

FY2016 Business Forecast Quarter 4 Review Conference Call
Thursday, August 4th, 2016
9:30AM-10:00AM

Background

USAID's Business Forecast is published each quarter throughout the fiscal year. The Agency's Business Forecast is an informational resource on potential funding and partnership opportunities at USAID. It is an advanced look at grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements that USAID is in the process of developing and plans to issue in the coming year. Two separate Forecasts are developed each quarter – one for USAID Missions overseas and one for USAID in Washington, DC. Organizations interested in working with USAID can use this tool to plan for proposal or application submissions.

USAID Participants

1. Roy Plucknett, USAID M/OAA Senior Procurement Executive
2. Mark Walther, USAID M/OAA Deputy Director of Washington Operations
3. Mandy Dagold, USAID M/OAA Foreign Service Officer
4. Kimberly Ball, USAID Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) Deputy Director
5. Rachel Chilton, USAID M/OAA Communications Specialist

Agenda

- Ms. Chilton kicks off call, introduces individuals in the room, and provides instructions for the call.
- Mr. Plucknett provides introductory remarks.
- Ms. Chilton begins asking USAID participants questions submitted for the call.
- Conclusion of the call.

Conference Call Transcript

Ms. Chilton remarks:

Good morning everyone and thank you joining us today for USAID's FY16 Quarter 4 Business Forecast Review call. My name is Rachel Chilton and I am a Communications Specialist for the Office of Acquisition and Assistance.

Before we get started, I want to provide a few quick reminders for the call. We will be recording the call and posting it on our Business Forecast website shortly after the call is complete. We will send a notice to everyone through our email list and post on Twitter. We will be muting everyone during the call, but we ask that you please not put us on hold.

We are excited to be here and we have over 300 people who have RSVPed for the call this morning. In total, we received approximately 230 questions. We appreciate your continued interest in sending us questions each quarter. For today's call, similar to what we did last quarter, rather than going through all 230 questions, we will highlight a few of the general questions that we received.

Later today, we will be posting all of the questions and answers on our Business Forecast webpage. We will notify you through our A&A email distribution list and twitter handle @USAIDBizOpps once it has been posted.

Thank you once again everyone for joining us today. We have a few folks in the room with us at USAID who will be answering your questions. I'd like to briefly allow everyone in the room to introduce themselves.

Great -- I would now like to now turn it over to Roy to give a few remarks brief remarks.

- **Mr. Plucknett provides introductory remarks.**

Mr. Plucknett Remarks:

Good morning. Welcome to our FY 2016, 4th quarter Business Forecast call. Thank you so much for joining us this morning and thank you for your continued interest in working with USAID. As our partners, you play a critical role in helping us to achieve our mission of ending extreme poverty and promoting resilient, democratic societies. I know that the Business Forecast is an important part of our partnership together. We are committed to continuing to improve the Forecast.

For the second quarter in a row, we have utilized our new timeline for updating all of our Acquisition and Assistance Plan data to turnaround and publish the Business Forecast within an 8 day window. This process used to take us up to 8 weeks -- and we plan to continue with this tighter schedule in the future. Our office wants to ensure the Business Forecast is released around the same time each quarter. You can begin to expect the data for the Forecast to be pulled by the end of the first month of each quarter. This means that you should see the Forecast published in late October, January, April, and July.

We will continue to raise awareness around the importance of the Business Forecast among all USAID staff around the world. Just yesterday I had the opportunity to address incoming Mission and Deputy Mission Directors about my office priorities, which included this resource.

Once again, I want to thank you for joining us today and for submitting your questions. We appreciate your feedback and are happy to continue this dialogue.

- **Ms. Chilton begins asking questions submitted for the call.**

1. QUESTION FOR MR. PLUCKNETT:

Trends in the Business Forecast: It appears that the trend within USAID is to utilize more and more contracts and task orders and less cooperative agreements and grants. In looking at the current Q4 Forecast, there are well over twice as many contracts and task orders as cooperative agreements and grants. Does USAID have a preference for contracts and will this trend continue?

USAID Response: USAID has no preference for contracts versus assistance awards. USAID's selection of the appropriate instrument type is based on analysis as outlined in ADS 304. Trends from [M/OAA's FY 2015 Progress Report](#) show an approximate 70%/30% split between assistance versus acquisitions over the past three fiscal years.

2. QUESTION FOR MS. DAGOLD:

Opportunities Missing from the Forecast: A number of opportunities we were following were dropped from the Q4 Forecast. In some cases we assume they ended up coming out as Task Orders and for others we're not sure what the reason was for being dropped. We kindly request that, if an opportunity is dropped from the Forecast, instead of just removing the entry, could USAID please indicate that it is intentionally being dropped and the rationale for it?

USAID Response: We encourage USAID A&A Plan users to list a cancelled status in the last column ("Business Forecast Status Change") on the Business Forecast for the following quarter before an action is removed from future forecasts. We will be sure to include a reminder to AOs/COs in our next call for updates on the next Business Forecast.

3. QUESTION FOR MR. WALTHER:

Use of Leader with Association Awards: In the current Business Forecast, there appears to be a heavy reliance on IQCs/IDIQs, yet not a single LWA. Is USAID no longer using the LWA mechanism? If so, then what is the rationale for continuing to use IQCs/IDIQs?

USAID Response: USAID continues to use both LWAs and IDIQs, but they are different mechanisms related to acquisition and assistance. Historically, IDIQs have been more numerous than LWAs. IDIQs allow missions/operating units to order a range of discrete services within the scope of the contract awards. In IDIQs, limited funds are needed to execute the base awards. LWAs allow missions/operating units the ability to replicate the Leader program in whole or in part within the program description of the assistance award. In LWAs, there needs to be a funded Leader program being supported.

