April 5, 2021

Subject: Request for Applications - Farmer-to-Farmer Agricultural Volunteer Opportunity Project (AVOP) Small Grants Program

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find the Request for Applications (RFA) to implement a small grant under the Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Agricultural Volunteer Opportunity Project (AVOP). Each grant will be issued by the F2F AVOP Program administered by Partners of the Americas (POA). The total amount of funding available under this RFA for all awards combined is $600,000 over 16 months.

All funding is contingent upon the availability of funds. POA expects to award up to three (3) grants under this RFA, but reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. POA also reserves the right to make additional award(s) under this RFA at a later date.

Grant funds awarded under this RFA are intended for fielding and supporting F2F volunteers. Please feel free to share this announcement with other parties. Any questions concerning this RFA should be addressed via email by May 24, 2021 to the AVOP Competition Manager at: AVOP@partners.net.

Absolutely no telephone calls will be accepted regarding this RFA.

Concept Papers should be submitted using the online form here.

Thank you for your consideration of this USAID initiative.

Sincerely,

Partners of the Americas Competition Team

Enclosure: Request for Applications

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Farmer-to-Farmer
Agricultural Volunteer Opportunity Project (AVOP)
Small Grants Program

A program established by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Resilience and Food Security

Administered by:

Partners of the Americas
1424 K Street NW, Suite 700
Washington D.C. 20005
Email: AVOP@Partners.net
AVOP RFA 2021-3

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Definitions and Acronyms

Term or Acronym	Definition
ADS	The Automated Directive System details USAID policies, procedures, and regulations, which apply to all USAID funded assistance agreements and contracts. They may be found on USAID's <u>website</u>. USAID often issues policy changes or interim guidance pending ADS updating by means of Acquisition & Assistance Policy Directives (AAPDs).
AVOP	Agricultural Volunteer Opportunity Project – grants program to award smaller F2F projects to new organizations
AVOP Small Grant Implementer	Sub-awardees implementing small (1-4 year) F2F projects under the AVOP small grants program managed by Partners of the Americas
Core Country Implementing Partners	Organizations currently implementing large (5-year) F2F programs under "core" awards directly with USAID
F2F	<u>Farmer-to-Farmer Program</u>
F2F Assignment (Traditional)	A traditional "F2F Volunteer Assignment" is equivalent to a volunteer "trip" from her/his point of origin to country or countries in which s/he provides services to a host(s). An "assignment" may involve volunteer work with multiple hosts. A typical (traditional) assignment is approximately 15-days long (including roundtrip travel) and includes time for the volunteer to prepare for trainings/host visits and complete required reporting.
Host	Organizations or individuals that request volunteer services and work most directly with the volunteers—essentially, the volunteers' "clients." Examples include an individual farmer, a cooperative, a microfinance institute, an agribusiness, a university, or a department in the host country's ministry of agriculture.
Key partners	A partner is a local entity in the target country that supports implementation of F2F activities. Support can include identifying potential hosts, providing in-kind and/or monetary resources to expand activities, serving as a local representative for the project, and/or helping to coordinate volunteer/assignment logistics. A partner can also serve as a host, but generally works with the implementer to meet and/or expand the objectives of the F2F project.
NICRA	Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement – governed by 2 CFR 200, <u>Indirect Cost Rate Guide</u>
Paired-Remote Volunteer Assignments	An assignment that "pairs" a U.S. volunteer with a local volunteer, based in the project country. Under this system, the U.S. volunteer works entirely remotely and supports the local volunteer who conducts in-person visits and trainings with the host(s) (when safe). Due to safety concerns and travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, many implementers have shifted to this type of assignment. This assignment can range in length, but is required to include some in-person interaction between the local volunteer and host(s).
POA	Partners of the Americas – The U.S.-based non-government

	organization which holds a cooperative agreement from the USAID to support international agricultural volunteer programs and is responsible for managing small grants under F2F AVOP.
PDP	Program Development Project – Two- to four-year F2F programs that were implemented in one or two core countries, similar to the core programs, and were intended to enable organizations to develop capacity to compete for future core program implementation.
Recommendation	During assignments, volunteers provide hosts with 3-6 clear, specific, and feasible recommendations to help hosts meet their goals. Implementers later follow up with hosts to observe whether a recommendation was applied or not.
RFA	Request for Applications – The document used for advertising competitive assistance programs. An RFA contains eligibility and qualification requirements, a general description of the program and range of activities, evaluation criteria, and other relevant information.
Scope of Work (SOW)	Document that outlines the specific topic and/or area of technical assistance requested by the host(s). The SOW should (at a minimum) include a brief description of the host(s), an overview of the specific training(s)/assistance needed, and required volunteer qualifications/skills. The SOW should align with F2F and specific Project-level objectives, while responding to a specific host's need(s).
USAID	United States Agency for International Development – the funding agency for AVOP
Volunteer	An individual who provides technical assistance under a volunteer program, receiving no direct salary from the assignment. Assignment expenses (round-trip flight, travel insurance, lodging, per diem, etc.) may be covered by the program. The volunteer must be a U.S. citizen or legally able to work in the U.S.[1]

