Issue Date: July 6, 2017
Deadline for Questions/Clarifications: July 14, 2017, 11:59 PM EDT
Closing Date: August 9, 2017
Closing Time: 11:59 AM EDT
CFDA Number: 98.005

Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) Number: RFA-FFP-17-000005

Program Title: Implementer–led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL)

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), Office of Food for Peace (FFP) is seeking applications from qualified institutions to fund a program entitled Implementer-led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) through the award of one Leader with Associates (LWA) Cooperative Agreement (also referred to herein as "Leader Award.") See Section C of this RFA for eligibility requirements.

Subject to the availability of funds, the award of one "Leader Award" will be made to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meets the objectives of this RFA and the selection criteria contained herein. While one award is anticipated as a result of this RFA, USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Funding details are provided in Section B of the RFA.

Eligible organizations interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this RFA thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and evaluation process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this RFA and meet eligibility standards in Section C. This RFA is posted on www.grants.gov, and may be amended. Potential applicants should regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this RFA. Applicants will need to have available or download the Adobe program to their computers in order to view and save Adobe forms properly. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the RFA has been received from the internet in its entirety and USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from the transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the RFA,

please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

The successful Applicant will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives. Please read each section of the RFA.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in section D. The deadline for questions is shown above.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Matthew Nims
Acting Director, Office of Food for Peace
Agreement Officer, Title II Food for Peace Act

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ABREVIATIONS AND ACCROYNMS USED IN THIS RFA

AO	Agreement Officer
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
BS/MP	Branding Strategy and Marking Plan
DCHA	Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
DUNS	Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System
EDT	Eastern Daylight Time
FACG	Food Aid Consultative Group
FFP	Office of Food for Peace
FFP Act	Food for Peace Act
FFPIB	Food for Peace Information Bulletin
FSN Network	Food Security and Nutrition Network
ICB	Institutional Capacity Building
IDEAL	Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning
IR	Intermediate Result
LWA	Leader with Associates
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
POC	Point of Contact
PIO	Public International Organization
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
R&I	Refine and Implement
RF	Results Framework
RFA	Request for Applications
SAM	System for Award Management
SO	Strategic Objective
TOC	Theory of Change
TOPS	Technical and Operational Performance Support Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
U.S.	United States
WFP	World Food Program

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SECTION A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. Authorizing Legislation

The authority for this RFA is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, including Section 103 which authorizes development assistance for agricultural, rural development and nutrition, and Section 491 which authorizes international disaster assistance to meet emergency food needs, as well as Title II of the Food for Peace Act (FFP Act), which authorizes the provision of agricultural commodities to meet emergency and nonemergency food needs, including by funding eligible organizations to assist in establishing and enhancing programs, and improving and implementing methodologies for food aid programs.

2. Award Administration

Awards will be made and administered in accordance with the FFP Act, the Foreign Assistance Act, as applicable, and USG regulations. As applicable, the award will be administered under 22 CFR 211, 22 CFR 216, 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 700, USAID Standard Provisions, and FFP Information Bulletins which are available on the USAID website. Notwithstanding the foregoing, because intergovernmental organizations are subject to different requirements, USAID reserves the right to make awards to such organizations on different terms and conditions than those made to private voluntary organizations and cooperatives.

3. FFP Background

a. FFP History

Established by the Agricultural Trade and Development Assistance Act in 1954, and situated in USAID's DCHA Bureau, FFP is the United States (U.S.) Government's primary food assistance program, and has been combating hunger and malnutrition among vulnerable groups around the world for more than 60 years. Congress authorizes the majority of FFP resources through the FFP Act. Since 2010, FFP has received additional funding flexibility through the Congressional authorization of cash resources for local and regional procurement of in-kind commodities, cash transfers or vouchers for food, as well as complementary programming addressing the drivers of food insecurity. Between 2010 and 2015, FFP programs reached an average 52 million people in 50 countries per year.

b. FFP Emergency and Development Activities

FFP works to reduce hunger and malnutrition and assure that adequate, safe and nutritious food is available, accessible to, and well-utilized by all individuals at all times to support a healthy and productive life.

FFP programs approximately $2 billion annually to meet both chronic and acute food needs in vulnerable populations. FFP is unique in working in both emergency and non-emergency contexts to improve food security and nutrition. Emergency and recovery programs comprise

80 percent of total spending, and the remainder supports broad-based resilience-focused development programs assisting chronically food insecure populations.

Through short-term emergency activities, FFP provides food assistance to save lives, reduce suffering, and support the early recovery of populations affected by both acute and chronic emergencies. FFP responds to crises where the food supply is severely disrupted and populations lack access to sufficient food through normally available means (e.g., production, barter, purchase in markets, etc.) Such crises may involve drought, floods, earthquakes, and/or civil conflict. In addition to resource transfers to help populations meet immediate food needs, FFP emergency programs may be accompanied by complementary programming that has a direct impact on food security and nutrition outcomes.

Through longer-term development food security activities, FFP works to reduce hunger and extreme poverty in vulnerable populations by addressing the underlying causes of chronic food insecurity. This includes a focus on improving food access and incomes through agriculture and other livelihoods initiatives; enhancing natural resource and environmental management; combating under-nutrition, especially for children under two and pregnant and lactating women; and mitigating disaster impact through early warning and community preparedness activities. Development activities are intended to strengthen resilience in populations vulnerable to chronic hunger and recurrent shocks, stresses and crises, and to reduce future need for ongoing or emergency food assistance. These activities are increasingly integrated with other USAID efforts to promote resilience and reduce extreme poverty.

FFP's development food security activities contain two unique features that strive to increase the 'fit to context' of all programmatic interventions:

- Each applicant is asked to develop a comprehensive theory of change for the proposed project and to update as needed throughout implementation. The theory of change is expected to describe the hypothesized series of changes that are expected to occur in a given context as the result of specific interventions and to make explicit how outputs from the proposed interventions are anticipated to interact with other concurrent interventions and contextual conditions to stimulate or enable a series of outcomes that will ultimately lead to the achievement of desired objective(s).
- FFP has been piloting a new approach known as Refine and Implement (R&I) in its development food security awards. R&I includes two stages: (1) a refinement period during the first year in which successful applicants (i.e., new awardees) will carry out pre-implementation studies, strengthen local partnership, undertake the preparation for implementation (e.g., hiring, training, procurements, etc.), and refine the activity theory of change, followed by (2) the implementation of programmatic interventions beginning at the onset of the second year. This pilot will allow highly successful activities to be extended and continue for up to five years past the traditional five-year development food security activity timeframe.

c. FFP Strategic Priorities
In FY 2017, FFP launched a new Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy 2016-2025 which lays out new priorities for the future around sustainability, systems approaches, and a new set

of cross cutting issues addressing gender equity and youth empowerment, social cohesion and social accountability. The Strategy serves as a broad framework for the capacities and capabilities of FFP and its implementing partners. See Annex 1.

