

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Discovery & Exploration of Emerging Pathogens – Viral Zoonoses (DEEP VZN)

NOFO Number: 7200AA21RFA00005

1. It is stated on page 47 of the Deep VZN RFA that the Project Director is a full time appointment. Is the Project Director equivalent to the application Principle Investigator, or is it considered to be a separate staff position?

The 'Project Director' position is specified as key personnel in the NOFO and 'Principle Investigator' is not. In Section D.5.g, the NOFO states "Applicants may propose additional key personnel if they choose to do so. If this is the case, the Applicant must state the proposed position, the roles and responsibilities, and the minimum qualifications. In addition, applicants must provide CV/resume and letter of commitment as required for all key personnel." The NOFO has been amended in Section D.5.g to remove "full time" as a requirement for both the Project Director and Deputy Project Director/Operations Lead and to stipulate that both the Project Director and Deputy Project Director/Operations Lead must commit at least 80% level of effort to DEEP VZN.

2. Is the Branding and Marketing plan required at the time of proposal?

The Branding Strategy and Marketing Plan is not required at time of application. Within 30 calendar days after award, the recipient shall submit a Branding Strategy and Marketing Plan. Upon the approval of the AO and AOR, the Branding Strategy and Marketing Plan shall be incorporated as Attachment D of the award document.

3. Do we need to include broken out budgets, risk assessments, and history of performance for partners that will receive less than 20% of the budget?

Detailed budgets for minor sub-partners (less than 20% of the budget) are not required.

4. Is Annex 3 Past Performance Information (PPI) (NOFO pg 76) the template we need to use for History of Past Performance (pg 53 of the NOFO)? If so what information do we need to provide? The information requested in each of these sections are different.

Section D.6.h) History of Performance outlines all of the information that the applicant must provide to USAID. Annex 3 is to be used as a cover sheet for each award referenced. Attached to the cover sheet should be reports and findings from any audits performed in the last three (3) years under that award, if available. If the applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, it may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. USAID reserves the right to obtain relevant information concerning an applicant's history of performance from any sources and may consider such information in its review of the applicant's risk. The Agency may request additional information and conduct a pre-award survey if it determines that it is necessary to inform the risk assessment.

5. Do we need to submit Federal Signal Audit documents and similar risk assessment documents for all major partners as part of the proposal package? If we do this could pose a problem as our Federal Signal Audit document is 12MB and it looks like you can only accept documents that are 10MB or smaller. If it needs to be included could we provide a hyperlink in the application to an online location where our audit document is housed instead of including the PDF?

[A hyperlink in the Budget Narrative is acceptable.](#)

6. The required illustrative, country-specific plans (pg 25) focus on Peru, Senegal and Vietnam but the program description focuses on Kenya, Thailand, Vietnam and Senegal (pg 20). Which counties should be the focus of this proposal?

[For the application process, the focus is Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam. However, since the list of countries for implementation has not been finalized, the successful applicant may have to implement DEEP VZN in some or all of these countries in addition to others. The text in the program description of the NOFO \(Section A.4\) has been updated to reflect this.](#)

7. Must the Program Director and Associate Director have full time (100% FTE) commitments to the program?

[The NOFO has been amended in Section D.5.g to remove “full time” as a requirement for both the Project Director and Deputy Project Director/Operations Lead and to stipulate that both the Project Director and Deputy Project Director/Operations Lead must commit at least 80% level of effort to DEEP VZN.](#)

8. The NOFO highlights that sampling should be for viruses of wildlife origin, but that the priority viruses (coronaviruses, filoviruses, and paramyxoviruses) can be detected in wildlife, livestock, domestic animals, or humans. Could USAID please confirm that sampling can include across the animal spectrum or does USAID prefer to see the main focus be on wildlife sampling?

