



East Africa RFA

Questions and Answers: Supplement to FAQs

Question 1: Country and Geographic Eligibility

Question 1: Can we work in more than one country?

Answer 1: Yes, a research team can work in more than one country. The focus of this solicitation is East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Basic Education applications are limited to Kenya and Uganda. (Please refer to FAQs Q.1d). The country of interest to a particular research also depends on the research problem that you propose to address.

Question 2: Eligibility and Leadership

Question 2a: Our team comprises researchers from different countries in the EA region in addition to a US researcher. Would it disadvantage the team if the lead researcher were from the US (other than one of the EA countries)?

Answer 2a: 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, Concept Notes and Full Applications (by invitation only) will be rated, selected, and funded according to how best they meet the two criteria of broader impacts and research merit.

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

Answer 2b: Yes. Students can be included in a research project and can be members of a research team.

Question 2c: Are there requirements that potential grantees must have managed a certain number of funds in the past, or must have past performance references?

Answer 2c: Yes, there is a specific requirements for past performance as reflected in the evaluation criteria (see RFA Section 4.1- Research Merit).

Question 2d: Organization X is a research and advisory organization that works with academic researchers from across the globe. Can we use one of the academics in our network as the PI?

Answer 2d: Yes, you can use the academic researcher from the HEI as the Principal Investigator (PI). Note that the key requirement for this call for Concept Notes is that only academic researchers based at Higher Education Institutions in USAID Interest Countries and in the United States are eligible to submit a Concept Note.

Question 2e: I have read the RFA on education, food security and water security and have read the application provisions. Should a lead researcher from the USA or East Africa make the application?

Answer 2e: The lead researcher (PI) must be based at a higher education institution and can be from USA or East Africa. However, a lead researcher from outside of East Africa must partner with a researcher in East Africa.



Question 3: Collaborators

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

Answer 3a: For this RFA, collaboration is not limited to partnerships with U.S. universities. Academic researchers from the East Africa region and/or USAID Interest Countries collaborate to submit a Concept Note. Please refer to FAQs Q. 1a and Q. 2a.

Question 3b: If so, how can the LASER PULSE network help applicants to get a partner in Purdue, Indiana or anywhere else over there?

Answer 3b: The LASER PULSE Network registration platform has a searchable database to facilitate such demand-driven connections. One must be registered to identify and connect with other researchers. (Please refer to FAQs Q.2a and Q.2c). In the case of practitioners, there are very few registered in the network, thus we ask you to use your connections to identify practitioners.

Question 3c: Will LASER PULSE link the applicants to other researchers in other countries if one required a research partner from another country within East Africa?

Answer 3c: See question 3b above.

Question 3d: My understanding is that once registered, applicants can do a Map search on the Network part of the website, and then filter by sector (education). They can then utilize email addresses to contact researchers and have them sign the partnership letter of support. Are those steps that we expect applicants to take, and am I missing anything needed in this process?

Answer 3d: Researchers can search the LASER PULSE Network to identify collaborators, mainly researchers. For practitioner, please use your own networks to identify collaborators.

Question 3e: You mentioned that you are “recruiting” practitioners. Other than joining, the network, is there something else that we as a practitioner should do?

Answer 3e: LASER PULSE is currently conducting intensive outreach to expand the Network’s practitioner-based membership and encourages practitioners who are not members to register with the Network. In the meantime, we encourage you to reach out to academic researchers in your sector to determine if they are considering submitting a concept note and if you might partner with them.

Question 3f: The RFA, clearly states that only academic researchers based at Higher Education Institutions in USAID Interest Countries and the United States are eligible to submit a Concept Note. However, are there any opportunities for research-oriented international organizations who work in international development area, like IFPRI, to collaborate with researchers at US universities in this call, for example, by serving a subcontractor?

Answer 3f: Researchers from research-oriented organizations can collaborate with researchers at U.S. universities but the research must be conducted in the focus region of East Africa and must partner with a researcher in East Africa and must have a translation partner.



Question 3g: Is there a network of Principal investigators (PIs) and practitioners that we can access? (I.e., PIs looking for practitioners and vice versa).

Answer 3g: The LASER PULSE Network comprise membership of both researchers and practitioners. However, practitioners are a small proportion within the Network (also, see question 3d and 3e above).

Question 4: Funding, Indirect Cost Rate and Budget

Question 4a: Is there an upper limit (ceiling) on the amount of money we can ask for?

Answer 4a: LASER PULSE will fund 4 to 6 awards for a period of 12 to 24 months of research and translation. (Please refer to FAQs Q.5a).

Question 4b: Could you please clarify if 4 to 6 awards means each application can request only up to 250K over a 2-year period of research and translation?

Answer 4b: Please refer to FAQs Q.5a.

Question 4c: If successful, can the funds to be delivered to the translation partner or is it only the PI from HEI?

Answer 4c: Purdue University will contract directly with *each partner* involved in the research translation activities.

Question 5: Research Translation

Question 5a: 1) Kindly give me examples of translation partners for a food processing value chain approach in the scenario of youth in agriculture. 2) If it were a multiple approach, would a project such as in 1 above use several translation partners? 3) Can a government entity with various departments addressing 1 and 2 above take the role of translation partner and involve the departments or divisions concerned?

Answer 5a: Please refer to the research translation on-line training. Examples of translation partners include: private sector, government institutions, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (see section 1.3 in the RFA). You will need at least one translation partner. **Note:** One must obtain a letter of support from the translation partner.

Question 5b: I am curious as to whether you give priority for research translation partners since a large data needed for the water security sector is for digitization of historical information, e.g. water and precipitation monitoring data. Do you prioritize government partners?

