Request for Concept Notes
Tanzania Early Grade Social and Emotional Skills and Phonics-Based Literacy Learning Agenda

USAID and LASER PULSE[1] (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine), hereafter referred to as LASER, seek four page Concept Notes (CNs) from multidisciplinary teams of researchers to undertake the design of the Learning Agenda work to support a Tanzania-based pre-primary, primary and secondary education programming called "Jifunze Uelewe". This learning agenda should also contribute to the overall progress in sustainably improving pre-primary and standards (Grade) 1-4 literacy and numeracy skills for all learners in Tanzania.

This request for (CNs) is administered by the LASER PULSE consortium led by Purdue University and funded through USAID's Global Development Lab/Center for Development Research. The project period is from January 31, 2021 to August 30, 2023 with total funding amount up to $850,000. The Concept Note must be no more than four (4) typed pages long, written in English, with narrative portions prepared in MS Word or Open Office format, using Times New Roman font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing. For details, please see section III (Request for Concept Notes).

I.   BACKGROUND

The Government of Tanzania (GOT) has seen rapid growth in access to basic education, but the quality of education and learning outcomes remain lower than its peer countries. Overall, Tanzanian children are limited in mastering the foundational skills of the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) to succeed in future educational or professional endeavors. Despite being in school an average of 7.8 years, learners in Tanzania only obtain 4.8 years when adjusted for actual learning.

In March 2020, COVID-19 was confirmed in Tanzania and on March 17, public gatherings were banned and education institutions were closed to limit the transmission of the virus. Students and teachers used online, distance learning options, where available, to continue learning. The President ordered the reopening of all basic education schools on June 29. On the Mainland, guidance on school reopening and how to ensure a safe learning environment has been developed and distributed to head teachers along with a checklist for reopening. The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (GOZ) also provided school guidance to head teachers and prepared for school reopening in consultation with the local education group.

The programming for the USAID/Tanzania Education Office, hereafter referred to as the "Education Office" focuses on improving literacy and numeracy levels in a safe and inclusive learning

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[1] LASER PULSE is a five-year USAID-funded consortium that supports the research-to-translation value chain through a global network of universities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector for research-driven, practical solutions to critical development challenges in USAID interest countries (UIC). LASER supports the discovery and uptake of research-sourced, evidence-based solutions to development challenges spanning all USAID technical sectors and global geographic regions.

environment. USAID's Tusome Pamoja activity, which ends January 2021, developed phonics-based materials (readers and accompanying teacher guides) for standards (grades) 1 through 4. These materials were approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and the Ministry of Education, and Vocational Training (MOEVT) for implementation in five target regions (four on the mainland and Zanzibar). In October 2020, MOEST officially certified all readers developed by [Tusome Pamoja](#) for nationwide use. However, the official government literacy materials provided by the MOEST and MOEVT use methodology, scope, and sequence that are not fully aligned with the phonics approach to reading. This can lead to confusion among teachers and head teachers. It is anticipated that the curriculum will be reviewed by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) in the next couple of years, which provides an important opportunity to identify how to align the MOEST and USAID-funded phonics-based materials.

The focus of the USAID Arithmetic and Inclusive Education activity is to ensure an inclusive learning environment, which supports the GOT's inclusive education approach as defined in the National Strategy for Inclusive Education: "an approach which transforms the education system, including its structure, policies, practices and human resources, to accommodate all learners in mainstream education by addressing and responding to learners' diverse needs."

The Education Office wants to promote a learning agenda that maximizes early grade primary literacy and numeracy outcomes, to: 1) ensure teachers incorporate social emotional skills into their instructional approach to create a safe and inclusive, quality learning environment, including those working in secondary school and 2) identify opportunities/avenues to integrate phonics-based literacy approaches into the Tanzania primary curriculum. The work will be initiated by co-creating a learning agenda, which focuses on teachers' social and emotional skills and early grade phonics-based literacy (**Activity 1**); followed by the development of research plans, collection of data and synthesization of information (**Activity 2**); and completed with the dissemination of findings (**Activity 3**).