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[1] Does not apply to local, paired volunteers

1 Solicitation and Award Information

Application and Submission Information

Date of Issuance: April 5, 2021

Due Date for RFA Questions: May 24, 2021 by 12 PM (noon) EST

Due Date for Concept Papers: June 8, 2021 by 6 PM EST

Concept Papers Selected for Advancement to Full Application Phase: July 7, 2021

Questions: All technical questions must be submitted in writing via e-mail by May 24, 2021 to **AVOP@partners.net.** No phone calls or faxes will be accepted. POA will confirm receipt. Questions and answers will be posted on a rolling basis and can be viewed at: AVOP RFA 2021-3: Questions/Answers. The final update to the Q&A site will be posted on May 25, 2021.

POA will host an informational webinar on April 19th, 2021. Call-in details will be posted on the Q&A site as well as https://farmer-to-farmer.org/2021-request-for-applications.

Concept Note Submission: Concept Note applications must be submitted using the online form **here.** No phone calls will be accepted. Application documents sent by fax or email will NOT be accepted. All application documents should be uploaded via the online form as Microsoft Word files. POA will confirm receipt.

Solicitation Information

POA, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is seeking applications from parties interested in the F2F AVOP Small Grants Program.

This RFA will be conducted in two phases:

> Phase I: Competitive Concept Paper (described in this RFA)
> Phase II: Collaborative Program Design and Full Application (details provided to successful Phase I organizations)

Only one Concept Paper per organization/institution will be accepted. Each Concept Paper will be competitively evaluated against pre- determined evaluation criteria (see Section 3). POA anticipates selecting three applicants to move forward as apparently successful. *Selection as apparently successful is not a guarantee of funding.* Awards are contingent upon receiving approval from the necessary USAID agencies and passing a risk assessment conducted by POA. POA reserves the option to request that applicants who are not initially selected as apparently successful extend the period of validity of their Concept Papers by up to one year to facilitate consideration for later awards. POA will notify unsuccessful applicants in a timely manner and provide feedback upon request.

Grants will be awarded only to qualified and responsible applicants that have the skills, experience, institutional capacity and mandate necessary to implement the program within the terms set forth in this RFA.

Small grants will be made as Fixed Amount Awards using the USAID ADS 303.3.25 procedures. It is USAID's policy not to award profit under grants. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable direct expenses, which are related to grant agreement activities and are in accordance with applicable U.S. Government cost standards (provided during negotiations with successful candidates), may be considered as a basis for determining the Fixed Amount for milestone completion under the agreement.

POA reserves the right not to make any awards under this RFA or to make an additional award(s) under this RFA at a later date up to one year after the closing date for applications. Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of POA or USAID, nor does it commit either entity to pay for costs incurred in the submission of an application. POA reserves the right to reject any and all applications, or to award a grant without further discussion or negotiations if it is considered to be in the best interests of POA and/or USAID.

Planned Award

POA anticipates awarding up to three (3) awards as a result of this RFA. Awards will be made as Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs). Applicants may submit proposals for 16-month maximum projects limited to a maximum budget of $200,000.

Anticipated Start Date

POA anticipates making grant awards as a result of this RFA on or about November 30, 2021. POA may, at its discretion, issue awards before or after this date.

2 Eligibility Information

Entities eligible to receive U.S. federal grant awards under this RFA include: non-profit organizations, for-profit firms, cooperatives, colleges and universities. In addition, applicants must meet the criteria below:

- Must be a U.S.-based organization
- Is not currently a Core Implementer under the F2F program (as prime)
- Does not hold a current sub-award under the AVOP program
- Must be at least one (may be more than one) of the following:
    - A minority-serving institution/organization (see below for more information)
    - A woman-led organization/business (see below)
    - Has not held a F2F small grant in the past seven years (2014-2021).

For the purpose of this RFA, Minority Serving Organizations (MSOs) include both Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) (defined as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic

Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions) and other organizations that are controlled by or represent a socially disadvantaged group.