[USAID confirms that sampling can include animals other than wildlife, as well as humans. However, applicants must justify why they are proposing specific populations for sampling and the proposed balance of sampling across the human and animal spectrum.](#)

9. On page 20 the NOFO states “initial focus countries for DEEP VZN includes Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, and Vietnam”, however, on pages 48 and 50 “Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam” are mentioned for the illustrative country plans and detailed budgets. Could USAID please clarify that in fact Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, and Vietnam (and not Peru) should have the illustrative country plans and detailed budgets?

[See answer to question 6 above.](#)

10. Would USAID allow the inclusion of novel methods of environmental sampling for novel viruses?

[Environmental sampling will be considered provided \(a\) Applicants can justify how these samples will directly feed into the process of viral detection and characterization and \(b\)](#)

that there is no protracted start-up period (e.g. pilot testing) for environmental sampling which then delays the start of viral detection and characterization.

11. Past Performance Information (PPI) is mentioned under Section E “Application Review Information” and the PPI template included in the annexes of the NOFO, however it is not clear if PPIs are required in either the Technical or Cost proposals. Could USAID please clarify if PPIs are required, and if so, where should the applicant include them, and if they are only required for the prime applicant?

PPI is required of the prime applicant and all major sub-partners (20% or more of total budget). PPI may be provided as a separate attachment, submitted with the Business (Cost) Application.

12. Would USAID consider extension of closing date, to allow applicants more time to dedicate on high quality responses to this global, complex project?

USAID is not able to extend the closing date of this NOFO.

13. Page 47 of the NOFO indicates that “the applicant must designate a full-time Project Director.” Does the PD have to commit full-time effort (100% effort) to this project or does the PD have to have a full-time status at the institution? If it’s the latter, is there a minimum commitment level required for the PD?

See answer to question 7 above.

14. In Section A.4 (page 20), USAID writes that the illustrative list of initial focus countries for DEEP VZN includes Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, and Vietnam. In Section D.5(h) (page 48), USAID asks applicants to submit country-specific plans for Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam. Could USAID please confirm (a) what the illustrative focus countries are and (b) which focus countries should be the subject of the illustrative country plans?

See answer to question 6 above.

15. In Section A.4 (Objective 4) (page 28), USAID writes that ‘in-country data systems will be used to avoid duplication’. USAID also writes that it does not expect DEEP VZN to ‘create a new data system for all of the data generated by the project’. How does USAID envision gaining a full picture of DEEP VZN work across countries?

The DEEP VZN implementing partner will need its own internal system to collect and track data across the participating countries for the purposes of monitoring project implementation. This data (and subsequent analyses) will be fed into existing data systems in the host countries, USAID, and global networks, where available, for permanent storage. The implementing partner for DEEP VZN will not be responsible for creating and maintaining a database to permanently house data after the project has ended. The NOFO has been amended in Section A.4 to clarify these expectations.

16. In Section A.4 Objective 4 (page 28 and Illustrative Activities on page 29), USAID refers to ‘proficiency testing and simulations’. Will USAID please clarify what is meant by proficiency testing and simulation exercises? Is there an expectation of regional workshops/working with dummy data? Is the expectation that local partners create and maintain risk models or that they understand and act upon them?

USAID was identifying illustrative activities for objective 4 by which the DEEP VZN laboratories could develop their capacities by participating in joint exercises or testing.

17. May Applicants use a 10-point font for textboxes Section D.3 (page 42)?

10 point font can be used for graphs, tables, and charts. In the event that a graph, chart, or figure cannot be edited or easily recreated, another legible font is acceptable.

18. In Section D.5(e)1.c (page 44), USAID refers to an annex (on decision making for sampling sites) that is not included in the list of annexes in section D.5(h) (page 48). Can USAID please confirm that that 2-page annex is required and allowed?

This 3-page annex is already included in Section D.5.h of the NOFO.

19. In Section D.5(e) (page 44), USAID writes that applicants should include an implementation timeline that illustrates the proposed timing and sequencing of global and country-level activities. Could USAID please clarify what focus countries should be included in the implementation timeline?