The learning agenda audience includes: 1) USAID Tanzania; 2) USAID implementing partners; 3) development partners, particularly partners working in pre-primary and primary literacy; 4) host country education stakeholders, which include MOEST, MOEVT, President's Office-Regional Administration, Local Government (PORALG-Mainland), the President's Office-Regional Administration, Local Government and Special Departments (PORALG-SD) in Zanzibar, the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE) staff, universities, and teacher training college researchers; and 5) civil society, NGOs and other education stakeholders.

The Education Office anticipates awarding a new activity in FY 2021 (Jifunze Uelewe) which focuses on pre-primary and primary education with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy learning outcomes for *all* learners.[2] The learning agenda should align with this new activity and contributes to the overall activity objective: *Sustainably improve Standard 1-4 literacy and numeracy skills for all learners in target regions.* The learning agenda will also support progress along several components of the Jifunze Uelewe results framework as listed below:

Outcome 1: Improved literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional instruction by teachers
● IR 1.1: In-service training to teachers and education officials improved

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[2] The definition for "all" learners includes but is not limited to: marginalized and vulnerable girls and boys, learners with disabilities, minority and linguistic minority groups, urban and rural learners, learners affected by crisis or conflict, and those living in poverty. See World Bank. (2018) Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling for additional information.

- IR 1.2: Continuous professional development strengthened.
- IR 1.3: Inclusive teaching and learning materials available to and utilized by teachers and children.

Outcome 2: Strengthened capacity of local and regional governments to sustain improved learning outcomes
- IR 2.1**:** Capacity of local and regional government to plan, budget, and implement curriculum improved.
- IR 2.2: Capacity of local and regional government to collect and utilize data to improve learning outcomes increased.

Outcome 3: Increased community support for safe and inclusive learning environments (in and outside of the school)
- IR 3.1: Engagement of communities to support a safe and inclusive learning environment enhanced.
- IR 3. 2: Reading skills outside of school increased

Tanzania's journey to self-reliance is premised on the foundation that an educated population is essential to improving individuals' social development and livelihoods. Under the 2020–2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), this activity falls in line with Development Objective 1: Foundational skills of children below age 15 improved. The foundational assumption of Jifunze Uelewe is that the MOEST and MOEVT will institutionalize a phonics-based literacy approach within the education system and apply it to all regions on the mainland and Zanzibar. Additionally, elements of social and emotional skills will be incorporated to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment.

II.   SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES

The Education Office envisions three major activities within this program: i) the creation and execution of the Learning Agenda implementation plan, in which the selected research team will work closely with LASER, USAID staff, and host country education agencies to prioritize learning agenda questions that have the most relevance to USAID Tanzania programming; ii) development and implementation of a research plan with research data/information synthesized; and iii) dissemination of findings to inform advocacy campaigns and programmatic approaches. These activities are outlined in more detail below.

Activity 0	Project Management
Deliverable	- Overarching work plan which lays out the key activities (see Activities 1-3 below) by timeframe, roles and responsibilities, and a general budget for each activity. - Principal investigator(s), and co-investigators or research team members identified.

The focus of this activity is to put in place an overarching plan to guide the administration and technical implementation of this two-fold research activity. This work plan will cover all three activities listed below in broad terms.

Review documents related to the social emotional skills and phonics-based literacy approach. The documents include but are not limited to: USAID implementing partners, research reports, landscape education analysis, Jifunze Uelewe program work statement, CDCS, and other documents as agreed with the Education Office. Additional resources are cited in Activity 1. For social and emotional learning, please consult the [USAID webpage on Social and Emotional Learning and Soft Skills](). For information on USAID's approach to reading and literacy programming, please review the [USAID Reading MATTERS Conceptual Framework]().