4. QUESTION FOR MS. BALL:

Small Business: Looking at the USAID business forecast, is there any chance that USAID will begin to set aside for Woman Owned or Economically Disadvantaged Woman Owned Small Businesses? The forecast does not show any ED/WOSB set asides and as of July 5th USAID was only showing 2.44% of contracts awarded to WOSB firms, half of the federal goal of 5%.

USAID Response: Let me begin by saying that USAID has a strong track record related to the WOSB goal achievement. We struggled a bit in FY2015 with 3.67% achievement. But in 2013 and 2014, we accomplished 5.02% and 6.42% respectively.

Procurements are posted on USAID Business Forecast prior to conducting official market research. If the results of the market research (Sources Sought Notification, Request for Information, or other form of market research) indicate a procurement may be set aside for a Woman-Owned small business (WOSB), the Contracting Officer (CO) may do so. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization conduct Small Business Program training for the Agency's acquisition and technical staff in Washington and at the Missions. USAID COs are aware that they may sole source or set aside an award for WOSBs. As we approach September 30th, the Agency's WOSB accomplishments may fluctuate as contract awards are issued. Please also be reminded that if you see something that you believe should be set aside for WOSB, you may reach out to the contracting officer and the OSDBU office. There must be at least two qualified, capable WOSBs for us to consider setting a requirement aside.

5. QUESTION FOR MR. WALTHER:

Use of Task Orders: Many of the opportunities listed in the Q4 forecast are listed as task order/delivery orders (TO/DO) under different IDIQs. Two questions:

- a. For those entries where the award/action type is listed as a TO/DO, can USAID please provide the instrument under which the TO/DO will be issued?
- b. USAID procures services under many different IDIQs. However, it is not always easy to find who the holders of those IDIQs are. Previously, USAID had put information about IDIQ holders and their subcontractors on the USAID website. In an effort to improve transparency and communication with industry, can

USAID please put key information about IDIQs – including the holders of those IDIQs and their subcontractors – on the website or some other publicly available location?

USAID Response: USAID has begun adding the mechanism by which a task order will be issued. In addition, the Agency has reinstated its process of posting a list of active IDIQ holders. The list will be updated on a quarterly basis. You can access it on our website under our “Resources for Partners → USAID Partners” page: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/resources-for-partners/usa-id-partners>

6. QUESTION FOR MR. PLUCKNETT:

Dollar Ranges on the Business Forecast: In the Q&A to previous forecasts, USAID had committed to reviewing whether the agency could come up with narrower ranges in order to give prospective partners more specific guidance regarding the specific size of awards. Could USAID update us on the status of that effort?

USAID Response: As we have mentioned previously, USAID is open to narrowing the dollar values. We had asked for partners to provide input on better dollar ranges, however, to date we have not received any feedback or input. If you have ideas, please let us know and we will take your suggestions into consideration.

7. QUESTION FOR MS. DAGOLD:

Missing Missions from the Business Forecast: Burma does not appear on the current Mission Forecast. Does the Mission have any upcoming opportunities?

USAID Response: For the 4th quarter of this FY, the Mission does not have any new competitive actions. The Forecast will be updated in FY17 to reflect all actions.

8. QUESTION FOR MR. WALTHER:

Tracking USAID Awards: We commend USAID in its continuous improvements to the Business Forecast. It is immensely helpful to have this information regarding the Agency’s procurement pipeline. However, once a solicitation is released, it is difficult to access information on awards and ongoing projects. USAID used to have a publicly accessible list of all its projects, called the Yellow Book. The Yellow Book only contained very basic information (project name and number, country, dates of implementation, budget total, and name of implementing partner) but it was an indispensable resource. Does anything like that currently exist and, if not, would USAID consider making publicly available a master list of ongoing and completed projects much like it does for procurement opportunities?

USAID Response: Please review Foreignassistance.gov and USAspending.gov--we believe these two websites captures similar data that use to be part of the Yellow Book. Data can be downloaded and sorted.

9. QUESTION FOR MS. DAGOLD:

Communication with Missions: During prior forecasts and Ask the Procurement Executive sessions, OAA announced that all missions would establish email addresses for questions on planned procurements. Could USAID please update partners on the status of that effort?

USAID Response: USAID is still in the process of communicating and implementing the idea of Mission email boxes for partners to submit questions. Once we have been able to get all of our Missions to set-up the email box, we will publish the contact information on our Business Forecast webpage for you to use.

10. QUESTION FOR MR. PLUCKNETT:

Recently, several RFPs have been announced where the fee was required to be fully based on deliverables under completion-type contracts (e.g. Malawi*). No base fee was allowed. Given that fee also covers expenses that cannot be covered by indirects, such as but not limited to the cost of money (interest), this practice does not reflect an understanding of the business requirements for operating in this environment where a contractor is supplying the funds to cover costs well before they are billed and paid. We note that non-profits have a different financial structure so this procedure unfairly advantages them. Is it possible to modify these kinds of incentive programs to allow at least a base fee to be paid so that contractors can cover essential business expenses not covered by indirect rates?

USAID Response: Any questions regarding the proposed fee structure in a specific solicitation should be raised to the Contracting Officer before a solicitation closes, especially if the proposed structure may unfairly advantage one type of offeror over another. The CO can then examine the issue and determine if an amendment is possible or necessary to maximize partner participation and ensure adequate competition.