Answer 5b: No. LASER PULSE does not prioritize the government as a partner on water security application. The major requirement is for a research team to collaborate with at least one translation partner and government is just one type of a translations partner. (For additional examples of translational partners, please refer to RFA Section 1.3).

Question 5c: Can one engage more than one translation partner?

Answer 5c: Yes. A research team can engage more than one translation partner. However, LASER PULSE requires at least one translation partner. Please note that we will need a letter of support from each translation partner for submitted concept note.



Question 5d: Can a government agency be considered as a practitioner or translation partner?

Answer 5d: Yes. Consider a government agency as a practitioner or translation partner. Please refer to RFA Section 1.3.

Question 5e: Would universities count as scaling partners? For instance, if you wanted to work with youth on curriculum building?

Answer 5e: If scaling partner is synonymous with translation partner per LASER PULSE requirement, then universities do not qualify as translation partners. For examples of translation partner, please See FAQs Q.6 and RFA Section 1.3)

Question 5f: Besides NGOs, are community-based organizations (CBOs) and private sector companies considered as translation partners?

Answer 5f: Yes. CBOs and private sector companies are considered as translation partners (Please refer to RFA Section 1.3).

Question 6: Letters of Support

Question 6a: The guidelines require that translation partners provide a Letter of Support. Our role on the project would be research support (including prototype development, etc), and the translation partner will be an East Africa based organization. As we are not a translation partner, is the assessment that institution does not need to provide a Letter of Support correct?

Answer 6a. You will need a letter of support from the East African based translation partner i.e. a development practitioner/institution that will help to ensure that the research is relevant and can be utilized to address a specific development challenge (see FAQs 3b).

Question 6b: The Concept Note also needs a support letter. We are planning to have a concept note that will involve our university, two ministries, and a private sector actor; should we have letters of support from all institutions or just from the lead research institution (i.e., our university)?

Answer 6b: Please note that there is **NO** requirement for a partnership letter for researchers. Instead, you need a letter of support from a research translation partner (development partner). Please refer to FAQs Q.8.

Question 6c: Do you need a letter of collaboration from each of the collaborators, if there is more than one collaborator?

Answer 6c: At the Concept Note phase, each PI must submit at least one letter of support from a translation partner. During Full Application Phase, each translation partner in the research team must submit letters.

Question 7: Required Training



Question 7a: I have this RFA call from LASER PULSE but one of the requirements to apply for funding from LASER PULSE is that the PI must have done some training (courses) with LASER PULSE and also be a member. How do I become a member and are the courses mandatory for all the applicants?

Answer 7a: All researchers must be registered in the LASER PULSE Network. Please find membership registration details at <https://stemedhub.org/groups/laserpulse/connect>. 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: When is the deadline for undertaking the LASER PULSE courses related to the recently released RFA?

Answer 7b: Each PI **must** complete two LASER PULSE on-line trainings (gender and research translation), prior to submitting a Concept Note. If a Concept Note is selected to advance to Full Application stage, every member of the research team will be required to complete the online training.

Question 7c: The conditions for Concept Note submission state that the applicants must take the gender course. Is this for all research team members or the principal investigator?

Answer 7c: 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.

Question 8: Development sector-specific topics

Question 8a: For Water Security and Food Security, do you require activity in all three countries?

Answer 8a: No, applicants are not necessarily required to conduct research activity in all three countries. Nevertheless, at least for the Water Security RFA, strong preference will be given to those concept notes that display a focus on East Africa as a region (the core of which are the 3 countries of the RFA). This reflects the overall intent of the RFA to compile and synthesize water supply and demand data/information to inform regional analyses and forecasting, since water resources are transboundary in nature. However, we recognize that budget limitations may necessitate restricting focus to a single country (if so, this should be clearly explained in the concept note) but taking such an approach will still be judged against those concept notes that propose a regional focus. (See FAQs Q.1d).

Question 8b: There is restriction to youth engagement for research applications covering food security. Does this disqualify studying other age groups in the research?

Answer 8b: The RFA requires research that targets and supports youth engagement in the identified research focus themes.

Question 8c: Does the theme food security include nutrition?

Answer 8c: Nutrition is not the focus of this RFA; the focus is targeting and supporting youth engagement in agriculture. The form of engagement may involve activities that contribute to nutrition.



Question 8d: It seems that the water security area is about big data, forecasting, and model development, etc. Is there interest in farm-scale irrigation development and translation through participatory research with small-scale farmers?

Answer 8d: Yes (first sentence), the intent of the Water Security RFA is to compile and synthesize water supply and demand data/information to inform regional analyses and forecasting. LASER PULSE strongly suggests reading the Sustainable Water Partnership (2017) document cited in the RFA to clearly understand this intention.

No (second sentence); while we encourage those submitting concept notes to be creative in proposing various approaches to realize the intent of the RFA, the example you provide is way too granular (farm-level). Actually, it represents a development intervention that would likely benefit from the type of information and projections that we seek with regard to water supply and demand and the impacts thereof. LASER PULSE aims to support research that examines systems at a decentralized level in order to provide forecasts to be used in planning. The farm-level is too small a scale to be feasible for this RFA.

Question 8e: Can you extend an existing ongoing project towards a different angle?

Answer 8e: Yes. An applicant PI can extend an ongoing project to address a specific development challenge for this solicitation. However, they must demonstrate alignment with the focus areas in the RFA, effectively articulate the co-creation process with a development practitioner, and design a feasible translation strategy that involves collaboration with appropriate partners.