



Request for Application Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question 1: Country and Geographic Eligibility

Question 1: Can I propose research in the LASER PULSE focus region of East Africa in countries other than the priority countries mentioned in the RFA?

Answer 1a: Due to limited funding, LASER PULSE will prioritize these competitive awards to the priority countries in the focus region.

As stated in the Call for Application in section 2, LASER PULSE “calls for innovative research – and associated research translation – focused on development challenges within three development sectors of: Basic Education (specifically, social and emotional skills); Food Security (specifically, youth engagement in agriculture); and Water Security (specifically, data and forecasting for water resources) in the context of the three East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Note that research on Basic Education is limited to Kenya and Uganda only”.

Additionally, researchers and practitioners from other regions may be included as collaborators for joint work. (Please refer to Question 2a: Eligibility and Leadership).

Question 1b: Will Concept Notes/proposals for research in countries outside the East Africa region be considered? For example: in Southern Africa, West Africa or Asia?

Answer 1b: With limited funding, we limit these competitive awards to the focus region of East Africa.

Question 1c: Are there other opportunities for research funding from LASER PULSE outside of the East Africa region?

Answer 1c: Yes, there will be opportunities for funding in other USAID geographic areas of interest in the course of LASER’s life. In particular, there will be an opportunity in Colombia, and Vietnam.

Question 1d: How many countries from the region can be involved in one project?

Answer 1d: This is up to the lead PI and Co-PIs. This also depends on the ability to achieve the stated research objectives, including management of the project across countries, and ability to have sufficient funds for the proposed research given a maximum budget indicated in the RFA.

Question 2: Eligibility and Leadership

Question 2a: What institutions are eligible to prepare a Concept Note for the call?

Answer 2a: As stated in the Call for Concept Notes in section 3.1.3:

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Only academic 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 are eligible to submit a Concept Note. Lead researchers (PI) from institutions outside of East Africa **must** partner with a researcher in the region (East Africa). Preference will be given to lead researchers from HEIs in the East Africa region. All researchers **must** be registered in the LASER PULSE Network. Please [click here](#) (or go to <https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect>) to register in the LASER PULSE Network.

The process requires researchers to identify, from the outset, research translation partner(s) such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector, and/or local government entities.

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

Answer 2b: Yes. The individual must be an employee at a higher education institution (HEI) and will serve as the PI. However, the individual must partner with a development practitioner (such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector, and/or local government entities) on the Concept Note. The individual must provide a Letter of Commitment/Support from the development practitioner's institution.

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

Answer 2c:

1. It is up to the researcher to find a translation partner. We encourage you to use your existing networks to find a development partner collaborator.
2. Co-PI(s) and research translation partner(s) are not geographically restricted but must demonstrate their experience in and/or knowledge of the East African region.

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

Answer 2d: Higher Education Institutions in the United States can lead but they must collaborate with an eligible research translation partner/development practitioner (e.g., a non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society, the private sector, or a local government entity).

Section 3.1.3 of the RFA states, “Only academic researchers based at [Higher Education Institutions](#), HEIs (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

The US lead researchers must have a local research partner. Preference will be given to lead researchers from HEIs in the East Africa region.”

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Co-PI(s) and research translation partner(s) are not geographically restricted but must demonstrate their experience in and/or knowledge of the East African region.

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

Answer 2e: Yes, you can submit as many Concept Notes as you would like as a PI or co-PI.

Question 2f: Can a researcher in one of the priority countries be a PI?

Answer 2f:

1. The lead researcher coordinating the research team and submitting the Concept Note will be considered the Principal Investigator (PI) by LASER PULSE. Researchers and research translation experts from partner institutions may be represented on a research team as Co-PIs.
2. 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 3: Collaborators

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

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

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

Answer 3b:

Yes, we only require letters of support from the development practitioners institutions i.e. letter of support. Please find a template of a [Letter of Support](https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Concept_Note_Letter_of_Support_by_Translation_Partner.docx) (or go to https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Concept_Note_Letter_of_Support_by_Translation_Partner.docx) that must be used at the Concept Note stage and letter of commitment [Letter of Commitment](https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Full_Application_Letter_of_Commitment_by_Translation_Partner.docx) (or go to https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/File:/uploads/Full_Application_Letter_of_Commitment_by_Translation_Partner.docx) that must be used at the full application stage.

Question 4: Addressing Gender as and other Cross-cutting Theme.

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Question 4a: The research activities in my Concept Note will impact men, women, and youth equally. How do I address the cross-cutting 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. Also note that the funds are not intended to be used for basic/fundamental research which can be very costly. Instead the funds are intended for applied/development research that addresses a development challenge.

Start planning and budgeting for translation and communication at the beginning (when research activities commence). You are encouraged to consider several factors among your research team to ensure that you can accurately plan and budget for your translation and dissemination expenses. These expenses include but are not limited to staffing costs, specialist hire/s, and costs for travel. Additionally, consider the scope of your team’s experience with budgeting for translation and dissemination and the translation product types that you envision producing. For a more elaborate description of the planning considerations for translation and dissemination activities, please see Question 6: Research Translation.

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

Answer 5b: 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.

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Question 5c: Regarding the indirect cost, what if our institution requires indirect cost other than 10%?

Answer 5c: To request a higher IDC rate, the institution must provide documentation on an established NICRA rate above the 10%. **See Answer 5b above.**

Question 5d: 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 5d: 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 5e: 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 5e: 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**, such as a tool/device, multimedia product, or IT platform; 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

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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 weblink

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). In fact, 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.

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Question 7: Types of Research Initiatives

Question 7a: There is a possibility that my research is cross-sectoral. Which research initiative do I select?

Answer 7a: It will be categorized on the basis of the sector in which the research is most intense. However, cross-sectoral research will be reviewed favorably.

Question 8: Letter of Support

Question 8a: To whom (or which office) do we address the completed Letter of Intent?

Answer 8a: The completed Letter of Intent should be from the research translation partner to the project PI. The letter must be signed by personnel authorized to make a commitment on behalf of the institution.

Similarly, the only organizations whose resources are contributing towards cost-share should describe these resources in the letter. Be sure to provide the dollar value of the cost-share in the paragraph detailing these resources.

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