For the implementation timeline, use Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam. The NOFO has been amended in Section D.5.e.

20. Would USAID allow applicants to submit a list of academic references cited in the response as an annex that does not count against the page limit?

Per Section D.5.: “Annexes not specifically required in this NOFO will not be evaluated.”

21. In Section D.6(d) (page 50), USAID indicates that Applicants must submit ‘Detailed budgets for each of the 3 countries listed above (Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam) reflecting the proposed activities and officesizes, start and end dates’. Will USAID please clarify that these country budgets will be amended to reflect the final determination from the focus country question?

Country budgets should be provided for Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam.

22. In Section D.7(h) (page 54), USAID indicates that ‘applicants and major sub-recipients must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involve similar or related programs...’ Will USAID please provide guidance on the number of Past Performance Information (PPI) documents Applicants must submit?

Please submit up to three (3) PPI references.

23. In the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE Page 10), USAID indicates that this project will involve construction as defined by ADS 201 and 301. However, under Funding Restrictions (page 60), USAID states that construction will not be authorized under this award. Will USAID please clarify.

Although construction was initially considered, USAID has since made the determination that construction will not be authorized by DEEP VZN.

24. If a Subawardee proposes indirect costs but doesn’t currently have a NICRA, can a Subawardee’s DCAA/DCMA provisionally approved bidding and billing rate agreements

be utilized in place of a NICRA? If not, will USAID allow the Subawardee to register for a NICRA during the proposal phase and award if selected?

Please refer to [Section D.6.d\)7. for alternate methods to determine indirect rate](#). If the sub-partner does not wish to use these alternate methods, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. For additional information on indirect cost, please refer to Subpart E of 2 CFR 200.414.

25. In addition to the detailed budgets, will USAID please confirm that the summary budget should include budgeting for all 12 potential implementation countries? If so, what timeline assumptions should Applicants use for country-level budgeting?

Please see question 29.

26. For the budget justification, do we need break it out only for the three/ four counties listed in the NOFO, or for all of the countries we are proposing?

Please see question 29.

27. On page 20, the NOFO indicates that “for the purposes of the NOFO, an illustrative list of initial focus countries for DEEP VZN includes Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, and Vietnam.” On pages 48 (3rd bullet of section 5.h) and page 50 (4th bullet of section 6.d), only Peru, Senegal, and Vietnam are referenced. Can you please confirm for which countries illustrative plans and budgets should be submitted?

[See answer to question 6 above.](#)

28. Will illustrative plans and budgets for more than the three countries required also be considered if submitted as part of the proposal?

[The budgets for the three illustrative countries will be used as directed in revised Section D.6.d\).](#) Also see question 29.

29. How should applicants reflect anticipated country budgets for the remaining nine (9) countries if only budgeting out three (3) in detail?

[Based on the information in Section D.5\(e\):](#)

[For the purposes of the NOFO, applicants should assume they will have to work in up to 5 countries in Africa, up to 5 countries in Asia, and up to 2 countries in Central/South America.](#)

[Section D.6.d\) has been revised to include the following instructions:](#)

[Applicants are required to multiply the associated costs of detailed country-level budgets as directed below:](#)

- [1. Africa’s budget is based on Senegal:
 - \[a. Multiply country budget by 5\]\(#\)
 - \[b. Display an Africa budget summary on the Total Summary tab.\]\(#\)](#)
- [2. Asia’s budget is based on Vietnam:
 - \[a. Multiply country budget by 5\]\(#\)
 - \[b. Display an Asia budget summary on the Total Summary tab.\]\(#\)](#)
- [3. Central/South America’s budget is based on Peru:](#)

