

FY2017 Business Forecast Quarter 1 Review Conference Call
Tuesday, December 13, 2016
8:00AM-8:30AM

Background

USAID's Business Forecast is published each quarter throughout the fiscal year. The Agency's 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. Two separate Forecasts are developed each quarter – one for USAID Missions overseas and one for USAID in Washington, DC. Organizations interested in working with USAID can use this tool to plan for proposal or application submissions.

USAID Participants

1. Mark Walther, USAID M/OAA Deputy Director of Operations
2. Sunil Xavier, USAID M/OAA Deputy Director of Foreign Operations
3. Teneshia Alston, Senior Program Manager, USAID Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)
4. Charity Benson, Senior Advisor, M/OAA Washington Operations
5. Rachel Chilton, M/OAA Communications Specialist

Agenda

- Ms. Chilton kicks off call, introduces individuals in the room, and provides instructions for the call
- Mr. Walther provides introductory remarks.
- Ms. Alston provides introductory remarks.
- Ms. Chilton begins asking USAID participants questions submitted for the call.
- Conclusion of the call

Conference Call Transcript

Ms. Chilton remarks:

Good morning – or good afternoon and good evening depending on where you are joining us from around the world. Thank you for being here with us today. My name is Rachel Chilton and I am on the communications team within the Management Bureau's Office of Acquisition and Assistance.

Welcome to USAID's Fiscal Year 2017 1st Quarter Business Forecast conference call. Today we are anticipating nearly 400 people on the line. This quarter we received well over 350 questions related to our Business Forecast. In the year and a half that we have been doing Business Forecast calls, this is the most that we have ever received.

For those of you that are new to this call, rather than going through all 350 questions, we will be covering a number of the general questions and posting responses to all of the Q&A later today or sometime tomorrow once we have all questions answered. We have most of the questions answered, but are still collecting a few from the field at this time.

Just a reminder, you are all muted and will not be able to speak. We ask that you please do not put us on hold as everyone will hear background music if you do. We are recording the call and will post the recording, as well as the transcript on our Business Forecast page along with the entire Q&A. We will notify you through twitter on our handle @USAIDBizOpps and our e-mail distribution list once everything has been posted.

I have a number of folks with me in the room today who I will let introduce themselves briefly --

- Mark Walther, Deputy Director of Operations for M/OAA,
- Sunil Xavier, USAID M/OAA Deputy Director of Foreign Operations,
- Teneshia Alston, Senior Program Manager, USAID Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), and
- Charity Benson, Senior Advisor, M/OAA Washington Operations.

I would like to now turn the call over to Mark Walther to provide a few introductory remarks before we dive into the Q&A that was submitted.

Mr. Walther remarks:

Thank you Rachel and thank you to everyone that has joined us for our call and submitted questions. We are definitely pleased to see the continued interest in our Business Forecast.

In regard to the 300 plus questions, it is my understanding that 85 to 90% of those are actually seeking additional information, where about 10% is seeking clarification on particular dates or things of that nature. We definitely welcome the additional expression of interest and the request for more information and hope you'll find those later today to be more responsible.

We're just going to spend about 10 or 15 minutes this morning highlighting some of the overall questions to give you a flavor of them.

It is my pleasure to be able to speak everyone on the today. Our Director, Roy Plucknett, is in training for several weeks. But we wanted to keep up with his condensed timeline that he spearheaded this past year on the Forecast.

There are a couple of updates that I would like to share with you.

First, is our annual progress report. We are working to finalize our second ever Progress Report which will cover our work during FY 2016. We are in the final stages of proofing everything and moving through clearances. Once the report is ready, we will post it online and have hard copies available at events and meetings.

In putting together the progress report, we did a few calculations related to our Business Forecast that I think you'll find interesting. Last fiscal year, our Forecast was downloaded more than 67,000 times, making it one of the most frequently downloaded documents on USAID.gov. Related to our Business Forecast review call -- more than 1,400 people participated in our review calls and we answered more than 900 questions throughout the course of FY 2016, so it really had been quite an accomplishment.

One of our key priorities as you know is to continue to increase the reliability and timeliness of our Business Forecast. This past year, Roy let efforts to increase the timeliness of our Forecast, we were able to cut down our production time for around 8 weeks to just 8 days. We continue to honor and fulfill that.

We know that it is a critical planning tool for you. But I do think it is important to remind you that it is also a planning tool for the Agency. The Forecast is just that -- a forecast of what we intend to do and like any forecast it is subject to change as we move through the fiscal year. As we move through a fiscal year, the Forecast becomes more reliable as activities planned for the year become better defined.