The FFP Strategy also contributes to USAID's mission statement, DCHA Bureau's Strategic Objectives, and a number of critical Agency policies and strategies, including the USG [Global Food Security Strategy, 2017-2021](#) and the [USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025.](#) See Annex 1.

4. Purpose and Scope of IDEAL

a. Intended Purpose

IDEAL is intended to improve the food security and nutrition of vulnerable populations through improving the design, implementation and overall effectiveness of development and emergency food security activities funded by FFP. This quality improvement effort is intended to address knowledge and capacity gaps in the food security and nutrition implementing community, and support the application of evidence and learning through knowledge sharing and peer learning efforts, capacity strengthening, stakeholder consultation, a grants component to support new knowledge and innovation, and a specialized focus on the generation and use of evidence and learning. IDEAL will seek to understand and meet the knowledge needs of implementing partner organizations throughout the program cycle through participatory approaches rather than top-down donor directives.

In a time of unprecedented food security and nutrition needs, the demands on limited resources are growing and with them, the responsibility to use those resources as effectively as possible. FFP believes that this collaborative learning mechanism will be fundamental to effective and accountable resource management, creating strong knowledge systems working across geographical and organizational boundaries, to improve understanding of what is working and what is not, while elevating critical findings, whether from experience or rigorous evidence, as part of a critical feedback cycle for improved design and implementation. The mechanism will work to improve linkages that enable collaborative, coordinated and efficient action around common goals. As a voice to the entire food security and nutrition implementing community, the mechanism will facilitate standard-setting and strengthen the capacity of the community as a whole, particularly around essential elements of quality programming, such as strengthening resilience capacities, improving targeting and context-specific responses, and striving for more sustainable change.

With the launch of the new FFP 2016-2025 Strategy (see Annex 1), this award will create an opportunity for current and prospective implementing partners to better align themselves with FFP's strategic priorities around improving the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable individuals and households while fostering transformative, systemic and sustainable change in communities and institutions. This mechanism will create an opportunity for partners to take ownership of the operational realities these new strategic priorities will bring, along with a forum to identify for themselves those sectors and intervention areas where additional capacity strengthening or implementation-level guidance is required. FFP envisions the IDEAL mechanism to be a catalyst

and facilitator for a community of practice of food security and nutrition stakeholders engaged in reflection, learning and knowledge application to improve the quality and effectiveness of activity implementation within this new framework.

b. Anticipated Program Pathways

Lessons learned from a long history of FFP support to implementer-focused collaborative learning (see Annex 2), as well as a robust consultation process over the course of the IDEAL activity design[1] has highlighted broad consensus amongst stakeholders over successful past and valuable new approaches to improve knowledge, capacity and practice for improved food security and nutrition activity implementation:

A broad and inclusive community of practice should continue to serve as a successful public face and overall umbrella under which stakeholders can work collaboratively, inclusively, and across organizational boundaries to identify and apply promising practices, and emerging research and knowledge, as well as to address implementation obstacles and capacity gaps. This community of practice should exist not only as a digital presence able to engage participants across geographic divides, but also, importantly, as a mechanism for facilitating in-person interaction, to deepen the level of meaningful dialogue, exchange and collaborative problem solving and innovation. The community of practice should build on the knowledge assets, materials, processes and audiences built up through seven years of FFP investment in the Technical and Operational Performance Support Program (TOPS) and the community of practice TOPS established, the Food Security and Nutrition Network (FSN Network). IDEAL should work with these assets, making adaptations, improvements and adjustments as appropriate.

Stakeholder input has pointed to the need to move beyond the current FSN Network's primary focus on implementation in development settings to also more substantively address emergency-focused actors, issues and capacities. This will help to bring IDEAL more in line with the allocation of FFP resources at the implementation level. There is also a need to extend the reach of the community of practice regionally and within priority countries,[2] to be able to harness and strengthen the knowledge and capacity of local implementing partners and other stakeholders, and to better capture and apply field-level learning and encourage cross-organizational collaboration throughout the program cycle. Finally, there may be an opportunity to identify new ways to engage with public international organizations (PIOs) such as the World Food Program (WFP), other USAID Offices, Centers or Bureaus, or academic research partners both as participants and as suppliers of important content.

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[1] In planning for this procurement, FFP engaged in a number of internal and external consultation efforts to build upon the findings of the TOPS midterm evaluation. These included in-person consultation meetings for 1) FFP staff, 2) for participants in a quarterly Food Aid Consultative Group (FACG) meeting, and 3) for members of the TOPS Program Advisory Committee (an open-membership steering committee of representatives of the FFP implementing and support communities). FFP also conducted a number of global online surveys sent out broadly to both internal and external stakeholders.

[2] Priority countries are loosely defined as those countries where FFP is currently operating with development food security activities and/or large-scale or long-term emergency food security activities, or other countries prioritized through dialogue with FFP over the course of IDEAL implementation.

Key program pathways under this community of practice should include, at a minimum:

- **Technical capacity strengthening**: This includes building on the strong foundation TOPS established around traditional in-person training in core technical areas, moving beyond direct delivery of individual training courses to, instead, create and strengthen more self-sustaining systems of knowledge uptake and application within the implementer community. This will help ensure skills around technical, strategic and management approaches are not simply passed on to individual cohorts of training participants, but also applied and rolled out throughout organizations, within consortia and to local partners. This should include a focused and vigorous look at current and best practice around transfer of technical training and tools onward into the workplace, while promising approaches might include a stronger focus on training of trainer approaches, on development of user-friendly and widely available training materials and tools designed for adoption and use by other stakeholders, and identification of and increasing access to relevant high quality tools and trainings developed by other local, regional and international networks and institutions. More sustainable technical capacity strengthening could also be accomplished through improving partner skills in innovative and high quality approaches to capacity strengthening, to enable those partners to take on greater responsibility at the organizational level to strengthen their own capacity in core focus areas. New approaches may also involve piloting and building skills around a broader and more diverse set of capacity strengthening methods, including virtual office hours, mentoring, structured site visits or direct technical assistance made available on an equitable basis to current FFP development or emergency food security activity Awardees.

- **Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and collaboration:** Creating dynamic, cross-organizational feedback loops on what is working and what is not in food security program implementation remains a fundamental role for the community of practice. The exchange of information, knowledge and solutions by and for implementing partners across geographic areas, organizations, sectors, and programmatic functions serves as a multiplier effect for program adaptation and improvements and the roll-out of relevant program learning on a global basis. Web and digital platforms should build on the fsnnetwork.org website established under TOPS as well as other capacities, and adapt these for the future as appropriate. The web presence should be solidly anchored by dialogue-focused and participatory in-person events that can provide food security stakeholders the chance to share implementation-focused experiential learning, adapt and apply promising practices, and understand the implications of new evidence in local contexts. Such peer-to-peer efforts should also strive to encourage collaboration and coordination of efforts at the field level where possible. These events may take different forms at different stages of the program cycle, but should reach implementers not only in Washington, DC but also in the field where work is being carried out. Under IDEAL, there are opportunities to further expand the reach of knowledge sharing and collaboration efforts, with key stakeholder groups such as emergency-focused implementing partner staff, academic researchers, regional networks, and international organizations playing larger roles as participants and as subject matter experts.