To qualify as an MSO for the purposes of this RFA, at the time of the application, organizations must demonstrate they meet **at least one** of the criteria below:

- Be certified as a socially disadvantaged organization under Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act
- Have a board of directors or similar governing body with more than 50% membership from the presumed socially disadvantaged groups as defined under Section 8(a) of the small Business Act: such groups include, but are not limited to, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Indian tribes, Asian Pacific Americans, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and other minorities;
- Meet USAID's definition of a Minority Serving Institution, which includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)

Applicants must include information in their Concept Papers that justifies their organization's status as an MSO as defined above

Women-led organizations must be headed by a woman as director/head of organization, women-led businesses must be at least 51% owned by one or more women AND the management and daily business operations controlled by one or more women.

Applications from organizations that do not meet eligibility criteria listed above will not be evaluated. Please note, implementing organizations that are sub-awardees to current core F2F implementers are eligible under this RFA, but must propose a project substantially different from their currently held sub-award. Implementing organizations that were small grantees or Program Development Project holders during the FY14-FY18 phase of the F2F program are only eligible under this RFA if they qualify as women-led or an MSI/MSO. U.S.-based entities are encouraged to work with non-U.S.-based partners in the proposed project country to implement F2F small grants. All proposed partnerships must be clearly identified in the concept note.

3 Funding Opportunity Description

Introduction

The F2F Program goal is to generate sustainable, broad-based economic growth in the agricultural sector through voluntary technical assistance. A secondary goal is to increase the U.S. public's understanding of international development issues and programs and international understanding of the U.S. and U.S. development programs. F2F introduces innovation and develops local capacity for more productive, profitable, sustainable and equitable agricultural systems while providing opportunity for people-to-people interaction in agricultural development activities. Programs build institutions and transfer technology and management expertise to link

small farmers with markets that exploit comparative advantages in production, processing and marketing. Activities are varied and conform to country needs and strategic objectives. Specific F2F projects align with or support USAID Mission strategies and objectives or those of other USG programs in a given country.

Applicants responding to this RFA should propose projects that focus on one or more of the four main objectives of F2F:
- Increase agricultural sector productivity and profitability;
- Improve conservation and sustainable use of environmental and natural resources;
- Expand agricultural sector access to financial services; and/or
- Strengthen agricultural sector institutions.

Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their Concept Papers and proposals tie into larger U.S. Government development strategies, including but not limited to those listed below:
- Feed the Future Initiative (FTF)
- USAID Country Strategies
- U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy

Applicants should consider planned results and impacts, as well as unintended consequences. Issues requiring special attention by the Applicant include:
- **Gender**: The Applicant shall provide consideration of gender issues and impacts in the proposed program and shall seek to promote gender equity.
- **Environment**: The Applicant shall ensure consideration of the implications of proposed program activities on environmental and natural resources and should seek to mitigate any adverse impacts.
- **Restricted Sub-sectors and Activities**: The Applicant shall not propose a program that supports activities that are restricted by USG policies and regulations. USAID policies and regulations restrict support for certain activities involving: tobacco production and processing; African oil palm production or processing; degradation or conversion of tropical forests; agricultural products in surplus on world markets; assistance to activities or projects of communist countries; assistance to military, police or prisons; luxury goods; alcoholic beverage production or marketing; export of U.S. jobs, relocation of U.S. businesses or restrictions on internationally recognized workers' rights; or production of agricultural products that compete with U.S. products in international markets.

The Farmer-to-Farmer Approach and Volunteer Program Management

While applicants are encouraged to propose projects that utilize their unique expertise to pursue overall F2F program objectives, Concept Papers should incorporate key recommendations and best practices in international agricultural volunteer program management. The F2F approach is briefly described below. Please see Annex D for further information and details on F2F implementation.

F2F programs provide high quality technical assistance services from volunteers. Over the years, the F2F Program has evolved, placing increased emphasis on economic impact and obtaining

measurable results by concentrating volunteer assignments in specific geographical areas, commodity programs, and service sectors. New programs go beyond simply placing individual volunteers and focus rather on development of specific market chains for which overall impact can be evaluated. Programs build institutions and transfer technology and management expertise to link farmers with markets. Volunteers typically work with medium and small agro-enterprises, cooperatives, individual producers, technical agencies, universities, and financial institutions. F2F volunteers share their knowledge to increase productivity, improve trade and competitiveness, and develop market opportunities. Programs are very diverse but in general they should increase farmer income and enterprise profitability; increase institutional capacities; improve financial services; or improve natural and environmental resource management.

F2F programs are managed by eight core implementing organizations, as well as U.S. organizations that receive grants from POA. An implementing organization may work through a local "partner" in the target country, i.e. an institution, project or program through which the implementing organization works to plan and implement activities with host organizations. The host organizations are the local beneficiary institutions or individuals receiving assistance from one or more F2F volunteers. In general, F2F host organizations should be groups of smallholder farmers or small agribusinesses that do not have access to technical assistance or investment from other sources. However, applicants may propose working with other host organizations, such as trade or business associations, local government offices, cooperatives, or public or private service providers. Program beneficiaries are people who may be (or be affiliated with) hosts, receive goods and services from them, or market agricultural products to them.