A challenge of issuing a quarterly Forecast is that there are likely to be many changes from quarter to quarter. I am pleased to share that over the last few months we have been

developing a new “live feed” tool of the Business Forecast. Working with our technical teams in M/CIO, we will begin pulling information directly from our internal Acquisition and Assistance planning tool to publish Business Forecast information which will be updated daily. Rather than waiting for updates each quarter from the Agency, you can see the latest Forecast information as our contracting and agreement officers make updates. We will be developing guidance for all A&A professionals on when they should make updates about opportunities.

This will be a major business process change for us, but we believe it is an important change as it will give our partners the latest information on procurements. We are in the process of testing the live feed now and plan to roll it out in January. Please be mindful when it goes live that there could be some aspects that may need further refinement as with any new advancement. We look forward to your insights when it is launched.

We have a lot coming up in FY 2017. As you know, the first quarter of this year we issued Procurement Executive Bulletin 16-03 on Communication with Partners. We will continue our outreach efforts and engagement in our solicitations and on a day to day basis.

Once again, we will be focusing on training and outreach this coming year -- such as the designing and planning chapters of ADS 200 which have recently been revised. We are working to incorporate them into training materials linking our designing and planning work to our A&A processes and the ADS 300. This is just one of many examples of what we will be working on in FY 2017.

Again, thank you for your continued interest and for joining the call today.

Ms. Alton remarks:

I would like to take this opportunity provide an update on USAID’s FY 2016 small business performance. Many of our partners are aware that the Agency’s small business procurement scorecard grade has improved over the past five years.

Unlike previous years, FY 2016 represented a challenge because of the inclusion of overseas prime awards. In order to continue our success we worked with our partners to identify trends that would help expand the small business program to the Missions in ways we had not in previous years. The preliminary FY 2016 data indicates we significantly exceeded our small business goal. Our FY 2016 small business goal was 11 percent. We awarded over 13 percent of worldwide acquisitions to US based small businesses which equates to more than \$553M, by far the most prime contract dollars ever awarded by the agency in a single year.

In FY 2017, we will continue to employ our top three successful practices to help achieve our goals. For example, we are in the process of negotiating internal small business goals with

Bureaus and Independent Offices located in Washington, DC and we are negotiating goals with the Regional Missions. We are continuing the practice of establishing internal goals because it provides each office with an attainable goal for the services and products it procures.

Another successful practice has been to expand the small business program training to more Missions and to increase the frequency of the sessions in Washington, DC. The training sessions can be attributed to our FY 2016 and previous years' successes because its addresses the importance of early, strategic market research.

Lastly, in FY 2017 we will make every effort to duplicate the success of the South Africa Small Business Conference to provide small business representatives with an opportunity to network with Mission officials. In addition, we will continue to support and host outreach activities through the US; and conduct Vendor Outreach sessions at our headquarters in Washington, DC.

Business Forecast Q&A:

1. USAID has mentioned in several recent meetings that it will be transitioning to a live forecast system. Could USAID please provide more information on how this new system will work?

USAID Response:

As Mark mentioned, we are in the process of developing and testing a new live feed of the Business Forecast. The new live feed, will be available on USAID.gov/Business-Forecast page once available.

Partners will no longer need to wait for the next quarter to receive updates to the Forecast. Instead, you will receive live updates as they are made in our internal system, the A&A Planning tool.

We will continue to do calls out to our A&A staff to ensure that they are updating the Forecast and will actively monitor the Forecast to ensure that updates are being made.

Within the new Forecast, you will be able to search by title, description, location, operating unit, sector, NAICS code, release date, or by entering specific terms. We will also be adding a "last updated" field so that you can sort and search by new and updated information. You will still be able to download a full version of the Business Forecast in Excel format.

We are currently in the process of testing the new feed. Once it goes live, it will include all of our USAID's operating units in Washington and all Missions in the field.

We look forward to the "live forecast" to improve timeliness of updates and appreciate any feedback you may have as we implement it.

2. What impact do you anticipate the new administration's transition will have on existing or proposed procurements?

USAID Response:

As all of you know, our programs continue all around the world yesterday as they have today. Many of our programs have significant bipartisan support on the Hill. We continue to work within the current administration to fulfill goals and initiatives. As you would likely be able to guess, until the new administration comes on board we are not able to speculate on policy initiatives or any insights into the A&A processes that they may want to focus in on. We appreciate the question, but there isn't anything that we can convey at this time.

