

Colombia Request for Application (RFA) - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question 1: Country and Geographic Eligibility

Question 1: Can I propose research in countries other than Colombia?

Answer 1a: No, this RFA is strictly targeting Colombia. As stated in section 2 of the RFA, LASER PULSE “calls for innovative research and associated research translation focused on development challenges within three development sectors in Colombia. These comprise: Youth (specifically, workforce/talent development and financial capital for entrepreneurship), Venezuelan migration response (specifically, research to inform policy for Venezuelan migration response and sustainable approaches/strategies for migration response), and integrated rural development (specifically, security and safety mechanisms, and policy implementation plans).

Question 1b: Will LASER consider and accept Concept Notes/applications for research in countries outside Colombia?

Answer 1b: LASER PULSE will only accept Concept Notes focusing on Colombia.

Question 1c: Are there other opportunities for research funding from LASER PULSE outside of Colombia?

Answer 1c: There will be opportunities for funding in other USAID interest countries in the course of LASER’s life. In particular, there are anticipated opportunities in Vietnam and Indonesia.

Question 2: Eligibility and Leadership

Question 2a: What institutions are eligible to submit a Concept Note for this call?

Answer 2a: As stated in the Call for Concept Notes in section 3.1.3: Only researchers based at Higher Education Institutions, HEIs in [USAID Interest Countries](#) (or go to <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work>) and the United States institutions are eligible to submit a Concept Note. Lead researcher(s)/Principal Investigator(s) (PIs) from institutions outside of Colombia **must** partner with a researcher(s) in Colombia. All researchers **must** register in the LASER PULSE Network. Please [click here](#) (or go to <https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect>) to register in the LASER PULSE Network.

Question 2b: Can an individual researcher submit a Concept Note?

Answer 2b: An individual researcher can submit a concept note but he/she **must** be an employee at a higher education institution (HEI) in order to serve as the lead researcher or Principal Investigator (PI). Note: The lead researcher coordinating the research team and submitting the Concept Note will be considered the PI by LASER PULSE. Additionally, PI must partner with a development practitioner institution such as an non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society, the private sector, and/or local government entity on the Concept Note. PIs will be required to provide a Letter of Support/(s) from the development practitioner's institution when submitting a Concept Note (and a Letter of Commitment/(s), if selected to advance to Full Application phase.)

Question 2c: How do I find a translation partner to meet the institutional eligibility requirements?

Answer 2c: It is up to the university lead researcher (PI) to find a translation partner. We encourage you to use your existing networks. For those of you who participated in the Colombia conference, you had a chance to interact with practitioners who could serve as your translation partners. If you did not participate in the conference and need a translation partner, please check the LASER PULSE network at [this link](#) (or go to <https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect>). You must be a registered member to access the search functions.

Question 2d: Can a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in a non-USAID Interest Country be a lead institution?

Answer 2d: A higher education institution in the United States can lead but the team must collaborate with an eligible research translation partner/development practitioner (e.g., a non-governmental organization, civil society, the private sector, or a local government entity) and/or a local research institution. Section 3.1.3 of the RFA states, “Only academic researchers based at Higher Education Institutions, (see definition of HEI in Appendix 3) in USAID Interest Countries (or go to <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work>) and the United States are eligible to submit a Concept Note. The US lead researchers must have a local research partner.

Question 2e: Can I be a PI or Co-PI in more than one Concept Note? Can a collaborator be included in more than one Concept Note?

Answer 2e: Yes, you can only submit one Concept Note as a lead researcher (PI) but can collaborate on as many concepts notes as you would like.

Question 2f: Can a researcher in a country other than Colombia be a lead researcher/PI?

Answer 2f: Yes, the lead researcher/PI can be based in or outside of Colombia. Researchers and research translation partners will be represented on a research team as Co-PIs. For the purposes of this RFA, a Co-PI is defined in section 3.1.3. as “as a key member of the research team (who is not the PI) that also serves as the point of contact for their institution.” An institution having more than one team member will specify their designated Co-PI”.