The F2F program approach emphasizes projects that offer the greatest potential for expanded economic impact on small and medium scale producers. It is an effective, low cost program that blends two goals: providing people-to-people level exchanges and enhancing sustainable economic and social development. The success of the F2F program depends on two key steps: first, identifying and structuring demand-driven overseas volunteer assignments with your local partners/hosts, and second, identifying the right volunteers to respond to the needs of the hosts/customers/clients.

Small Grants Program Description

POA implements a portion of the F2F program called the Agricultural Volunteer Opportunity Project (AVOP). Under AVOP, POA contributes to meeting overall F2F Program objectives by awarding grants to qualified U.S.-based organizations to implement small-scale F2F projects using voluntary U.S. technical assistance for agricultural development programs in developing countries and emerging democracies.

AVOP Small Grant Projects will test innovative approaches to use U.S.-based volunteers, draw from non-traditional sources of volunteers, and increase the capacity of organizations to effectively implement international agricultural development volunteer programs. For further information on how a typical F2F program is often implemented, please see Annex D. Examples of potential innovations include:

- New type of host organizations: host organizations that do not typically receive volunteers or those that represent underserved populations;

- New development objective: programs or assignments that target development objectives that are not typically addressed with volunteers, or cross-sectoral programs - for example gender and access to finance;
- New use of volunteers: creating non-traditional volunteer postings, such as longer-term placements or using volunteer resources remotely;
- New sources of volunteers: recruiting from a specific community or technical specialty.

Because AVOP is designed to encourage and test innovation, Small Grants Projects have flexibility to incorporate new approaches and implementation strategies. However, projects should work within the F2F approach, focusing on agricultural activities that improve food security and economic development through safe and impactful volunteer assignments. They should also meet one of the four F2F objectives listed above in section 3. In particular, Applicants should be sensitive to the following aspects that are common to most F2F activities:
- Demand-driven – volunteers work with hosts to assist them in activities that *the hosts have identified and desired*, rather than implementing a program motivated or conceived solely by the F2F implementing organization.
- Focused on technical assistance or advisory services – Projects must emphasize the transfer of skills to project beneficiaries, rather than materials or funds. F2F funds are used for implementing the F2F program, primarily the recruitment, placement, and support of volunteers to provide technical assistance or advisory services in the field. The program can NOT provide equipment, supplies, and operating costs for local host organizations, although implementers may use F2F funds for limited costs of demonstrations and presentation materials associated with volunteer assignments. F2F-funded activities should directly and/or indirectly benefit smallholder farmers.
- Aligned with other USG strategies or programs in the target country – Describe how the project would align with USAID or other USG development activities in a country. *No letters of support or other communications are necessary.*

During the COVID-19 pandemic current F2F implementers have pivoted to new ways of assisting host organizations. While U.S. volunteers are unable to travel, there have been two main methods of support: remote assignments, where a U.S. volunteer works entirely remotely with a host organization, facilitated by local staff; and "paired remote" assignments, where a remote U.S. volunteer is paired with a local volunteer. The local volunteer works in-person with the host organization when it is safe and both volunteer and host are willing.

Applicants may explore opportunities for leveraging funding through co-financing or other innovative ways of programming volunteers. Applicants should also demonstrate, however, that F2F funds will be used exclusively on new and/or complementary volunteer activities and will neither duplicate nor offset administrative costs of activities that have existing sources of funding.

Eligible Countries and USAID Mission Interest

As per USAID guidelines, AVOP is global in scope. Sub-awards can target specific countries and/or thematic areas. Eligible countries are listed below. While listed as eligible, some countries below are *not recommended* due to potential safety concerns for U.S. volunteers. Applicants are

encouraged to assess the potential security risks in the country they are proposing and address any concerns in the proposal. AVOP reserves the right to not fund projects in areas that pose significant security issues.

A second list contains countries that are eligible, but currently have an active F2F program. If one of these countries is proposed for a small grant, the Applicant must specify how their proposed project is substantially different from the current F2F program. Further, a "no-objection" from the F2F Core Country Implementing Partner will be required prior to approval of a sub-award. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to the Core Country Implementing Partner prior to developing their Concept Paper. Potential sub-award recipients may be asked to modify their proposal to ensure their activities support or align with the Implementing Partner's country strategies and/or incorporate a formal role or collaboration with these organizations. More information on current implementers and where they work can be found here.