- **Small grants program:** Offering current and potential FFP partner organizations access to resources to support the design, testing and sharing of promising practices, tools, guidance and skill building puts an opportunity for problem solving and innovation into the hands of those on the front lines, experiencing implementation challenges and witnessing the emergence of promising new approaches. The successful work of the TOPS small grants program should be enhanced through deliberately linking the grants program to relevant focus areas such as FFP's new strategic priorities, the emerging FFP learning agenda,[3] or needs identified and prioritized through inclusive consultations within the community of practice. A promising area of potential growth may also be in using the grants program as a deliberate mechanism for increased partnership between implementers and researchers, to strengthen respective capacities around implementation-level field pilots and operations research.

- **Stakeholder consultations:** Enabling the implementing partner community to engage with and provide direct feedback to FFP around key issues that impact the achievement of results, provides an opportunity to bring to light implementation experience, operational needs, unintended consequences, and areas where adaptations could reduce roadblocks or create new opportunities. Consultations may look at the operationalization of new strategic and programmatic focus areas, the application of emerging evidence and learning, and updates to FFP guidance and policy; they may also provide a platform for stocktaking over past efforts to gain important implementer feedback on where policy, guidance or technical approaches could be improved for smoother implementation, stronger results and fewer unintended consequences.

c. Anticipated Focus Areas

Under the FFP Strategy 2016-2025, FFP's work remains founded on the core concept that food and nutrition security is an outcome of adequate and stable food availability, access and utilization. As such, **key sectors** such as agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, WASH, natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, infrastructure and other traditional domains of FFP programming remain as important as ever. Similarly, while flexibility to use cash resources has increased since 2010 and has allowed FFP a fuller range of programmatic response options, in-kind commodities are still a critical resource at FFP's disposal; management of those commodities remains an essential underlying capacity for successful food assistance program delivery. FFP made significant investments, through TOPS, over a seven-year period, in strengthening implementer capacity in many of these core areas, and it is expected that in those areas, the implementing partner community is well equipped to take ownership of their own direct capacity strengthening. However, there is still an opportunity for IDEAL to build on the capacity strengthening momentum – and materials - developed under TOPS, while also continuing to engage participants and subject matter experts in other program pathways to keep dialogue and learning in these key sectors alive.

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[3] The FFP learning agenda is designed to be a broad framework identifying priority questions and key lines of inquiry the answers to which will help FFP and the broader food security community to strengthen programmatic approaches. A consultative process in FY17 is expected to result in guidance available to FFP stakeholders in early FY18.

Stakeholder consultations in the design of this mechanism pointed overwhelmingly to the need for strengthened capacity and improved practices for the **generation, analysis, sharing and application of knowledge and data**. IDEAL is intended to create opportunities across organizational boundaries for more dynamic systems of evidence and learning which will result in improved design and implementation. This might include efforts to increase capacity in core skill areas in data collection, including third party monitoring, post distribution monitoring, and harmonization of indicators across activities in emergency settings; or assessing institutional capacity, working with sustainability benchmarks or measuring incremental but important systems level change. IDEAL should also explore best practice and capacity strengthening in formative research and context assessment, as well as operations research and post-project evaluation.

Within the food security and nutrition stakeholder community, gaps remain in both capacity and practice around data analysis and sharing of the knowledge generated in ways that ensure that the implications of survey, assessment and research findings can be understood, discussed and adaptations considered and applied, as appropriate, within and across activities and within and across organizations.

Resilience has been an increasingly important concept in FFP programs since the 2006 FFP Strategy outlined the importance of addressing risk and vulnerability across multiple domains to reduce food insecurity. As the resilience concept has gained prominence at USAID and internationally, FFP's work has been foundational in operationalizing context-specific, multi-sectoral development programs that strengthen resilience through integrating, layering and sequencing interventions to reduce vulnerability and strengthen absorptive and adaptive capacities, while accelerating growth and transformative change. Increasingly, resilience has become a core concept in emergency interventions, as a process driving individual, household and, where possible, systems-level change that reduces vulnerability and enables development footholds that may lead to longer-term, more sustainable change. Improving the depth and quality of resilience programming will require improvements in underlying capacities such as context analysis, capacity assessment, resilience measurement, and collaborative design, implementation and learning.

FFP has long been striving to understand and articulate best and promising practices around improving the **sustainability** of impacts achieved through development food security activities. With the completion of the FFP-funded and Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance-managed Exit Strategies work, there is a wealth of both generalizable and context-specific lessons and recommendations that can be applied and tested in program implementation. The conceptual framework for sustainability developed through this work, identifying the importance of sustained resources, motivation, capacity and, sometimes, linkages, provides a new lens through which local systems can be better understood, and strengthened program planning, analysis and measurement can be applied. As FFP works to better understand the incremental changes that lead to sustainability through strengthened systems, improved dialogue and collaborative learning within the implementing partner community on how best to incentivize, measure and reward such change is essential. Implementing partners are a rich source of peer learning around the best approaches to enable sustained impacts, depending on context, while there are

opportunities to integrate the latest thinking in systems strengthening to implementation-focused design, theories of change, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Social and behavior change (SBC) remains an enduring challenge in FFP programs in both emergency and development contexts. Despite well intended efforts, SBC programming has achieved limited success in driving sustained change. Many SBC approaches in FFP focus on improving individual knowledge with limited attention to broader contextual factors that influence change and its eventual impact on improved food security, including cultural norms, gender dynamics and broader societal change. With a new focus on systems and sustainability, there is a need for SBC approaches that leverage existing community resources and networks, and move beyond "messaging" to catalyze lasting change.

The FFP 2016-2025 Strategy particularly highlights the need for continued focus on **gender equity** and how this can be better operationalized in the context of food security and nutrition implementation. The Strategy also calls for a new focus on empowering youth, increasing social cohesion, and strengthening social accountability, approaches that have the potential to mitigate or prevent conflict, reduce fragility, and address root issues impeding the achievement of food security. Each of these focus areas require new thinking and each pose specific challenges in terms of assessment and analysis, integration into theories of change, and measurement of impact.

The Strategy also calls for increased attention on other core approaches, including cross-organizational and cross-team design, implementation and learning, working with a theory of change and adaptive management.

d. Guiding Principles

Participatory and implementer-led approaches
While the ultimate goal of this activity is improved food security and nutrition for vulnerable populations, the direct beneficiary of this assistance mechanism is the broad community of current and potential FFP implementing partners. It is anticipated that to best serve the needs of this broad community, IDEAL will work through participatory and stakeholder-guided processes to determine needs, respond to demand, and prioritize action that will improve the quality of development and emergency food security activity design and implementation.