The work plan should include: 1) overview of activity description and deliverable(s); 2) activity budget; and 3) staffing plan (roles and responsibilities) and also describe how the activity will be conducted within the current COVID-19 operating environment. The plan may be revised, as needed, during project implementation.

The research team should work with LASER and USAID for approvals on format and content for each deliverable. The research team should work with the Education Office and LASER to develop and implement the workplan. All final deliverables must be submitted LASER, who will in turn submit to USAID.

The workplan, principal investigator and co-investigators or key members of the research team are expected no later than 30 days after the project start date.

Deliverable of activity is completed when the LASER and USAID have reviewed and approved the workplan, principal investigator, and co-investigator(s) or key members of the research team.

Activity 1	Co-create learning agenda with host country education agencies[3] (MOEST, MOEVT, and higher education institutions) and teachers
Deliverables	● Identify research questions for social emotional skills (for primary and secondary) and phonics-based literacy approach.

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[3] For purposes of this Scope, host country agency staff include, but is not limited to: MOEST/MOEVT departments/ directorates, TIE/ZIE, NECTA, universities and teacher training colleges.

	● Provide parameters for research methodology and data collection tools. ● Detailed Work Plan for the learning agenda which has two research initiatives: social emotional learning (primary and secondary) and early grade phonics-based literacy approach. Specific research questions and research parameters will be identified. ● Principal investigator(s), and co-investigators or research team members identified.
Use	Education Office and Host Country Education Agencies: ● Provide input into the design and implement learning agenda (products and processes); and, ● Create foundation for a participatory and iterative learning agenda process.

The focus of this activity is to design a learning agenda that is participatory, iterative, and focuses on utilization of the evidence. Prioritized stakeholders in this process will include but not be limited to: PORALG/PORALG-SD staff; MOEST/MOEVT staff including Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE); National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA); and Directorate of Quality Assurance; university/teacher training college researchers who focus on social emotional skills and early grade literacy; and teachers themselves who are critical to the implementation of the Jifunze Uelewe activity. The learning agenda should include: i) the state of the research East Africa with a focus on Tanzania (or globally if relevant); ii) a list of final questions, and for each question, some initial parameters or suggestions for research designs, ethical considerations, and measures; and iii) a strategic outreach plan for dissemination of the learning agenda to engage other GOT education agencies, development partners, national (Tanzania) education organizations and other agreed upon education stakeholders.

The Education Office and selected staff from the host country education agencies will work with the research team to identify appropriate methodologies (interviews, survey, etc.) for different stakeholder groups and to provide the research team with necessary introductions.

The SEL research will focus on two main groups: 1) primary and secondary teachers and head teachers and 2) primary through upper secondary learner with a focus on both in school and out-of-school time.
The SEL research may examine three environments:
● Classroom: instructional approaches
● School: school practices and policies
● Household and Community: partnerships

The purpose of consultations is to generate research questions guided by the following illustrative questions (to be finalized by LASER, Education Office, and host country education agencies):

Illustrative social and emotional skills research questions[4]:

1. Is the teacher training intervention effective at improving social and emotional instruction? How did the impacts of the intervention vary according to teacher characteristics? What was the cost-effectiveness of the intervention(s)?

2. Can teacher professional development (in-service and/or coaching/mentorship) improve their social-emotional competence? If so, does it translate into improved teacher wellbeing, retention, motivation, job performance, or job satisfaction?

3. What are the most effective, cost-effective indicators and measures for monitoring social and emotional instruction by teachers?

4. How does technology enable effective social and emotional or soft skills programming?

5. How do higher education institutions and teacher training colleges best prepare a workforce of teachers to build social and emotional skills for children and youth?

6. Which social and emotional skills are more meaningful to positive academic and other educational outcomes in the context of Tanzania? Does this vary based on gender, disability, or other important characteristics of learners?

7. When resources are limited, what is the appropriate sequence of social and emotional and literacy interventions across levels and skills to ensure learners gain solid foundational skills?