Due to these extra steps required, AVOP recommends avoiding these countries, if possible.

Eligible Countries:
Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kosovo, Laos, Lesotho, Liberia, Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Montenegro, Namibia, Nauru, Niger, Palau, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Eswatini, The Bahamas, The Gambia, Togo, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vietnam

Eligible Countries that have current F2F Projects:
Armenia**,** Bangladesh, Benin, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria**,** Peru, Rwanda, Senegal**,** Sri Lanka**,** Tajikistan**,** Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Application Requirements and Selection Criteria

Each applicant shall submit a Concept Paper to POA. **Only one Concept Paper per organization/institution will be accepted. Organizations/institutions with multiple departments and/or centers should coordinate to ensure that only one Concept Paper is submitted. If more than one Concept Paper is submitted by an institution/organization, only the paper submitted closest to (without going past) the submission deadline will be considered.** POA will convene an evaluation committee to competitively evaluate and rank Concept Papers according to the criteria outlined below. Applicants with the highest scored Concept Papers will be invited to a Collaborative Development Phase. In the event of a tie, priority will be given to new implementers, who have never held a F2F Core Award or Sub-Award.

All Concept Papers must meet eligibility criteria and the requirements outlined below.

Submissions that do not meet the eligibility criteria or requirements will not be evaluated.

Phase I: Concept Papers

The first phase of the application is a Concept Paper, the purpose of which is to outline the proposed project, demonstrate need and demand for proposed activities, and establish the Applicant's capacity to successfully develop an effective F2F project, implement a safe and successful international agricultural volunteer program, and comply with USG rules and regulations. Applicants should adhere to the formatting and content requirements below in preparing Concept Papers. To be considered, Concept Papers must demonstrate conformity with these criteria as well as the eligibility criteria set forth in this RFA. Only proposals for volunteer technical assistance projects are eligible for funding and will be evaluated. Concept Papers that do not include all required information or are received from organizations that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be evaluated.

Concept Paper Format

- Language: English
- Font Size: 12-point font (except for tables and graphs, which may be smaller but must still easily readable)
- Font Style: Times New Roman or Garamond
- Spacing: single spaced
- Size and Margins**:** 8-1/2" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, right, and left)
- Microsoft Word document

Concept Paper Requirements

- All Concept Paper submissions must include:

    1. Cover page – maximum 1 page

    2. Concept Description– maximum 6 pages

    3. Attachment 1: Budget Summary and Full Budget, see supplied template, submitted as Microsoft Excel file

    4. Attachment 2: Key Personnel Resumes – limit two pages per resume

    5. Attachment 3: Three Past Performance References – no page limit, see supplied template

1. *Cover Page (1 page):*

    1. Organization Name
    2. Organization Business Status (non-profit, for profit, PVO, etc.)
    3. Contact Name (authorized negotiator)
    4. Contact Email Address
    5. Contact Telephone Number
    6. Complete Business Mailing Address

7. Qualification as either:
   a. A minority-serving institution/organization
   b. A woman-led organization/company
   c. New implementer (has never held a F2F small grant or sub-award)

2. *Concept Description (6 pages maximum):*

Concept Papers must follow the outline below. To facilitate review, Applicants should organize their Concept Papers in the same order and with the same headings. Applicants should refer carefully to the Concept Paper evaluation criteria below and include relevant information in each section.

   a. Project Overview and Description of Problem/Demand

   b. Objective(s) and Proposed Activities

   c. Sources and Management of U.S. Volunteers

   d. Grant Administration

3. *Attachment 1: Budget Summary and Questions and Full Budget*

Applicants must complete the budget summary worksheet and related questions using the form provided in the Excel document.

Applicants should also submit a Budget following the template in the second sheet of the MS Excel document. The ceiling for USAID's contribution is $200,000. The budget should be realistic for the proposed activities and demonstrate cost-effective use (in terms of volunteer days) of USAID funds.

Applicants who have a US Government Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) may include that rate in their budgets. Applicants who have never received a NICRA may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs[2].

Exclusions – Because of the short duration of the grant, USAID will not fund capital expenditures such as durable goods and other large equipment purchases which have a shelf life of more than one year and/or an acquisition cost exceeding $5,000.

4. *Attachment 2: Key Personnel Resumes*
Applicants must provide, at a minimum, the resume of the proposed Project Director. Up to two additional resumes of proposed staff may also be included. Each resume shall be no more than two pages.

5. *Attachment 3: Past Performance References (no page limit)*
Applicants must provide three (3) recent past performance references, including all information specified on the template in Annex C. References should have knowledge of the Applicant's performance implementing the listed program. Please do not use projects/references that are more than ten years in the past. Applicants should communicate with listed references in advance

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[2] Modified total direct cost means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, service, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each sub-award. See CFR 200.68 for full definition.

to ensure they are willing to share information about the project with POA.