Adaptive management
FFP emergency and development food security activities are designed and implemented against a backdrop of emerging evidence, ongoing program learning, and often-changing international, national and local contexts. This calls for an adaptive management system for IDEAL that will allow for changes in emphasis over time, whether in terms of staffing and capacity needs, the mix of interventions, priority sectors or approaches, and/or geographic focus to better meet emerging stakeholder needs and capitalize on new approaches and new opportunities.

Focus on networking and complementarities
To enable a strong, sustainable and far-reaching community of practice, it is important to recognize, leverage and promote the role, value and knowledge assets of other networks and

communities of practice, particularly across the many sectoral, analytical and management focus areas relevant to FFP emergency and development programming. Helping to raise awareness of and improve access to a diverse set of knowledge and networking resources beyond IDEAL can bring robust and cost-effective returns in terms of synergies around institutional capacity strengthening and program improvements.

Sustained impacts
FFP's commitment to fostering more sustained results applies not only to field implementation but to the IDEAL activity as well. From the launch of IDEAL, throughout implementation, strategies should be developed and updated to ensure that dedicated sources of sustained resources, capacities, motivation and linkages will be developed, where appropriate, independent of FFP funding, so that program pathways for sustained implementation quality will be maintained, where possible, without additional donor resources after the end of the award.

e. Key stakeholders

There are several key stakeholder groups who are vital for the success of IDEAL. The nature and level of engagement with each will vary.

FFP: As the funder of IDEAL, FFP will oversee and manage IDEAL administratively, technically and financially. FFP will provide input on relevant food security focus areas, capacity strengthening topics, emerging needs, and possible consultation topics that are of global interest or that will contribute to its critical functions of global leadership, research and evaluation, and technical support to the field. FFP will also review and critique products and services developed by IDEAL, and participate in the selection and approval of sub-grants.

External experts and advisors: It is expected that IDEAL will engage and routinely consult with international and national organizations that are recognized leaders in food assistance and food security. This might include representatives of FFP implementing partner organizations, academic researchers, policymakers and relevant offices and Bureaus in USAID including the Center for Resilience, the Bureau for Food Security, the Nutrition Division in the Bureau for Global Health, as well as offices in the DCHA Bureau, such as the Office of U.S. global Assistance, the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, or the Center of Excellence for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance. This might also include representatives from relevant PIOs such as WFP or UNICEF, or from other U.S. Government Agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These specialists across a wide range of technical and analytical areas can serve as subject matter experts for knowledge sharing or capacity strengthening efforts, as well as serving as advisors on emerging program priorities for IDEAL.

Participants in the community of practice: IDEAL will develop products and services for audiences whose actions affect the quantity, quality and range of FFP emergency and development food security activities. This includes program development and technical specialists from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and from relevant implementation-focused PIOs, as well as representatives from academic and research organizations and private sector actors working in the food assistance and food security sphere. Finding ways to engage and sustain engagement with local actors is key. Levels of participation will vary across roles,

geography, level of expertise and time availability. Program pathways and focus content should accommodate a broad range of interests, expertise, and engagement.

Collaborating partners: A wide range of existing networks, communities of practice and donor funded collaboration and/or knowledge management mechanisms exist in areas relevant to food security and nutrition program implementation. Whether at the global level, funded through USAID, or taking the form of food security or nutrition working groups at the national or regional level, these should be thought of as collaborators and opportunities for joint action and coordinated efforts. Primary collaborating partners should include the BFS knowledge management mechanism Knowledge Driven Agricultural Development, the Center for Resilience buy-in to the TOPS mechanism, and the Cash Learning Partnership. In addition, other key collaboration partners should include the FFP-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network which conducts food security analyses and enhances understanding of food security causality; and the follow-on to the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance activity which supports FFP's analytic agenda through large-scale research and development of guidance.

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SECTION B. AWARD INFORMATION

1. Leader Award

This RFA is being issued with the intention of awarding one LWA Award (Leader Award) covering a specified worldwide activity, as described in the program description in Section A of this RFA. The Leader Award will be a Cooperative Agreement, which will extend over a period of five years. The Leader Award will be made pursuant to this RFA to the Applicant whose application conforming to this RFA offers the greatest value to the U.S. Government.

USAID may (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept applications for reasons other than cost, or (c) accept more than one application. USAID intends to award a cooperative agreement but reserves the right to award any other form of assistance agreement. USAID may waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received.

USAID may award the resulting assistance award(s) on the basis of initial applications received, without discussions, negotiations and/or oral presentations. Therefore, each initial application must contain the applicant's best terms from a technical and cost standpoint. As part of its evaluation process, however, USAID may elect to discuss technical, cost, or other pre-award issues with one or more applicants. Alternatively, USAID may proceed with award selection based on its evaluation of initial applications received, use an alternative process (e.g., keep or drop oral presentations), and/or commence negotiations solely with one applicant.

2. Associate Awards

Subsequent Associate Awards may be awarded by FFP or other USAID Operating Units, subject to the availability of funding. No further competition or waiver of competition is required for any Associate Agreements awarded within the terms of the Leader Award. Missions or other USAID Offices may award their own Associate Awards without further competition.

Each Associate Award is a separate Assistance Agreement by FFP or other USAID Operating Unit, as applicable, and awarded to the Leader Award Recipient to support a distinct local, regional or global activity that fits within the scope of the broad worldwide Program Description of the Leader Agreement.

An Associate Award may be a grant or a cooperative agreement, independent of whether the Leader Award is a grant or cooperative agreement. An Associate Cooperative Agreement must spell out the terms of any substantial involvement. Each Associate Award will determine its own cost-share needs, if any, regardless of the level of cost-share identified under the Leader Award. Under individual Associate Awards, the need for cost-sharing will be individually determined by each Mission or Bureau for its respective program. Associate Awards will not contain separate standard provisions. Instead, they will be subject to the provisions of the Leader Award.

Associate Awards may be awarded for an initial five-year period. They may be issued through the final day of the period of performance of the Leader Award. Associate Awards may be extended for a cumulative term of up to ten years, but in no event may Associate Awards extend for more than five years past the expiration of the Leader Award. In no case may an Associate Award extend more than five years into the future at any given time. The Leader Award will not be closed out until all the Associate Awards have been completed.

Associate Awards must support Section A. Program Description in this RFA. Associate Awards are separate and distinct grants or cooperative agreements and are not to be confused with small grants provided by the Leader under the Leader Award or any Associate Awards.

The selection of countries and/or substantive areas for the Associate Awards will be based on demand from FFP or other USAID Operating Units as appropriate. The length of activities may vary. Activities may range from performing basic assessments to implementing fully developed technical interventions that support quality improvements in emergency and/or development food security programming.

