creation as well.

17. **Country Development Strategies**: USAID had planned for a second 'Wave' of Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs) to be completed by December 2020. Could USAID please provide an update on the timing of the CDCS process and when this second Wave of new CDCSs might be made public?

USAID Response: The CDCS launch began with Wave 1 and Wave 2 countries, respectively, and took place between 2017-2019. Since then, all Missions that were not exempt began their CDCS development process. As of November 2020, we have 32 CDCSs approved and are diligently working with the remainder of the Missions submitting final strategies for approval before the end of the year. An additional 16 CDCSs and 5 RDCSs are in process and most are in the final stages. Approved public versions of CDCS's are available on USAID.gov.

18. **Environmental Compliance Database:** The Environmental Compliance Database remains down for unscheduled maintenance. Does USAID have any information on when access may be restored to the Environmental Compliance Database? Can USAID clarify if there is an alternate location to access its Initial Environmental Examination documents?

USAID Response: The team is working to get the site open for partners once again. As of right now, there is limited support for helping persons outside USAID; however, if a partner has access to USAID's network, they are able to search the ECD right now.

19. **Global**: As the US Government consolidates Foreign Aid Explorer and Foreign Assistance.gov, will USAID include any disaggregated data on spending by target beneficiary group (ie youth, women, etc)?

USAID Response: Not at this time. The consolidation of Foreign Aid Explorer and ForeignAssistance.gov would not impact USAID's ability to report spending by the target beneficiary group. USAID does not currently capture this level of data in its corporate systems,

and would need to explore the feasibility of doing so in the future.

20. **Grants Under Contract:** In the previous Business Forecast call, USAID mentioned that a GUC Ceiling increase to $500,000 was under review. Can USAID provide a status update on this action?

    USAID Response: Currently, the $100,000 threshold limitation for GUCs to U.S. non-governmental organizations remains in place. Removing or increasing the $100,000 threshold limitation is an Effective Partnering and Procurement reform (EPPR) recommendation, and the EPPR team has held internal discussions on this topic for the past several months. USAID is consulting OMB on a potential threshold increase, after which USAID will submit an approval memorandum to the Agency Front Office for approval. We hope to have this completed during Q1 of FY21.

21. **GSA Schedule:** Which GSA schedules does USAID mostly/typically use for services? Is it OASIS, which others?

    USAID Response: OASIS is not a GSA Schedule. OASIS is a GSA IDIQ and is designated as a Best-in-Class (BIC)/Tier 3 contract under Category Management (CM). Since OASIS is an IDIQ, ordering procedures are found in FAR 16.505. This differs from GSA Schedule ordering procedures, which are according to FAR 8.405. More information on OASIS is here. More information on GSA's Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) is here. As determined appropriate for the services required, USAID will use OASIS, MAS, and other USG-wide contract vehicles as appropriate for the requirement.

22. **Use of GSA Schedule:** It appears that the USAID is procuring or intends to procure technical and developing assistance services through the GSA Schedule on a more frequent basis. How does USAID make a determination to utilize the GSA Schedule?

    USAID Response: The CO, in consultation with the requiring office, determines the most appropriate approach for the procurement after reviewing the requirements documents.

23. **Holidays:** Can USAID request that their staff add additional flexibility during the holiday season for new/upcoming solicitations?

    USAID Response: As we have done in previous years, we will encourage our Contracting and Agreement Officers to include flexibility in solicitation and response dates during the upcoming holiday season.

24. **IDIQ:** Multiple activities on the USAID Business Forecast list the Award/Action Type as "IDIQ" or "IDIQ TO." Would USAID request of its operating units to include the name of the IDIQ be listed, as well?

    USAID Response: Yes, we will encourage our staff to include the specific IDIQ if/when this is listed on the Forecast.

25. **Multi-Stage Procurement:** For solicitations with a multi-stage procurement process, would USAID please consider standardizing the process for all Missions to ensure consistency across the agency?

    USAID Response: Streamlining and standardizing partnering and procurement processes is

a main focus of the EPPR initiative. For multi-stage procurement processes, USAID is looking to review its experiences in this category, and develop associated program and procurement guidance on this topic.

26. **Multi-Stage Procurement:** Would USAID also consider limiting the requirements in early stages to conserve resources and limit the number of competitors in later stages of co-creation to three or less?

    USAID Response: USAID is continuing to evolve its co-creation processes and appreciates your feedback. As part of the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI), we have tried to streamline the process by asking for just concept notes up front. Operating units have also been encouraged to consider the budgetary impact on new and underutilized partners when selecting where in the procurement process to use co-creation. Recent use of virtual co-creation has found positive trends in mitigating up front costs.

27. **SF-424A Form:** In multiple recent USAID Notices of Funding Opportunity, as a part of Business (Cost) Application Format, there is a category that does not correspond with budget categories in the SF-424A form. Does USAID plan on updating SF-424A to ensure consistency between NOFO requirements and the form?
    i. Please see an excerpt of this budget category below.
       "Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.