Concept Paper Evaluation Criteria:

Concept Papers will be evaluated in accordance with the Evaluation Criteria set forth below. The evaluation criteria serve to A) identify the significant issues which applicants should address in their Concept Papers; and B) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

The following evaluation factors and maximum scores will be used to evaluate all Concept Papers. Members of an external panel will score each Concept Paper, and those with the highest cumulative scores will be invited to submit a Full Application.

1. **20 points – Project Overview and Description of Problem/Demand**
Successful Concept Papers will include a succinct summary of a project that will meet a specific development need through short-term volunteer assignments. The development need will be clearly explained and substantiated, and it will be clear that volunteer technical assistance is an appropriate solution. There will be strong evidence of local demand for the project, and the expected outcome(s) of the project at the end of the grant period will be specific.

2. **40 points – Objective(s) and Proposed Activities**

Successful Concept Papers will include a clear and convincing model for how volunteer technical assistance will address the identified development need. Objectives of the project will be specific, measurable, and achievable within sixteen months and a $200,000 budget. Objectives will also be tied to specific activities that can logically be expected to lead to the achievement of those objectives. Details on the kind of volunteer assistance that will be provided, number of volunteer assignments, length of volunteer assignments, and location of volunteer assignments should be included.

Concept Papers should include information about a committed local collaborator/partner: a person or organization located in the target country that desires and is willing to support the proposed activities. The Concept Paper should describe the collaborator's background and their anticipated roles and responsibilities on the project. The Concept Paper should also describe the process that would be used to identify and select host organizations, taking host interest and needs into account. Evaluators will consider whether the proposed activities are feasible and appropriate for F2F.

3. **20 points – Sources and Management of U.S. Volunteers**

Successful Concept Papers will include evidence that the Applicant has the capacity to field safe, impactful and enjoyable volunteer assignments. Applicants should describe their experience and capacity to recruit volunteers and provide in-country support to volunteers while they are in the field. Applicants should describe how they plan to develop scopes of work, identify and select volunteers, manage trip logistics, insure volunteers, handle safety and security, and provide translation services when necessary.

4. **20 points – Grant Administration**

Successful Concept Papers will include evidence that the Applicant has staff and administrative systems in place to successfully implement a Small Grant project and meet all award requirements. Evaluators will consider staff experience and availability, quality of

financial and administrative policies and systems, potential to meet all reporting requirements, the feasibility of meeting stated objectives within funding limitations, and the Applicant's previous experience managing similar programs. Evaluators will also consider whether the proposed budget is cost-effective and realistic.

4   Application Review Information

The selection of Concept Papers is a multi-step process including a: (1) Basic Eligibility Screening; (2) Technical Review Panel; (3) Risk Assessment Panel and (4) USAID Review. POA will assess each Applicant to ensure that it practices mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets acquired as a result of the sub-award funding. Consideration shall be given to such matters as integrity, record of past performance, financial and technical resources, or accessibility to other necessary resources.

POA will also conduct a risk assessment to determine if the organization has the ability to effectively manage a project and if any special reporting requirements need to be included in the Award. The risk assessment may result in a decision not to fund the award. **Risk Assessment forms for Apparently Successful Applicants will be due to POA on July 16, 2021.** POA will conduct eligibility screenings but the AVOP Technical Review panel will make the final recommendation on which organizations should receive an award, with concurrence from USAID. Final awards will be made only to responsible applicants whose applications meet the stated goals of this program. The budget will be evaluated for cost realism and reasonableness, in accordance with the U.S. Government's applicable cost principles.

Application Review Process:

Basic Eligibility Screening
All Concept Paper submissions will be compiled and screened for minimum eligibility requirements, including conducting System for Award Management (SAM) and terrorist watch list checks on applicants to ensure eligibility to receive U.S. government funds. Screening will ensure submissions meet the basic eligibility criteria set forth above in terms of submission date, page limits, required attachments, and other non-qualitative factors. Any Concept Papers that do not meet the minimum eligibility requirements will not be evaluated further.

Past Performance References
POA requests applicants submit Annex C, the Past Performance Reference Request form. Applicants are required to fill out the contact information for their chosen references, as well as the background information on the project. POA will contact the reference and request a response to specific questions.

Technical Review Panel
During this stage, an outside panel will evaluate Concept Papers for technical merit and other evaluation criteria, such as whether the application demonstrates local host demand for volunteer activities. The panel will independently rank and then collectively discuss the applications and come to a consensus on the Concept Papers that should move forward as the apparently successful applicants.