Question 2g: Our team comprises researchers from Colombia in addition to a US researcher. Would it disadvantage the team if the lead researcher were from the US?

Answer 2g: No, a research team would not be disadvantaged by virtue of the fact that they have a lead based in the U.S. U.S. higher education institutions are eligible to apply. Furthermore, LASER PULSE will rate, select, and fund Concept Notes and Full Applications (if selected to advance) on merit, according to how best they meet the two criteria of broader impacts and research merit.

Question 2h: Can we include students in a proposed research project?

Answer 2h: Yes, students can be included in a research project and can be members of a research team.

Question 3: Collaborators

Question 3a: Do applicants for this funding need a partner in a U.S. university?

Answer 3a: Applicants are not required to partner with US universities but may choose to do so if they have a need for partnership.

Question 3b: Will LASER PULSE initiate connections between applicants in Colombia with other researchers in other countries if one required a research partner from another country?

Answer 3b: LASER PULSE Network is a searchable database that researchers can use to connect with potential partners (researchers and practitioners). One must be registered to access the search functions (Please refer to FAQs Q.2a and Q.2c).

Question 3c: Is there a requirement for interdepartmental collaboration? Otherwise, should a single department per institution propose a collaboration with a research translation partner?

Answer 3c: We encourage inter-departmental or multidisciplinary collaboration within an institution and across institutions. However, each application should have only one lead PI.

Question 3d: Do we need letters of support from all Co-PIs and partner institutions?

Answer 3d: LASER PULSE only requires letter(s) of support from a translation partner. A template will be provided for use.

Question 4: Addressing Gender

Question 4a: The research activities in my Concept Note will impact men, women, and youth equally. How do I address the crosscutting theme of gender?

Answer 4a: All proposals are required to address the relationship between the proposed research and gender. Prior to developing the Concept Note, please review the gender analysis guidelines in Gender Appendix 2. Concept Notes should clearly reflect that the research team is fully aware of the gender considerations that are relevant for the sectoral focus, and specifically those that have shaped the proposed research study.

Question 4b: Is gender analysis going to be scored?

Answer 4b: Gender is an integral part of USAID/LASER PULSE funded proposals. Thus, it is included in the evaluation criteria in section 4.2.

Question 5: Funding, Indirect Cost Rate and Budget Template

Question 5a: Is there a maximum dollar amount per application?

Answer 5a As stated in the RFA in section 3.1.8: “LASER PULSE will fund 4-6 awards for a period of 12 to 24 months of research and translation. For this RFA we expect to award a total of \$1,000,000 in total funding across all awards”. We do not know what you plan to propose, thus, cannot set a maximum amount.

Question 5b: If successful, can the funds be delivered to the translation partner or is it only the PI from HEI?

Answer 5b: Purdue University will issue a sub-agreement directly to each partner involved in the research activities.

Question 5c: What indirect cost rate should we use?

Answer 5c: Purdue University uses a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) for sub-awards for indirect costs (IDC). A request for a higher indirect cost rate must have documented justification, such as an established NICRA. Indirect costs charged to your sub-awards are limited to the first U.S. \$25,000.

Question 5d: What procedures should we follow if our institution requires indirect cost other than 10%? Answer 5d: To request a higher IDC rate, the institution must provide documentation on an established NICRA rate above the 10%.

Question 5e: Is the 10% IDC also related to the indirect costs on our project sub-awards (from the host institution)? Does it relate to the IDC rate for the host institutions direct costs? Answer 5e: In granting awards to lead institutions, Purdue University, allows 10% IDC or the established NICRA rate on MTDC, with IDC on sub-award amounts from the lead to other institutions limited to the first \$25,000 of that sub-award. The IDC rates charged by sub-awardees to the lead institution are negotiated between the lead institution and the sub-awardee institution.

Question 5f: Do I need to submit the Concept Note through my institution's official representative with financial authority? Do they need to sign off on the budget?