8. What is the role of communities or families in providing social and emotional support or instruction, particularly in the context of school closure?

9. What questions, if answered, will help teachers manage the impact of an emergency in the classroom?

10. What type of social emotional skills are required for teachers to effectively manage a classroom and use positive disciplinary approaches? How does this vary by key teacher characteristics (e.g. years of teaching experience, gender)?

11. What social emotional skills help nurture the safety of the classroom, e.g., inclusiveness and absence of violence?

12. What actions should be undertaken to assist the Jifunze Uelewe and/or youth programming to more effectively utilize these social and emotional skills?

SEL resources include but are not limited to:
-   Teacher wellbeing: this **landscape review** covers a range of topics briefly, including social and emotional competence for teachers

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[4] The USAID SEL Policy Brief, the USAID Foundational Skills Learning Agenda, the Education in Conflict and Crisis Learning Agenda, and the Education Equity Research Initiative Teacher Landscape review are the basis for these sample questions.

- Tools used to measure different social and emotional skills. The papers and presentation may be located **here**.
- **SEL qualitative research in Tanzania** has also recently been conducted.
- **LEGO Foundation** works on SEL skills in Tanzania
- SEL Frameworks: the **Explore SEL website** lets you explore frameworks across ages/stages and also locations

Illustrative phonics-based literacy research questions:

1. What are the questions that, if answered, would help the Education Office and MOEST/MOEVT identify the best elements of phonics-based literacy to integrate into the national curriculum? How can existing approaches in the national curriculum be enhanced/blended with phonics-based literacy to improve reading outcomes for all learners?
2. What opportunities exist within the education ecosystem[5] to promote phonics-based literacy?
3. What standards, norms, and policies are in place in Tanzania for fostering reading and literacy acquisition for young learners? What is the impact of these standards, norms, and policies on reading acquisition for all learners, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups?
4. Does the national reading curriculum allocate adequate time for reading instruction, sequence basic skills according to the evidence base, and provide for appropriate instructional and practice time?
5. To what extent is phonics-based literacy instruction included in pre-service and in-service teacher training? To what extent are pre-service and in-service teacher training for early grade literacy teachers aligned? What is the impact of pre-service and in-service teacher training on reading instruction?
6. To what extent are coaches and mentors trained on phonics-based literacy instruction? To what extent do teachers receive ongoing coaching and mentoring on phonics-based literacy instruction? What is the impact of coaching and mentoring on reading instruction?
7. Are teaching and learning materials following an evidence-based scope and sequence for literacy instruction? How effectively are teachers and students utilizing existing teaching and learning materials to foster reading acquisition?
8. Do students receive extra phonics-based literacy practice outside of schools? If so, how effective is the extra literacy practice?

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[5] For purposes of this research education ecosystem includes but is not limited to: government entities(MOEST/ MOEVT, Local Government Authorities, Regional, District and Ward Education Offices), communities, civil society, and private sector.

9. How often are students' literacy skills assessed? To what extent do teachers know the literacy skill levels of their students? How well do teachers use student literacy data to continuously inform their instruction?
10. To what extent are pre-literacy skills taught to learners before primary school (e.g. in pre-primary, in the home, etc.)?
11. How can the local system foster reading skills acquisition for all learners in the midst of an emergency situation?

Phonics-based literacy resources include but are not limited to:
● USAID Tusome Pamoja Improving the Effectiveness of the 3Rs Teaching in Tanzania: Operational Research Report (April 2019)
● USAID Tusome Pamoja Midline Findings Report (October 2018)
● **USAID Reading MATTERS Conceptual Framework**
● USAID Education Links: **Reading & Literacy**

The research team, in consultation with LASER and USAID, should prepare a draft of the learning agenda design, to include the final learning agenda questions. The above (aforementioned) illustrative questions may be used to guide the process with updating and revisions, as appropriate. This process will include collaboration with a core team of the Education Office and host country education agency staff to align activities and outputs with the MOEST/MOEVT and PORALG/PORALG-SD short- and long-education plans and needs and USAID education programming. After the researchers and the core team agree upon the design, the research team should produce its plan for implementing the learning agenda within the timeline of the project, to include a framework for monitoring progress against anticipated results.