USAID Review
Upon selection of finalists, POA will communicate with USAID which Concept Papers are recommended for Collaborative Development. USAID will give concurrence to the selection. If a Concept Paper is given USAID/Washington approval, USAID/Washington will share the Concept Paper with relevant USAID Mission(s) for a "no-objection" to program activities. Any question or need for follow-up from the USAID Mission will need to be discussed and resolved before any awards are signed.

5 Notice of Apparently Successful Application

POA will notify applicants in writing if they have been recommended to receive an award and move forward to the Collaborative Development Phase. As mentioned above, POA reserves the right not to make any awards under this RFA or to make an additional award(s) under this RFA at a later date up to one year after the closing date for applications, if funding becomes available. Recommendation to receive an award is not a guarantee of funding. Prior to signing sub-awards POA may request additional documents.

Annex A: Budget Summary and Questions and Full Budget Template (see Excel template on [RFA webpage](#))

Annex B: Key Personnel Resumes

Annex C: Past Performance Reference Sheet

Past Performance References

	Reference 1	Reference 2	Reference 3
Project Name			
Client/Funder			
Project Location			
Project Value (USD)			
Contract Type			
Was Applicant a Prime or Subcontractor?[3]			
Period of Performance			
Reference Contact (Name, Title, Email Address, Phone Number)			
Description of Project			

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[3] Indicate "Prime" if the Applicant was the recipient named in the funding agreement and responsible to the funder for the project's success; Indicate "Subcontractor" if the Applicant was contributing to a project for which another person or organization was the recipient named in the funding agreement and responsible to the funder for the project's success.

Annex D: Typical Functions and Activities of a F2F Project

This attachment is for informational purposes only.

a) Sector analysis and planning: The Applicant shall ensure adequate analysis and planning to guide implementation of the F2F program. For a list of current programs being implemented by the Core Implementers, please see the F2F Informational Brochure at [this link](#).

b) Selecting partners: The Applicant shall identify any key partners with which it intends to work to accomplish objectives of the proposed F2F Program. Applicants are not required to work with or through partners. Still, partners with in-country capabilities may assist the Applicant in the development and implementation of the country F2F program and project strategies and plans. Such partners can be public or private agencies and can include trade associations, NGOs, commercial firms, projects, government departments and programs (e.g., Peace Corps) or educational institutions. Partners are commonly involved in providing goods and/or services to agricultural producers or agribusinesses. The clients of such partners are often the public and private sector organizations that are potential hosts for volunteers. Roles of partners vary, but commonly include serving as: a) local representative for the F2F program implementer; b) retailer of volunteer services; c) link to clients (hosts); or d) technical backstop.

In some cases, volunteers may work with partners to strengthen the partner's own capacity to provide goods and services to their clients (in which case the partner is also the "host" organization). Generally, good partners will help to see that the specific knowledge or skills that volunteers bring to a host organization are spread more widely to benefit the sector.

c) Selecting hosts: The Applicant shall establish systems necessary to identify appropriate hosts with which it will work to implement the proposed F2F Program. The hosts are organizations or individuals that request volunteer services and work directly with the volunteers. Host organizations commonly include private businesses, community groups, trade or business associations, local government offices, cooperatives, or public or private service providers (inputs, credit, information, marketing, processing, storage, etc.). Hosts may be the ultimate beneficiaries (typically small farmers) that the proposed F2F Program is designed to assist, but may also be intermediaries (service providers, agribusinesses, etc.) whose improved operations benefit the target populations.

The ability of host organizations to absorb, utilize, and disseminate information provided by volunteers is a critical consideration in determining the impact of a volunteer's assignment. Host organizations should be involved early on in developing the F2F program strategies and plans, and particularly the volunteer scopes of work. If possible, they may contribute to the costs of fielding volunteers and facilitate an assessment of the impact of the volunteer's efforts. The impacts of a volunteer program are primarily a function of what host organizations do as a result of the information and training provided by volunteers.

d) Development of assignments: The Applicant shall establish systems to develop scopes of work (SOW) that describe services requested/required by host organizations and identify the skills and experience volunteers will need for the assignment. SOWs may also include

background on the sub-sector and host project. The SOW identifies the results anticipated from the assignment. The SOW may also identify complementary inputs expected to be forthcoming from the host and other partners.

