



# *An Implementing Partner's Guide to* **UNSOLICITED CONCEPT PAPERS AND APPLICATIONS**

An unsolicited concept paper/application is submitted to USAID for consideration of award by an organization solely on its initiative, without prior formal or informal solicitation by a USAID official. It is submitted in the hope USAID will issue an award with the applicant for development of the methods, approaches, or ideas it contains. Unsolicited applications are a valuable means by which USAID can obtain unique, innovative and proprietary programs that have originated outside USAID. Unsolicited applications are covered in Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 303.3.6.5(a)(2)(g).

## **What criteria must an unsolicited concept paper/application meet to be valid?**

An unsolicited concept paper or application must:

- Clearly demonstrate a unique, innovative, or proprietary program;
- Represent an appropriate use of USAID funds to support or stimulate a public purpose; and
- Fit within an existing Development Objective (DO).

## **Can an individual or organization contact USAID to discuss the unsolicited concept paper/application before development?**

Yes. Because an unsolicited concept paper/application often represents a substantial investment of time and effort by the applicant, early discussions with USAID can save considerable time and effort for both parties. USAID personnel can advise potential applicants on:

- the content requirements of an unsolicited concept paper/application;
- requirements concerning responsible prospective applicants and conflicts of interest;
- preferred methods for submitting concepts to the government, such as any agency mailbox, bureau or Mission;
- upcoming solicitations, broad agency announcements or grant programs;
- USAID points of contact;
- information sources on agency Development Objectives (DOs) and areas of potential interest; and
- procedures for submission and evaluation of unsolicited concept papers or applications.

## **What information must be included in an unsolicited concept paper/application?**

An unsolicited concept paper/application (generally not to exceed five pages) should present the proposed program's clear objective(s) which fit within USAID Development Objectives (DOs) in sufficient detail. Specifically, an unsolicited concept paper/application should include:

- A cover page/introduction containing basic information such as the applicant's name and address of the organization or individual; type of organization (e.g., non-profit, university, etc.); contact point (phone and e-mail); names of other organizations (federal and non-federal as well as any other government offices) to whom you are/have submitted the application and/or are funding the proposed activity; and signature of authorized representative of the applicant.
- Technical information, including a concise title and objective of proposed activity; a discussion of the objectives, the method of approach, the amount of effort to be employed, the anticipated results, and how the work will help accomplish the USAID's mission in the targeted area; and the type of support the applicant requests from USAID (e.g., funds, facilities, equipment, materials, or personnel resources).
- Supporting information, including a proposed estimated cost; a brief cost breakdown (e.g., salaries, travel, etc.); proposed duration of activity; any proposed "cost-sharing or matching;" and a brief description of applicant's previous work and experience, both functionally and geographically.

## Where does the applicant submit an unsolicited concept paper/application?

USAID has established electronic submission as the preferred method of submission of unsolicited applications. Submissions can be made through the Agency's central mailbox: [UnsolicitedProposals@usaid.gov](mailto:UnsolicitedProposals@usaid.gov).

Unsolicited concept papers may also be submitted directly to the Program Office within USAID/Washington Bureaus, or directly to USAID Missions. The technical nature of the proposed concept paper, region or country of implementation will determine the applicable Bureau/Mission to which the paper should be submitted.

## What USAID's review process for an unsolicited concept paper/application?

An unsolicited concept paper/application undergoes two evaluations: an initial review (generally performed by the cognizant senior Program Officer or his/her designee); and, if the application passes the initial review, a detailed, comprehensive evaluation performed by the appropriate technical office.

In addition to any factors that are unique, innovative or proprietary to the concept paper/application, technical reviewers should consider whether the concept paper/application represents an appropriate use of USAID funds to support or stimulate a public purpose; and if it fits within an existing Development Objective.

## What happens if an unsolicited concept paper/application receives an award recommendation?

An award recommendation does not guarantee an award, nor does it mean that a successful negotiation will lead to an award within the same fiscal year that the concept paper/application was submitted. The Agreement Officer (AO), upon receipt of an award recommendation with accompanying justification(s) from a technical office, will proceed to negotiate an award. The final negotiation will typically involve clarifications and/or discussions of any remaining cost issues, and a pre-award risk assessment that may or may not require additional information from the applicant.

## Key Takeaways

- Unsolicited applications can be a valuable means by which USAID can obtain unique, innovative and proprietary approaches that have originated outside of USAID.
- Because an unsolicited application often represents a substantial investment of time and effort by the applicant, early discussions with USAID are allowed and can save considerable time and effort for both parties.
- Unsolicited applications undergo two evaluations – an initial review; and, if the application passes the initial review, a detailed, comprehensive evaluation (performed by the appropriate technical office).
- USAID has no obligation to make an award to an applicant even if the technical evaluation is favorable, nor does it mean that a successful negotiation will lead to an award within the same fiscal year that the unsolicited concept paper/application was submitted.

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