Answer 5f: Each institution has its own regulations governing budgeting and related financial authorization. From Purdue University's LASER PULSE perspective, if permitted by the applicant institution, the signature on the Concept Note budget may be that of the PI. However, the signature on the full proposal budget must be that of an official institutional representative with financial authority.

Question 6: Research Translation

Question 6a: How does LASER PULSE define "research translation"?

Answer 6a: LASER PULSE defines research translation as, "an iterative co-design process among academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders in which research is adapted for use and intentionally applied to a development challenge".

Question 6b: Are applicants required to focus on specific types of translation products? Additionally, is there a specified number or products or a threshold that determines successful research?

Answer 6b.(i): Section 1.3 of the RFA states that: translated research should result in a **tangible product** is a required output of research translation. This could be a tool/device, report or document, multimedia product, or IT platform. This product should contain a

policy brief or recommendation that leads to changes in legal, constitutional, funding, accountability, feasibility, or implementation mechanisms or a **practice recommendation**, such as new agricultural production or processing method, education curriculum, guidebook, technical manual, training module, and planning tool. methods, education curriculum, guidebooks, technical manuals, training modules, and planning tools.

Applicants are encouraged to focus on specific types of translation products as outlined in the LASER PULSE research translation overview and training module. For more details, please click [this link](https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Translation_Overview.pdf) (or go to https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Translation_Overview.pdf)

LASER PULSE also recognizes the need for creative and innovative approaches to research development and translation and welcomes new ideas. Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, abstracts, and traditional methods-focused posters **are not** considered as translated products. Products must be tailored to an audience and adapted for use by an end-user.

Answer 6b.(ii): There are no restrictions on how many and/or specific number of products required; however, a proposed product (policy, or practice) should align with the scope of the research. In some cases, a single, well-developed product with an audience, and communication strategy is sufficient. In others, the project team might need to explore multiple channels at multiple levels.

Question 6c: How do I anticipate what translation and dissemination will look like at the end of the project?

Answer 6c. Planning and budgeting processes for translation and communication start at the beginning (when research activities commence). You can make much headway before your research has been completed. Work with your local partners to map out stakeholder group/s and figure out who you need to target. Some research on whom your audiences comprise will be beneficial in helping you figure out what their preferences and needs are. You can even engage them directly in your research process and provide updates as your research progresses.

Question 6d. How do I anticipate the budget for translation and dissemination?

Answer 6d: As you plan and design your research project, please consider what costs will go into this. Do you need a dedicated staff member to manage and implement this process? Do you need a specialist to work with you on design and content? What experience do your partners have with budgeting for translation and dissemination? What materials do you anticipate producing and how much would those cost to produce, print, and distribute? Does the product that you are planning on have costs associated with it? Do you need to factor in travel to support dissemination? Consider these questions among your team to make sure you can accurately plan and budget for your translation and dissemination expenses.

Question 6e: Can one engage more than one translation partner?

Answer 6e: The LASER PULSE requirement is for *at least* one translation partner. However, the research team can engage more than one translation partner based on their needs. Please note that we will need a letter of support from each translation partner for a submitted concept note.

Question 6f: Would a university count as a translation partner? For instance, if a researcher wants to work with youth on agro-entrepreneurial curriculum development program?

Answer 6f: University partners are not considered as translation partners. Please See FAQs Q.6 and RFA Section 1.3) for examples of translation partners.

Question 7: Required Training

Question 7a: Are courses described in the RFA mandatory for all the applicants? When is the deadline for completing the two trainings?

Answer 7a: There are two mandatory courses: research translation and gender inclusion into research. Both are mandatory as follows: 1) for PI only at Concept Note stage, and 2) for all research team members at full application stage (by invitation only).

Question 7b: Must all research team members take the gender course or only the principal investigator?

Answer 7b: Prior to submitting Concept Notes, training on gender and research translation are mandatory for all PIs. During the Full Application stage, all members of the research team must take both the gender and research translation training.