For more information about LWA Awards, please refer to ADS Chapter 303, section 303.3.26.

3. Estimate of Funds Available

Subject to the availability of funds under this RFA, FFP anticipates providing approximately $30 million over five years for the IDEAL Leader Award Cooperative Agreement for DCHA/FFP. This will include any funds designated by the Leader for small grants to development and/or emergency food security activity implementers, researchers or other relevant stakeholders.

FFP or other USAID Operating Units may provide additional funding for Associate Awards under IDEAL. FFP has established a ceiling of $95 million for the overall IDEAL LWA mechanism which will encompass funding for the Leader Award as well as any future Associate Awards. Whether or to what degree this ceiling will be reached, and the number and size of future Associate Awards will be a function of demand and subject to the availability of funding.

USAID reserves the right to adjust the number of awards, funding levels, and/or sources of funding. Note that not all funding is interchangeable and some budget adjustments may need to take place. Successful applicants will be notified of any changes or updates accordingly.

4. Anticipated Start Date and Performance Period

The anticipated start date of the new award(s) will be on or about September 2017. The period of performance will be approximately five (5) years from the date of award, subject to the availability of funding.

5. Authorized Geographic Code

The anticipated authorized geographic code for procurement of goods and services under the prospective award is 937. USAID reserves the right to modify this.

6. Substantial Involvement

During the life of the award, FFP's development and emergency activities will be designed in the context of the FFP 2016-2025 Strategy. Implementation of these activities and, therefore, the practices and capacities prioritized by the implementing partner community through IDEAL, should be reflective of this broad strategy. It will be important for FFP to be substantively involved in elements of IDEAL to ensure that Agency knowledge and expertise can be appropriately leveraged and synergies created between implementation of IDEAL and the broader implementation of the FFP strategy.

The intended purpose of the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR's) involvement during the life of the award is to assist the recipient in achieving the supported objectives of the agreement. USAID's elements of substantial involvement are limited to those found below:

a. Approval of the Recipient's Implementation Plans

FFP will require approval of recipient's workplans annually, to ensure appropriate timelines and implementation planning aligned with FFP's broad strategic priorities, partnership opportunities and activity purpose.

b. Approval of Specified Key Personnel

For those deemed essential to the successful implementation of the award, FFP will approve up to five key personnel as well as changes to those personnel over the life of the award. This will ensure strategic alignment with priority core capacities and focus areas over the life of the award.

c. Agency and Recipient Collaboration or Joint Participation

The recipient's successful accomplishment of the activity purpose will benefit from FFP strategic, policy and technical knowledge. This will include:

(1) Collaborative involvement in selection of advisory committee members to provide advice to the recipient on programmatic and technical issues. FFP anticipates participating as a member of this committee as well.

(2) Concurrence on the substantive provisions of sub-awards. 2 CFR 200.308 already requires the recipient to obtain the Agreement Officer's (AO's) prior approval for the sub-award, transfer, or contracting out of any work under an award. In addition, FFP will be substantially involved in participation on technical review panels for sub-grants and selection of the final list of applications selected for funding.

(3) Approval of the recipient's monitoring and evaluation plans to ensure appropriate measures are in place to capture progress in expanding the knowledge base and strengthening the capacity of the implementer community.

(4) Monitor to authorize specified kinds of direction or redirection because of interrelationships with other projects. All such activities will be included in the program description, negotiated in the budget, and made part of the award.

For specifics and additional detail, please refer to ADS 303.3.11 - Substantial Involvement and Cooperative Agreements.

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Section C – Eligibility Information

1. Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for a Title II funded award, the applicant must be a private voluntary organization (PVO) or cooperative that is, to the extent practicable, registered with the USAID Administrator, or an organization designated by USAID as a PIO, such as WFP. This includes U.S. and non-U.S. NGOs as defined in the FFP Act and as described on the USAID website under PVO registration.

In the case of a consortium, the applicant must be the consortium lead and must identify any other members of the consortium or individuals tied to the implementation of the activity as described in the application, along with all sub-awardees. The respective roles of any other members of the consortium or individuals, including all sub-awardees, must be described and separate detailed budgets must be attached for each.

2. New Partners

USAID encourages applications from potential new partners (i.e., those who have not received any USAID funding previously).

3. Cost Share

Cost share is not required for the Leader Award.

4. Minimal Qualification Requirements

USAID has no additional minimal qualification requirements.

5. Limit on Number of Applications

An applicant, defined as a submitting organization, may only submit one application under this RFA. However, an applicant may be a sub-awardee on applications submitted by other organizations.

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Section D – Application and Submission Information

1. Point of Contact

The point of contact (POC) concerning this RFA is Ms. Joan Whelan, acting Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Team Lead at jwhelan@usaid.gov. Any questions concerning this RFA or its appendices must be submitted in writing within 8 days of its posting to the POC with a copy to FACG@usaid.gov and "IDEAL RFA" in the subject line.

2. Application Format

The application must be specific, complete, and concise. Applications that do not meet the requirements of this RFA will not be considered. The application shall be divided into the following sections, with the maximum number of pages given per section, excluding the table of contents, but including any endnotes and/or footnotes, as follows:

- Cover Page (1 page)
- Executive Summary (2 pages maximum)
- Technical Approach (25 pages maximum)
- Management and Institutional Capacity (8 pages)
- Staffing and Key Personnel (5 pages maximum)
- Budget (no page limit, see requirements in paragraph e)
- Annexes (see paragraph f)

The above bullets correspond to the sections of the RFA described below and constitute the general application format. If submissions exceed the page number maximum, only the pages up to the limit will be reviewed, and pages exceeding the maximum will not be considered.

a) Cover Page (1 page)

The cover page must have the following:
- Name of the applicant's organization;
- Name and title of the organization's representative who has signatory authority and authority to submit the application;
- Name, title, and contact information of the organization's point of contact with whom USAID will coordinate on matters related to the application (if different from the organization's representative with signatory authority and authority to submit the application). Contact information should include mailing address, e-mail, and telephone number;
- Valid Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number; and
- Registration date in System for Award Management (SAM) – note that successful applicants must maintain SAM registration.

b) Executive Summary (2 pages maximum)

The executive summary should provide a high-level overview of how the Applicant proposes to carry out the requirements set out in the RFA, to achieve the intended purpose of IDEAL to improve the design, implementation and overall effectiveness of development and emergency food security activities funded by FFP.

c) Technical Approach (25 pages maximum)

The technical approach should express a clear understanding of the FFP Background, and Scope and Purpose of IDEAL outlined in Section A of this RFA. In addition, it should include:

1- A clear overview of the **operating and policy context** for the IDEAL activity, in terms of
- The global food security policy environment, including the 2016-2025 FFP Strategy and relevant USAID policies and strategies
- Current global trends and the major barriers and enablers in working towards improved and sustained food security and nutrition for the most vulnerable
- The role of FFP and its implementing partners in carrying out both emergency and development food security activities in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations
- Key capacity and knowledge gaps in the FFP implementing partner community that are relevant to the achievement of improved food security

2- A clear and detailed description of **proposed program pathways,** including **illustrative interventions and content focus areas** under each:
- How proposed program pathways - and the illustrative interventions and content focus areas under them - will work to strengthen the capacity of the implementing partner community.
- How the proposed program pathways will link together, complement one another, and provide opportunities for participants with differing levels of capacity, interest, motivation and areas of expertise to engage in collaborative learning processes.
- How content focus areas will be identified, prioritized and matched to program pathways on an ongoing basis based on stakeholder needs, interests and opportunities and the overall policy and operating context.