SOWs translate program and project plans into specified tasks for volunteers. Ideally, there should be a high degree of participation by host organizations in the preparation of SOWs. The SOWs document the understandings reached among the parties involved, namely the host organization, any partners, and the proposed F2F program implementer. The clearer the SOW can be in terms of specifying who, what, where, when, why, and how, the easier it will be to recruit for the volunteer assignment, guide the volunteer once on the job, and finally assess the success of the volunteer assignment. The process of approving a SOW also clarifies the roles of the proposed implementing agency, the volunteer(s), any partners, and the hosts in making the assignment a success. Ideally, individual volunteers work with farmers and target beneficiaries to develop personal relationships and mutual understanding. Often effective assignments require volunteers to work with agribusinesses, financial institutions, or government institutions that benefit the target group. In such assignments it is desirable for volunteers to also have some exposure and interaction with farmers and other beneficiaries at the field level.

e) Volunteer recruitment: The Applicant shall establish systems for identifying and recruiting volunteers to provide services as per defined SOWs. The success of any given assignment is largely a function of the quality of the volunteer. Building institutional capacity or influencing overall sub-sector development typically requires the aggregate efforts of a series of effective volunteers working in tandem with local partners and other development programs. The Applicant may already have an extensive database of potential volunteers and/or develop linkages with common sources of volunteers, such as farm, professional, cooperative, agribusinesses, university, and trade groups. F2F Program experience has indicated that many Americans are interested in serving as volunteers and – with a well-developed recruitment system – recruitment is generally not a problem, except for very specialized technical assignments. Volunteer assignments are generally solo (accompanied by local staff) and 2-3 weeks in duration.

The Applicant's F2F Program shall support services of U.S. volunteers (U.S. citizens and permanent residents); non-U.S. volunteers shall not be used, unless prior approval is obtained from the USAID AOR for any unique situation requiring such use of non-U.S. volunteers. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, implementers currently have the option of pairing a local volunteer with a remote U.S. volunteer, though there is no guarantee this option will be available in the future.

f) Volunteer orientation: The Applicant shall establish systems for appropriate volunteer orientation, including information about travel, health and security issues, other logistics and support, the country, and the organizations and individuals with whom the volunteer will work, as well as the specific tasks of the assignment. The orientation process begins as part of volunteer recruitment and extends through the initial days of their arrival in the host country. The more informed volunteers are about what they are getting themselves into, the better equipped they will be to make their assignment successful both for the host as well as for themselves.

g) Volunteer logistics and support: The Applicant shall establish systems to ensure that volunteers are provided with adequate logistical and technical support to provide efficient and effective services to hosts. The logistics and support services greatly impact the effectiveness of volunteers. Logistical support includes transport, housing, translators, secretarial assistance, compensation arrangements, and other services. Technical support includes information, links to local technology programs, teaching aids, and equipment. Volunteers that are appropriately supported will have more time to focus on their assignments and will develop a better understanding of the host's operating environment and constraints. Technical support can help volunteers adapt their technical knowledge and skills to local conditions and develop appropriate linkages to local technical support institutions. Such support is particularly important given the relatively short duration of many volunteer assignments. The Applicant shall provide adequate medical and evacuation insurance, vaccination and health briefings, in-country security and other support to ensure safety and wellbeing of volunteers.

F2F AVOP grantees will be required by 49 U.S.C. 40118, commonly referred to as the "Fly America Act," to use U.S. flag air carrier service for all air travel funded by the U.S. Government, except as provided in CFR §§301-10.136 and 301-10.137. Detailed information about this Fly America requirement can be found here.

h) Complementary support to hosts: The Applicant shall consider needs and make appropriate arrangements, as far as is possible, to ensure that complementary services (e.g., financial services, equipment and infrastructure, input supply, marketing, and processing arrangements, etc.) are available to enable hosts to make use of volunteers' recommendations. Complementary support services represent the range of resources available to enable host organizations to operate effectively, including such things as financial services (especially), equipment and infrastructure, input supply, database services (e.g. marketing and pricing information), marketing, and processing arrangements. These services are generally not within the scope of an individual volunteer assignment, but volunteers' recommendations often implicitly or explicitly require a host to draw on such resources to implement recommendations. Thus, while a volunteer may complete his/her assignment satisfactorily without such services, their availability varies according to the environment in which the host operates and they are often critical determinants of the level of impact from a volunteer assignment. F2F programs with limited budgets are not likely to be able to provide complementary support to hosts, but may be able to facilitate access to such services from other programs.

i) Project staffing: The Applicant shall assign adequate staff and staff support resources for efficient and effective implementation of the volunteer program, including the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the F2F program.

j) Volunteer outreach activities: The Applicant shall establish systems to encourage and maximize the amount and impact of outreach activities carried out by returned volunteers. Outreach encompasses the full set of activities designed to inform both the general public and particular interested parties of the character and accomplishments of the F2F program. Outreach has three principle benefits: 1) educating the public on global development issues and market opportunities; 2) building public support for international development efforts; and 3) recruiting new volunteers.