3. Can you provide an update on USAID's Small Business goal for FY 2017? What steps is USAID taking to achieve the goal?

USAID Response:

We have finalized negotiations with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to establish USAID's FY 2017 goals. Our Agency's worldwide small business prime goal is 11.5 percent and the subcontracting goal is 18 percent.

The statutory goals remain the same (5 percent for Small Disabled Businesses and Woman Owned Businesses; and 3 percent for Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses and firms located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones).

The Agency attributes its previous small business goaling success to leadership support, its internal Small Business Program Training and its outreach activities. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) will continue to conduct small business training for its contracting officials and contracting official representatives in Washington and at the Missions.

In November 2016, the Agency hosted its first small business outreach event in South Africa. The Africa Missions Small Business Conference was a huge success and it will serve as a template for future overseas small business events.

To keep abreast of the Agency's small business events please check the Federal Business Opportunities website (www.fbo.gov) and the USAID/OSDBU's website (<https://www.usaid.gov/partnership-opportunities/small-business/outreach-events>)

4. Can USAID please explain the meaning of the Status of Action Column (activity approval, finalizing SOW, etc.) in the Mission Forecast?

USAID Response:

The status of action was inadvertently published in the latest Forecast. This column is used for internal tracking and planning purposes only. It is not our intent to include this on future iterations of the Forecast. We apologize for any confusion.

For your understanding, Finalizing Scope of Work, Activity Approval, Presolicitation/AARAD, Contract Review Board, etc. are internal clearances and steps required depending upon the threshold amount before the solicitation is released. Our goal in the immediate future is to get the live feed up and running and continuing to work to provide the highest quality Forecast.

5. Why are there so few Small Business Set asides on the Forecast?

USAID Response:

Often the Agency cannot determine if a requirement will be a full or partial small business set aside until market research is conducted (refer to the Federal Acquisition Regulations Subpart 19.501c).

In many cases the small business set aside status reads “TBD or N/A” until the research is completed. You may also note that the Award/Action Type may indicate “TBD”.

In some cases market research may be needed to determine if the award will be issued as one contract or an Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) type contract.

It is important that the small business community respond to Source Sought Notices, Requests for Information, and other Agency inquiries that are used to gauge industry capabilities and intent.

In cases of re-competing an existing award that was awarded to a small business, the Agency may post the re-compete as a set aside without conducting market research.

6. What determines if an RFP is a Partial or a Total Set Small Business Set Aside?

USAID Response:

First, market research must be conducted to establish a reasonable expectation that two or more responsible small business concerns that are competitive in terms of market prices, quality, and delivery will submit an offer in response to the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Secondly, factors such as complexity of the work, period of performance, place of performance, etc., may be used to gauge the feasibility of issuing a total or partial small business set aside.

If USAID is unable to issue a total small business set aside, we will consider a partial set-aside.

For a partial set-aside, we will identify a phase or segment of the requirement that is severable and can stand alone.

7. Timing of Solicitations: Would missions consider not releasing solicitations in the two weeks prior to the December holidays?

USAID Response:

Thank you for raising this request. While we cannot mandate Missions do this, in case of emergency or other urgent requirements, we have sent a note to our CO staff encouraging, if at all possible, they hold on releasing any new solicitations during the holidays. Additionally, we have encouraged Missions to extend solicitations that are scheduled to close during this time period.

8. Small Business: Do you keep a database of big companies intending to bid so we can reach out for partnering opportunities?

USAID Response:

USAID does not have a means to determine which firms will bid and accordingly does not maintain such a list.

The Agency recognizes the importance of developing partnerships. It is important in gaining experience, exposure and past performance.

For this reason, we post the Agency's Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract holders (<https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/resources-for-partners/usaids-partners>) to provide all interested parties with information about our current partners, small and large. Additional resources to identify potential partners are USA Spending.Gov and the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) websites.

Closing Remarks from Ms. Chilton

Once again, that is just a little flavor of some of our questions. We will be posting a full Q&A, along with our transcript and recording of the call, hopefully later today once we have the remaining questions answered. Thank you again for joining us. I'm going to hand the call back over to Mark to provide a few closing remarks.

Closing Remarks by Mr. Walther

I want to thank everyone again. Rachel noted that there truly are only a handful of questions remaining of the 300+. We are working to conclude those today and post everything. We appreciate your attention. We hope you find it responsive to all of your questions.

Final note, as some of you know, we are also exploring timelines and structures for a Partners' Day in the spring. We're working on that efforts as well, in conjunction with offices in the Management Bureau and the Small Business Office. We will keep you posted.

Thanks to everyone for helping to answer the questions and the world-wide effort to make this informative and helpful to everyone.