    USAID Response: The SF-424 forms are governmentwide forms and the Agency does not have the ability to update them. The language quoted here is not mandatory language, however, AOs may request this information from potential applicants in the budget and budget narrative section of the NOFO. There is no requirement for the AO's requested budget and narrative to align with the categories found in the Application for Federal Assistance.

28. **NPI:** Can USAID provide a list of NPI awards to include awardee name, amount and NPI partner category?

    USAID Response: To date we have formed 29 partnerships with nearly 60 organizations, valued at over $400 million.

    All awards issued under the New Partnerships Initiative are available on our website -- including the awardee name, amount, partner category, and a description of the activity. I would encourage you to take a look at usaid.gov/npi.

    We also share information in our bi-monthly NPI newsletter on each of the new awards issued through the initiative.

29. **NPI:** Does USAID anticipate any NPI solicitations being set aside for small businesses?

    USAID Response: The goal of the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) is to diversify USAID's partner base and multiply its development impact by elevating local leadership, fostering

creativity and innovation, and mobilizing resources across the Agency's programs. NPI supports US small business as it targets new, under utilized (an organization that has received less than $25 million in direct/indirect funds over the last 5 years) and US small businesses are also well positioned for mentorship awards where they can help build up the capacity of local sub-partners. Potential Partners are encouraged to sign up for the NPI newsletter to stay up to date on the latest information regarding NPI.

30. **NPI:** Can USAID please describe the type of solicitations that will be released in support of the NPI for 2021?

    USAID Response: USAID has historically issued NPI solicitations as APS and Addendum to APS and has issued one BAA. However, NPI is not restricted to this procurement modality and missions may choose a variety of options as they move forward on their NPI action plans. USAID is encouraging the principles of NPI to be incorporated into all awards, whether or not they are a specific "NPI award." As a result, partners will see opportunities for new and underutilized partners in many of USAID's more traditional awards.

    In addition, over the past few months, all 77 of USAID's Missions completed 2-year NPI action plans, which identified a significant number of actions that will target new and underutilized partners.

    Stay up to date with the latest NPI information at https://www.usaid.gov/npi. Potential partners are also encouraged to continue monitoring the forecast, grants.gov and betasam.gov for future opportunities.

31. **NPI:** We have noticed multiple cases of NPI opportunities in which new partners are asked to bring Resource Partners to the table with leveraged funds from the beginning of the process. For example, see Peru New Partnerships and Private Sector Engagement Initiative 72052720APS00001. The two strategic objectives that USAID is pursuing through these seem to be at odds: new and under-utilized partners, many of which are local and small, are already at a disadvantage when approaching USAID for funds due to lack of experience. Why would USAID increase the barrier to entry by requiring an already committed Resource Partner? Do you expect this trend to continue?

    USAID Response: The New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) seeks to operationalize USAID's Acquisition and Assistance Strategy objectives by changing the way that USAID partners; diversifying the agency's partner base and improving the quality of our partnerships. NPI promotes a variety of approaches to meet the many strategic objectives articulated within the A&A Strategy, this includes partnerships with organizations that can leverage other funding - USAID is committed to leveraging private resources that can help sustain impact.

32. **Local Capacity Development:** What is USAID doing to ensure capacity of new and underused partners will meet USAID requirements for financial and performance management?

    USAID Response: We recognize that USAID's compliance requirements can be cumbersome, especially for new and underutilized partners. If the new and underutilized partner is a subaward recipient, we encourage the sub-awardee to work closely with the prime implementing partner for support on compliance and reporting requirements. Prime implementing partners are often the best positioned to mentor sub-award recipients on learning how and what to report to USAID. The New Partnerships Incubator is piloting some efforts for

self-assessments, tools, and resources to support this type of capacity - as well as updating the training on USAID's website - look for more information on this throughout 2021.

33. **Local Capacity Development:** What areas of capacity are targeted most directly under NPI?

    USAID Response: As part of NPI and envisioned by the A&A Strategy as a whole, USAID is shifting our focus on local capacity development from focus on the ability to receive and manage federal funding, to measuring success by the strengthened performance of local actors and local systems in achieving and sustaining demonstrable development results. As a result, we are more focused on the outcomes of an organization's development work. In order to measure progress on this capacity front, we have developed a Capacity Building and Local Development indicator (CBLD-9) to measure improved performance. In addition, NPI is committed to mutual accountability across all levels of partnership, and to capacity development of local networks and local systems.

34. **Local Capacity Development:** Is USAID planning to provide guidance for the types of capacity building needed for NPI local partners?

    USAID Response: As USAID finalizes its Local Capacity Development Policy, implementing partners will receive updates and invites for webinars to learn more about the policy. In the meantime, implementing partners can learn more about capacity building and the CBLD-9 indicator on USAID's NPI website.

35. **Small Business Applied Research Program:** Can USAID please share any information on future SBAR solicitations?

    USAID Response: USAID anticipates the release of a new SBAR Program BAA solicitation in the near future.