- a. Multiply country budget by 2
 - b. Display a Central/South America budget summary on the Total Summary tab.
4. Display a Home Office budget summary on the Total Summary tab.
5. Total Program Budget is calculated by adding Africa Budget + Asia Budget + Central/South America Budget + Home Office Budget.
30. For minor subrecipients (defined as those receiving less than 20% of the total estimated budget), is the expectation that only a lump sum line item will be included in the detailed budget for minor subawards? This seems to contradict 6.d.5 of the NOFO, which states that subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the applicant's budget. Please clarify the level of detail required for minor subaward budgets.
A detailed budget is not required for minor sub-partners.
31. How does USAID see the balance between testing of specimens for priority virus families (known unknowns) and the likely high diversity of other viruses (unknown-unknowns) discovered during the course of the project?
As stated in the program description of the NOFO (Section A.4), DEEP VZN will focus on discovery of known unknowns and not unknown unknowns.
32. Could USAID please clarify priority countries; page 20 lists the initial focus countries for DEEP VZN as Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, and Vietnam, while on page 1 of the initial environmental examination, the priority countries listed are Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia Uganda, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam.
See answer to question 6. The IEE reflects the priority countries initially considered. However, USAID has since made the determination that the initial focus countries for DEEP VZ will be Kenya, Senegal, Thailand, and Vietnam
33. The NOFO mentions three regions of priority, would USAID consider a proposal including Caribbean countries?
No.
34. In support of objective 3 (characterization), would USAID view it as OK to send a limited number of high-priority viruses out-of-country for analysis at BL4 lab? Would USAID view it as OK to support two regional labs with focus on in vitro viral characterization? Or does USAID prefer to avoid in vitro characterization of viruses?
As stated in the NOFO (Section A.4), characterization of a limited-number of high-priority viruses at external BL4 labs is acceptable and in vitro characterization is okay assuming appropriate biosafety measures and certifications are in place.
35. What are USAID expectations or guidance in regard to infrastructure purchases or expenditures such as next-generation sequencing systems in support of establishing in-country sequencing capacity (where existing infrastructure might be limited)?
It is up to each Applicant to propose what they think is the best approach to strengthening sequencing capacity as part of the technical approach.
36. What is the expectation for wildlife species identification (e.g., barcoding)?

For animals sampled, the DEEP VZN implementing partner must identify genus (at a minimum) and species (whenever possible). The NOFO has been amended in Section A.4.

37. Should human behavioral surveys be included in the sampling plan?

While it is anticipated that DEEP VZN will physically characterize the sampling sites to provide valuable metadata (which may include observed behaviors and practices) associated with the samples collected, additional behavioral surveys will not be part of this characterization process. The NOFO has been amended in Section A.4.

38. Given the current pandemic, has USAID revised travel protocols; can major consortium meetings be held virtually thus reducing travel costs and planning?

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID implementing partners have been conducting virtual discussions with consortium members and host-country partners including USAID missions and host governments. This option is available to the DEEP VZN implementing partner.

39. Can a sub awardee under the prime issue their own subaward or a service contract? If so, what documentation is needed from those sub awardees?

USAID does not require any documentation for second tier sub-partners (defined as a sub of a sub of a prime).

40. Please clarify cost sharing requirements. Is this a suggested 5% cost sharing over and above the total requested budget, or only of the direct costs?

This is typically a percent of the total USAID portion including direct and indirect.

41. Effort: Are Project Director and Deputy Project Director/Operational Lead expected to commit 100% effort on this project?

See answer to question 1 above.

- a. If so, what is the expectation with their current effort on sponsored awards and University/non-sponsored activities?

- b. Is there a minimum effort requirement for the scientific Co-PI?

“Scientific Co-PI” is not listed in the NOFO as a mandatory key staff position.

42. Please what information should be provided for Peru, Senegal and Vietnam particularly in the Cost Proposal.

Please refer to Section D.6.d) for specific information required in the Budget and Budget Narrative.

43. Please consider extending the deadline by 2 weeks.

Please see question 12.