The Learning Agenda is expected to be completed within the first three months of implementation.

Deliverable of activity is completed when LASER and USAID have reviewed and approved the final learning agenda and initial parameters for implementation.

Activity 2	Summarize the evidence on social emotional skills and phonics-based literacy research
Deliverables	● Research design plan (methodology, data collection plan and tools);

	● Data collection; ● Final measures used; ● Ethics review & approval; ● Data sets & code books; and, ● Synthesis of findings tailored to different audiences. Final reports.
Use	● Education Office: Understand the current state of evidence to better inform the programmatic activities to incorporate social emotional skills and phonics-based literacy approaches more broadly (nationally); ● Jifunze Uelewe Implementing Partner: Use information/data collected to inform programmatic activities; and, ● MOEST/MOEVT, PORALG/PORALG-SD, and development partners: Increase understanding of how to utilize social emotional skills to ensure a safe learning environment and align phonics-based early grade literacy components MOEST/MOEVT methods and resources.

The focus of this activity is to collaboratively conduct research (research team and host country education agencies) identified in the learning agenda (developed under activity 1). Though the research team will not have resources to carry out all of the research identified, it should coordinate with LASER, USAID, MOEST/MOEVT, and the implementer of Jifunze Uelewe in order to choose a short-list of feasible research.

For each specific piece of research, the research team will provide a research design plan, the final measures used (in languages administered and English), the ethics review & approval, datasets and codebooks, and a final report. The dissemination of the results should be covered under Activity 3.

The research methodology, research questions, and synthesis should be developed and implemented by the research team and selected host country education agencies staff with the potential for iterations on the original proposed method. Research should build upon the initial findings of USAID Tusome Pamoja operational research conducted: *Improving the Effectiveness of 3Rs Teaching in Tanzania: Operational Research Report* (April 2019), and other research conducted via USAID-funded projects. USAID Tusome Pamoja project also is providing remote teacher professional development in part on social and emotional support, as well as other piloted work. It would be important to continue to consult all USAID-funded projects for all their learning, written or unwritten.

Phonics-based literacy potential areas of research include:

1. Brain science on how children most effectively learn to read; evidence base on the big five foundational reading skills;
2. How phonics-based literacy instruction can be effectively incorporated/blended into the existing literacy instruction frameworks;
3. Benefits of Big Books and read alouds at the pre-primary level;
4. Benefits of comprehension and working memory and linkages to strengthen foundation of phonics-based literacy;
5. Benefits of teachers engaging in conversations to expand students oral/expressive language development; and,
6. Identify instructional techniques for improving foundational literacy skills from a distance, at home, or in the community.

Social emotional skills potential areas of research include:
1. Culturally relevant social and emotional skills in Tanzania for learners and educators, and potential frameworks or measures;
2. Identify competencies which build learner's confidence in the classroom and how teachers build these competencies through targeted activities;
3. Identify simple techniques to improve the quality of teacher-learner relationships (classroom management techniques and positive disciplinary practices;
4. Identify competencies and activities to promote a nurturing, inclusive learning environment absent of violence. Activities may be for both the classroom and outside the classroom, e.g., learning spaces such as reading clubs, home-based activities, etc.; and,
5. Identify social and emotional instructional techniques that can be done at a distance, at home or in the community.

The full parameters of the research methodology will be discussed during the learning agenda design phase, and, with approval from the Education Office, iterations on the original method may be made. Data collection may include, but not be limited to: 1) structured and semi-structured interviews, 2) classroom observations, and 3) material review.

The research team should produce research output(s), to be agreed upon during the learning agenda design phase (activity one). The research team should work with the Education Office, MOEST/MOEVT, and the implementer of Jifunze Uelewe to develop a dissemination plan for each of the research outputs, including a timeline, expected outputs/outcomes, and resources required.