36. **Procurement.usaid.gov:** We came across the USAID the web site https://procurement.usaid.gov which seems to be a location for prime contractors to post subcontracting requirements. Can you explain how this platform is supposed to be used by USAID and implementers? There seems to be no instructions.

    USAID Response: This site is used by M/OAA's Transportation Division for the procurement related to the shipments of goods and commodities. The site is utilized to publicize contract actions supporting the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance food aid programs. Solicitation and Award information announcements are provided on the site.

37. **RFI:** For all opportunities that you post, it would be great if could indicate if an RFI was ever released and a link to that RFI. This has become ever more important because BEtaSam has many bugs and doesn't always show past RFIs.

    USAID Response: With the addition of the new co-creation field on the Business Forecast partners will be able to note if an RFI plans to be/has been issued for upcoming funding opportunities.

38. **Small Business Goals:** Can USAID provide the 2020 USAID mission internal small business goals? It also seems some countries with significant budgets are missing from the list of mission small business goals e.g. West Bank/Gaza, Yemen, Angola, Armenia, Benin, Haiti, Nicaragua,

Botswana, Lesotho, Laos PDR, Cameroon, Macedonia, Namibia, Burkina Faso, Kyrgyz Republic and eSwantini.

USAID Response: USAID will share the Bureaus, Independent Offices, and Missions' FY 2020 small business goals and accomplishments as soon as the data is available. Several Missions are excluded from the small business goaling for FY 2020-2021 due to various reasons such as natural disaster, conflict, or other issues that may deem a region temporarily unstable.

39. **Small Business Goals:** What are the final percentages achieved for the FY20 small business goals and will the goals be the same for FY21?

    USAID Response: The preliminary data indicates our accomplishment of 14.83 percent for prime awards significantly exceeded our official small business goal of 12.00 percent. USAID's final percentages will be provided via the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Annual Procurement Scorecard. It is anticipated the SBA will release the finalized data for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 during the second quarter of the FY 2021.

40. **Subcontracting Goals:** We understand from reading PEB 2017-01 US small business subcontracting plans are required for overseas awarded contracts except for contracts or contract modifications that will be performed entirely outside of the United States and its outlying areas. How does OSDBU include the applicable overseas awarded contracts (under this criteria) in the numerator and denominator of the USAID subcontracting goals?

    USAID Response: All of the awards issued to small businesses in the area of prime and subcontracting is counted toward meeting small business goal achievement. The U.S. Small Business Administration and USAID utilize the data entered into the Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS) by its prime contractors to determine the dollars and percentage of subcontracts awarded to small businesses worldwide.

41. **Sub-Contracting Plans:** USAID OSDBU requires that prime contractors and prime grants with a subcontracting requirement about SAP to send the requirement to OSDBU 45 days in advance? What happens to them after submission to OSDBU? Where can US small businesses find the posted solicitations?

    USAID Response: The OSDBU helps increase contracts and subcontracts to U.S.-based small businesses, it does not review grant opportunities. When OSDBU receives a subcontracting plan, relative to a contract, it makes sure the plan conforms to Federal Acquisition Regulations, Part 19 requirements. Small businesses may locate solicitations in the U.S. Small Business Administration SubNet website (https://eweb1.sba.gov/subnet/client/dsp_Landing.cfm). It is not a marketing system. However, prime contractors utilize SubNet to post small business opportunities.

42. **SUBNET:** We are having problems entering a subcontracting solicitation requirement into the Small Business Administration SUBNET database as well as searching for requirements in SUBNET? We understand it has software problems. Can OSDBU provide an update when SUBNET software problems will be fixed?

    USAID Response: Please visit the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), SubNet website, and select the help tab. The help tab has videos and documentation to provide step-by-step instructions to post a Solicitation or Sources Sought Notice. The help tab also has an advanced search to help locate specific requirements. If you have additional questions please

contact SBA's Office of Government Contracting https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/headquarters-offices/office-government-contracting.

43. **UTRAMS:** Can USAID please explain how the new Universal Technical Request and Mission Support (UTRAMS) system impacts how USAID will design and procure new contracts and assistance mechanisms? How is this system related to the SOAR process?

   USAID Response: UTRAMS is an Agency-wide, internal system through which Missions can request technical assistance from Washington staff.   UTRAMS alerts a network of Agency expertise to each request for technical assistance -- ensuring that Regional and Technical Bureaus work together to provide a comprehensive, holistic response. UTRAMS will not fundamentally impact the way the Agency designs and procures new contracts and assistance. Currently UTRAMS does not interact with the SOAR process.

44. **Virtual Industry Days/Co-Creation:** Does USAID intend to host virtual industry days and co-creation in FY21? If so, are there industry events currently scheduled?

   USAID Response: Yes, the Agency will continue to host virtual industry days through FY 2021. Please sign-up for the Agency's A&A updates newsletter for Agency-wide events. For events related to specific funding please pay attention to grants.gov and beta.SAM.gov. In addition, you can also look at the Agency's Business Forecast where information on co-creation is now available.