3- An explanation of how the activity will exemplify **best practices in capacity strengthening, knowledge sharing, stakeholder consultation and grants management**. This should include:
- How the activity will identify capacity and knowledge gaps on an ongoing basis, and monitor the adoption of new knowledge, learning and evidence generated under IDEAL.
- How stakeholders across a variety of institutions, roles, and geographic locations will be engaged for substantive involvement in the community of practice.
- How linkages will be made with other food security and nutrition related networks and working groups, collaborative learning efforts and program quality improvement efforts to ensure coordination and complementarity.

- How knowledge generated through the various program pathways will be captured and shared within and beyond the community of practice to maximize impact.

4- Key challenges anticipated in implementing IDEAL and how those challenges can be addressed.

d) *Management Approach and Institutional Capacity (8 pages maximum)*

The management section of applications must include the following:

Management Approach: The proposal should detail a management structure that ensures the efficient use of resources and strong, effective management, technical implementation, and administrative support. The management structure should demonstrate the necessary technical competencies to implement the technical interventions proposed, including the ability to scale-up during periods of high demand and the logistical capacity to carry out both short-term and long-term interventions on a global scale, sometimes concurrently.

If sub-awardees or a consortium management model are proposed, applicants should describe how the partnerships will be organized and managed to use complementary capabilities most effectively. Specify the responsibilities of all principal organizations and the rationale for their selection; proposed staff and reporting relationships within and between each of these organizations; and internal processes to ensure cohesive, coordinated knowledge sharing, planning, decision-making and implementation across organizational boundaries. Letters of commitment from consortium members must be included.

The applicant should explain the management structure presented in the organizational chart; personnel management of expatriate and local staff; procurement arrangements for goods and services; and lines of authority and communications between organizations and staff. The management plan should also explain how IDEAL proposes to interact with FFP, Regional FFP Offices, Missions, in-country NGOs, academic institutions, international organizations, the headquarters and field offices of FFP implementing partners, and with other relevant communities of practice or working groups.

In addition, the proposal should address the following:

- Performance monitoring strategies that will enable IDEAL to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of proposed interventions, including capacity strengthening and knowledge exchange and uptake.
- Adaptive management approaches that ensure functioning feedback loops and opportunities to pause, reflect and course correct around activity interventions, focus content, and management practices to ensure that activity interventions remain appropriate, with challenges met and new opportunities capitalized on.
- Quality control systems to ensure that interventions in every program pathway reflect a dedication to high quality, technically rigorous, well-designed outputs.
- Sustainability planning to ensure that a dedicated source of resources, capacity, motivation and linkages will sustain the work of IDEAL and the community of practice it

fosters, beyond the timeframe of the award, and, to the degree possible, independent of continued FFP funding.

Institutional Capacity should demonstrate the degree to which the Applicant and all proposed consortium members or sub-contractors possess the depth and breadth of institutional capacity, technical expertise, and management systems to plan, implement and support the complex pathways and interventions described in the Technical Approach to the proposal, as reflecting Section A. Program Description in the RFA.

e) Staffing and Key Personnel (5 pages maximum)

The success of IDEAL will rely on its ability to flexibly respond to emergent capacity needs and knowledge sharing opportunities that are context-specific in terms of geography, time, participant groups and their capacities, and the program design/theories of change and implementation challenges of the FFP development and emergency food security activities being supported. Applicants should provide a comprehensive staffing plan that demonstrates core staff expertise combined with dependable access to highly experienced specialist consultants that, together, will be sufficient to implement the proposed interventions outlined in the Technical Approach and Management Approach sections of the proposal, as well as the program pathways, content focus areas and guiding principles outlined in Section A. Program Description in the RFA.

The staffing plan should demonstrate the ability to bring on new, highly qualified technical, managerial, M&E, learning or communications staff or consultants, as needed, to meet needs and address opportunities in emerging focus areas or geographic locations. It should also identify how staff and consultants will be encouraged to work collaboratively across teams.

The staffing plan should demonstrate a core staff with substantive experience with both FFP development and emergency food security activities. Necessary skills should include organizational capacity development and learning; adaptive management; generation, capture, sharing and application of knowledge and evidence in key strategic, technical, and/or management focus areas; and a full range of research, assessment and monitoring and evaluation capacities.

A total of five key personnel are envisioned: Director; Deputy Director; Food Security Technical Advisor; Strategic Learning and Capacity Strengthening Advisor; and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Advisor. Each key personnel position requires USAID approval as noted in the substantial involvement provision in Section B. All key personnel must be full-time positions (40-hour workweek) throughout the life of the agreement. Required attributes for all key personnel include strong management, interpersonal, communication, mentoring and facilitation skills, the ability to network and communicate with a wide range of stakeholders, and experience working overseas in low-resource environments.

Project Director: The project director will provide vision, direction, strategic leadership and management to the overall IDEAL Leader Award. The director will also provide continued focus on fostering the long-term sustainability of the community of practice

funded under this Award. The position requires a senior manager with at least 10-15 years of experience managing large-scale international development and/or emergency activities, and providing leadership to diverse teams of highly experienced professionals. The director should have demonstrated experience in food security, organizational capacity development, and partnership development with U.S. Government agencies, host country governments, implementing partner organizations and other stakeholders. An advanced degree (PhD or Master's) and at least 15 years relevant work experience required.

Deputy Director – Management: The deputy director will be responsible for managing implementation of the IDEAL Leader Award, ensuring quality results and coordinated efforts across consortium members and program pathways. The deputy should also have direct oversight of the small grants program. The skills, knowledge and defined roles of the deputy director should complement those of the project director but should include, at least 10-12 years of experience leading, managing and implementing large-scale international development and/or emergency activities. The deputy director should have demonstrated experience in food security, organizational capacity development, and strategic planning. An advanced degree (PhD or Master's) and at least 12 years relevant work experience required.

Food Security Technical Advisor: The technical advisor will be highly experienced in a broad spectrum of food security technical focus areas with responsibility for establishing and managing systems to ensure rigorous, high quality technical outputs in all IDEAL content focus areas, and continued access to experienced technical staff as well as long- and short-term technical assistance in relevant content focus areas. The technical advisor should also ensure collaboration and communication across technical content focus areas and amongst technical specialists, whether core staff members or consultants. The technical advisor should have demonstrated experience developing - and ensuring quality control for - technically rigorous, food security capacity strengthening and knowledge sharing efforts. An advanced degree (PhD or Master's) plus a minimum of 10 years relevant experience.