The research plan for activity two is expected to be completed within the first ninety days of award.

The implementation of research in activity two is expected to be completed within the first 12-18 months of award.

Deliverable of activity is completed when the USAID and LASER have reviewed and approved the methodology, data collection tools, and final synthesis of evidence/information gathered.

Activity 3	Dissemination of evidence: i) programmatic interventions for social emotional skills and ii) resources for phonics-based literacy advocacy campaign
Deliverables	● Tools for literacy advocacy campaigns ● Program activities/materials incorporating social and emotional skills ● Research dissemination event in Tanzania
Use	● Education Office: Use evidence to: i) shape and monitor programmatic activities to incorporate social emotional skills and phonics-based literacy approaches and ii) advocate of national spread/incorporation into early grade learning ● Jifunze Uelewe and other USAID Implementing Partners: Use evidence to develop and implement programmatic activities. ● MOEST/MOEVT, PORALG/PORALG-SD, NECTA, TIE/ZIE and development partners: Use evidence to reflect on strengthening national literacy and numeracy teaching and learning within a safe and inclusive learning environment.

The focus of this activity is to package the evidence/information generated to help the Education Office with program implementation of social and emotional skills and phonics based literacy as well as advocate for broader (national) spread.

Based on the state of evidence identified during activity 2, the research team will generate deliverable(s) that should be tailored to specific users and audiences to increase their relevance and applicability to both USAID's work and GOT's education activities. Illustrative research outputs may include: webinars and technical guidance briefs in order to inform policy revisions (aligning USAID phonics-based literacy materials with GOT whole language literacy materials) and information sheets and webinars for social and emotional learning skills application.

The dissemination process should emphasize the participation of the learning agenda stakeholders and other education actors. The activities should be designed in a way that integrates opportunities for reflection, iteration, and adaptation.

This activity is expected to be completed within the last six months of the award.

Deliverable of activity is completed when the LASER and USAID have reviewed and approved the research outputs.

III.   REQUEST FOR CONCEPT NOTES (CNs)

USAID and LASER seek concept notes (CNs) from multidisciplinary teams of researchers to undertake the design of the Learning Agenda work described in the previous sections. The teams should pay attention to qualifications, expertise, and experience in areas and roles identified in the eligibility and leadership section below.

A)   Eligibility and Leadership

● The Principal Investigator (lead researcher) must be based at a Higher Education Institution (HEI)[6] in Tanzania, and the PI's institution will serve as the lead for this work. It is also encouraged to have non-Tanzania HEIs/ researchers partner with the Tanzania-HEI lead in supporting the phonics-based and social emotional learning agenda. LASER will make the subawards to additional partners if they are eligible to receive USAID funding. The Concept notes will be assessed according to the strength and experience of the team as a whole (see below).
● Qualifications/Expertise desired for the project
    ○ Subject matter expertise (early grade literacy and social emotional skills);
    ○ Methodological skills in qualitative and quantitative research, including skills in remote data collection and analysis, and innovative research design;
    ○ Data collection and management capacities to ensure ethics and standards of data integrity and quality, per USAID guidance;
    ○ Organizational learning skills, including experience in designing and implementing organizational learning agendas and facilitating learning events;
    ○ Communication skills to support adoption by USAID and host country education agencies of evidence generated from the learning agenda;
    ○ Understanding and/or previous experience working in the education sector in Tanzania;
    ○ Ability to collaborate with the host country education agencies, including MOEST/MOEVT and PORALG/PORALG-SD departments/ directorates, TIE/ZIE, and NECTA, and,
    ○ Ability to produce a wide range of learning products for different audiences (policy briefs, technical guidance, data visualizations, etc.).