Strategic Learning and Capacity Development Advisor: The strategic learning and capacity development advisor will provide vision, and strategic leadership for IDEAL efforts to improve peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing and application, capacity strengthening and stakeholder consultation, through design and management of direct interventions under IDEAL as well as efforts to strengthen capacity in the implementer community around implementer-led, activity-based capacity strengthening, evidence and data utilization, and collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA). The strategic learning advisor should have demonstrated experience in food security, knowledge management, organizational learning, and capacity strengthening. An advanced degree (PhD or Master's) plus a minimum of 10 years relevant work experience required.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Advisor: The monitoring, evaluation and research advisor will provide technical expertise and leadership for IDEAL efforts to strengthen implementer capacity to generate and analyze quality evidence and data through program-level research, context assessment, and activity-based M&E efforts. The advisor should have a strong quantitative background with 8-10 years of experience working on designing and

implementing evaluations, carrying out program-level research to address knowledge gaps, and strengthening monitoring systems in the context of international development and emergency activities. The advisor should have demonstrated experience in building or strengthening monitoring systems, working in partnership with research and academic institutions, and strengthening evaluation and research capacity in low-income and resource-constrained contexts. A PhD in a quantitative field plus 8 years relevant experience or a Master's degree with at least 10 years relevant work experience required.

f) Budget (no page limit)

For more information on the Cost Application, please see Section E. 2. Review of Cost Application. Cost applications include the general budgets such as the SF 424, SF 424A, SF 424B, a comprehensive budget, detailed budget, and budget narrative and must be submitted by email, separately from the technical application portion. Cost applications (i.e., budget components) are not subject to the page limitation of the application, and may not be evaluated alongside the technical application. Cost applications must be in U.S. dollars only and include budget details as described below for the applicant, each member of the consortium (if applicable), sub-awardees and/or sub-contractors. Applicants are required to minimize their administrative and support costs for managing the activity to maximize the funding available for interventions. More details on the budget annexes can be found in section f) Annexes.

g) Annexes

Technical Application
1. Applicant Organizational Chart (and information on consortium or sub-awardee structure, if applicable)
2. Curriculum vitae (not to exceed three pages each) for key personnel and other senior staff
3. Letters of commitment for key personnel and other proposed senior staff
4. Roster, including name, date of availability, proposed LOE, organization or consultant status of experts likely to provide technical assistance on an as-needed basis.
5. Abridged monitoring, evaluation and learning plan
6. Sustainability plan
7. NICRA – Most recent U.S. Government issued Negotiated Indirect Cost Recovery Agreement

Cost Application
1. Comprehensive Budget
2. Detailed Budget
3. Budget Narrative

3. Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:
- Provide a valid Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number; and

- Be registered in the SAM – note that successful applicants must maintain SAM registration.

FFP may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. This is justification for not signing an award. Please note an awardee cannot make a subaward to an entity unless the entity has provided a DUNS number to the awardee.

4. Submission Date and Time

The application submission deadline is August 9, 2017 at 11:59 EDT. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the electronic application is received by the due date and time specified.

5. Funding Restrictions

It is the legal responsibility of USAID awardees to ensure compliance with all U.S. laws and regulations, including those that prohibit transactions with, and the provision of resources and support to, sanctioned individuals, groups, and organizations.

6. Pre-Award Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of the Recipient

Successful applicants must provide a signed copy of *Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of the Recipient and Solicitation Standard Provisions* as described in ADS 303.3.8 on the USAID website in response to the issues letter.

7. Other Submission Requirements

FFP requires that applicants use FFPMIS to apply for a development food security activity under this RFA. FFPMIS can be accessed at https://usaid-ffp.entellitrak.com/.

- User guides and additional FFPMIS resources can be found on the Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) site.
- Any technical questions on the use of FFPMIS should be emailed to FFPMIS_Support@devis.com.
- Any questions concerning submission of applications must be submitted in writing to jwhelan@usaid.gov with a copy to FACG@usaid.gov.
- The FFPMIS helpdesk is staffed from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Potential applicants are encouraged to start the submission process early, as new account creation and answers to technical questions may take more than one business day.

To apply in FFPMIS for the IDEAL solicitation through a concept paper:
Open a New Concept Paper
Award Type choose Regional/Global
Shock Type choose N/A
Country choose United States

In the Concept Paper Documents tab:
Upload the budget under "Cost Information", application under "Technical Information", annexes under "Other Documents" and delete all other required documents. To delete, click on the document to open and choose 'delete'.

All documents must be completed in accordance with the format detailed in this RFA and must adhere to the following:

- Written in English and in 12-point Times New Roman font;
- Text in tables or charts may be 10-point Arial Narrow font;
- Narratives must be prepared in Microsoft Word with print areas set to 8.5 x 11 inch, letter-sized paper with one-inch margins, left justification and a footer on each page including page number, date of submission, and applicant name;
- Spreadsheets must be prepared in Microsoft Excel, with print areas set to 8.5 x 11 inch, letter-sized paper;
- Official (signed) documents, memoranda, and certifications may be submitted as Adobe PDF files, with one-inch margins;
- Faxed or hard copy applications are not acceptable.

If any of the necessary documents listed in the RFA are not submitted according to the format and/or deadline referenced in the RFA, FFP will consider the application incomplete. Late or incomplete applications will be considered at FFP's sole discretion.

The applicant may be required to submit certain documents in order for the AO to make a determination of financial responsibility. Applicants may be required to submit any additional evidence of responsibility, as requested, to support the determination, such as:

- Adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the award;
- Adequate management and personnel resources and systems;
- Ability to comply with the award conditions, considering all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, both nongovernmental and governmental;
- Satisfactory record of performance - unsatisfactory past relevant performance is ordinarily sufficient to justify a finding of non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance or the applicant has taken adequate corrective measures to assure that it will be able to perform its functions satisfactorily; and
- Integrity and business ethics; along with qualifications and eligibility to receive a grant or cooperative agreement under applicable laws and regulations.

Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant, and all preparation and submission costs for the application are at the applicant's expense.

Section E – Application Review Information

1. Technical Evaluation Criteria

Technical Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Possible Points
a) Technical Approach	45
b) Management Approach and Institutional Capacity	30
c) Staffing and Key Personnel	25
Total Possible Points	**100**

a) Technical Approach
The applicant will be evaluated on a technical approach which adheres to the criteria listed under Section D Application and Submission Information. This should include a clear overview of the operating and policy context; proposed program pathways, and illustrative interventions and content focus areas; adherence to best practices in capacity strengthening, knowledge sharing, stakeholder consultation, and grants management; and key challenges anticipated and strategies to overcome them.

b) Management Approach and Institutional Capacity
The applicant will be evaluated on a management approach and institutional capacity which adhere to the criteria listed under Section D Application and Submission Information. This should include a management structure that is suitable, appropriate, and strategic. Management approaches should foster the ability to scale-up, manage adaptively and carry out multiple concurrent interventions in multiple geographic locations across a variety of relevant content focus areas. Planning for sustainability of activity interventions and impacts, where possible and appropriate, should be clear and feasible.