B)   LASER Requirements

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[6] Based upon USAID documents, LASER defines a Higher Education Institution as a tertiary education institution that provides educational opportunities that build on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialized fields. It aims at learning at a high level of complexity and specialization. This may include public or private universities, colleges, and training institutes.

- The full team must register on the LASER PULSE Network at this link https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8AhZcWIGps5kyjP.
- The research team must complete LASER's online gender certification before submitting a CN. **Note**: only registered members have access to the training. The training can be accessed at this link https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/courses).

C) **Required Documents for Submission**

1. Concept Note: Must be no more than four (4) typed pages long, written in English, with narrative portions prepared in MS Word or Open Office format, using Times New Roman font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing, and must include the following sections:

    a. **Team details:** Full name, position, affiliation, and contact information of Team Leader and all collaborators on the research team. Provide a description of the role for each proposed team member.

    b. **Capacity statement:**
        i. A brief description of the team's related prior research (cite prior published work) and expertise in areas of relevance to this project scope.
        ii. A summary of how the researchers will conduct the work detailed in this call for CNs document. The summary should link to the researchers' expertise to the proposed plan of activities

    c. **Illustrative workplan**, in Gantt Chart format and accompanying narrative. Though research will be co-designed with USAID and LASER, the applicants are expected to have sufficient experience to propose an illustrative workplan, with activities and timelines, and a cost for activity of the work, as described in Section II (Specific Deliverables).

2. <u>Detailed activity budget</u> for **a maximum of $850,000** for all activities described in this call for CNs, including direct + indirect costs and broken down by institution in case of teams from multiple institutions using the provided template. The final budget will be decided after the teams are selected and the project plan is finalized. Budget pages do not count towards the 4-page CN limit.

3. <u>Full CV's</u> (limited to 4 pages, including academic record and most recent list of publications- 2000 and later) of the team members (do not count towards 4-page CN limit).

    Items 1, 2, 3, and 4 should be combined into one (1) PDF and emailed to Pamela McClure at awardsmanager@laserpulse.org by **5:00 pm EDT, December 8, 2020.**

Prospective applicants will have one week to submit any questions concerning the statement of work. Questions should be sent to Betty Bugusu at TD@laserpulse.org. Questions should be received no later than **5:00 pm EDT, November 18, 2020.**

D) **Concept Note Review**

The submitted CNs will be evaluated by a committee of peer reviewers, jointly selected by USAID and LASER, based on the following criteria:

- ***Team capacity***: i.e. capacity to co-design and implement the proposed work. Qualifications, skills, experience, and availability will all be considered
- ***Clarity and quality of the Illustrative Work Plan,*** b*ased on how well the plan corresponds to the requested information and in response to the background information and specific deliverables.*

LASER Rating Definition for Concept Notes (CN) Evaluation Criteria.

Adjectival Rating	Descriptive Statement
Excellent (5)	CN fully addresses all aspects of the evaluation criterion and convincingly demonstrates that it will meet the study objectives. Weaknesses, if any, can be easily addressed.
Very Good (4)	CN fully addresses all aspects of the evaluation criterion, and strongly demonstrates likelihood to meet the study objectives. Weaknesses, if any, can be easily addressed.
Good (3)	CN meets all aspects of the evaluation criterion and demonstrates the ability to meet study objectives but shows some weaknesses, yet the positives of the CN outweigh the negatives
Fair (2)	CN does not address all aspects of the evaluation criterion nor is evidence presented to indicate the likelihood of meeting the study objectives. Significant weaknesses are demonstrated and clearly outweigh strengths presented.
Poor (1)	CN does not address all aspects of the evaluation criterion and the information presented indicates a strong likelihood of failure to meet study objectives.

The evaluation committee will recommend three (3) highly ranked CNs to LASER and USAID, based on the above criteria. USAID will provide final review and selection of the winning CN. **The Finalist team will be notified by January 22, 2020** and invited to an orientation session hosted by LASER. The co-creation among the research team, LASER, and USAID commences after the orientation meeting to develop an in-depth program description for this activity.

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