Relevant information on consortium members and sub-awardees should be included, demonstrating technical and management expertise relevant to implementing the Technical Approach and Management Approach submitted in the proposal, as well as the criteria outlined in Section A. Program Description in this RFA.

c) Staffing and Key Personnel
The applicant will be evaluated on a staffing plan and key personnel that adhere to the criteria listed under Section D. Application and Submission Information. The staffing plan should demonstrate the requisite technical skills and management experience, clearly defined duties amongst full-time staff and consultants, and approaches to ensure steady access to qualified personnel and consultants, who together will enable successful implementation of the proposed technical approach. Proposed key personnel must meet or exceed the minimum requirements set forth in Section D of the RFA.

2. Review of Cost Application

The cost application may be evaluated separately from the technical application. The review of the cost application will determine if the level of resources is appropriate for the number of participants and degree of change being proposed. Aspects to be considered under this criterion include the justification for activity costs: general reasonableness, allowability under the cost principles and according to FFP Information Bulletins (FFPIBs), and the allocability of the costs reflected in the budget. For further information on costs considered reasonable, allowable, and allocable, please refer to 2 CFR 200, subpart E.

The cost application must include:
- The breakdown of all costs associated with the activity;
- The breakdown of all costs according to each partner organization or sub-contractor/sub-awardee involved in the activity;
- The costs associated with external, expatriate technical assistance and those associated with local in-country technical assistance;
- The costs associated with robust monitoring and evaluation;
- A procurement plan for equipment (may be incorporated into an existing or new annex), if applicable.

Areas to be listed/discussed in detailed budget and budget notes include:

a) Personnel

Salaries and wages should reflect the "market value" for each position. Salaries and wages may not exceed the applicant's established written personnel policy and practice, including the applicant's established pay scale for equivalent classifications of employees, which must be certified by the applicant. Base pay, or base salary, is defined as the employee's basic compensation (salary) for services rendered. Taxes which are a responsibility or liability of the employee are inclusive of, and not additive to, the base pay or salary. The base pay excludes benefit and allowances, bonuses, profit sharing arrangements, commission, consultant fees, extra or overtime payments, overseas differential or quarters, cost of living or dependent education allowances, etc.

In accordance with ADS 303.3.12 and the evaluation criteria contained in Section E of this RFA, USAID will review proposed costs, including salaries, for reasonableness. USAID uses the top salary on the Mission's Local Compensation Plan as one indicator of reasonableness for the base salaries of locally employed staff, and the Contractor Salary Threshold as one indicator of reasonableness for the base salaries of U.S. and third-country national staff.

Annual salary increase and/or promotional increase must be justified and supported by appropriate documentation and may be granted in accordance with the applicant's established written personnel policy and practice.

b) Fringe Benefits

Applicants must indicate the fringe benefit rate used and the base of application for each rate that has been approved by a U.S. Federal Agency. Applicants must submit the most recent Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) as evidence of rate approval. If the fringe benefit rate has not been approved, the applicant must propose a rate and explain how the rate was determined. If the latter is used, the budget narrative must include a detailed explanation/breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits, such as unemployment insurance, workers compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, FICA, etc. and the cost estimates of each expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries. The applicant must specify if paid leave is included in fringe benefits.

The applicant should indicate fringe benefits for local employees as a separate item of cost, providing a detailed explanation/breakdown as described above. The applicant should specify which fringe benefits for local employees are required by local law and which are applied in accordance with the applicant's compensation policy.

c) Travel

The applicant must:
- Identify total domestic and international travel as separate items;
- Indicate the estimated number of trips, number of travelers, position of travelers, number of days per trip, point of origin, destination, and purpose of trip;
- Itemize the estimate of transportation and/or subsistence costs, including airfare and per diem for each trip. Per diem shall be based on the applicant's normal travel policies and practices. However, proposed lodging and per diem must not be in excess of that authorized by Department of State Standard Regulations; and
- Provide supporting documentation, such as the applicant's travel policy to justify these costs, as appropriate.

d) Equipment

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.33, in a brief description, "equipment" means tangible non-expendable personal property, including exempt property charged directly to the award having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit.

The applicant must:
- Itemize the type of equipment and briefly justify the need for the items to be purchased as they relate to the applicant's technical approach;
- Indicate the estimated unit cost and number of units for each item to be purchased; and
- Provide the basis for the cost estimates, e.g., pro forma invoice or published price lists.

e) Supplies

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.94, "supplies" means all personal property excluding equipment, intangible property, debt instruments, and interventions. The applicant must specify the supply items and briefly justify the need for those items to be purchased as they relate to the applicant's technical approach.

f) Contractual (if any)

The applicant must:
- Identify any sub-awards/transfers/sub-contracts (other than the purchase of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services) and provide this information in a chart which includes their total value.
- Provide sub-award/sub-contract budgets and accompanying budget notes in the same format as submitted by the prime applicant, and with the same exchange rate for all members of the consortium.

h) Other Direct Costs

The applicant must:
- Identify other direct costs and briefly justify the need for each cost item as they relate to the applicant's technical approach;
- Indicate the estimated unit cost and number of units for each item proposed; and
- Provide the basis for the cost estimates.

i) Indirect Costs

The applicant must support the proposed indirect cost rate with a letter from a cognizant USG audit agency, a NICRA, or with sufficient information for USAID to determine the reasonableness of the rates. For example, a breakdown of labor bases and overhead pools, the method of determining the rate, etc.
The applicant must:
- State the percentages and amounts used for the calculation of indirect costs.
- Provide a copy of the latest Government-approved NICRA from the cognizant U.S. Government audit agency showing the Overhead and/or General Administrative rates.
- State if indirect costs have not been approved by a Federal agency and provide the basis for the proposed indirect cost rates, as appropriate. The applicant who does not currently have a NICRA from their Cognizant Agency must submit the following information:
    - Copies of the applicant's financial reports for the previous three-year period, which have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID;
    - Projected budget, cash flow, and organizational chart; and
    - A copy of the organization's Accounting Manual.

In accordance with 2 CFR 200.414, eligible applicants may choose to apply a 10 percent *de minimis* indirect cost rate. Please note this is only for those applicants who have never received a NICRA.

3. Review and Selection Process

Consistent with the requirements set forth in the Food for Peace Act, FFP shall determine whether to accept an application no later than 120 days after receipt of a complete application (subject to availability of funds). FFP is committed to meeting this mandate; however, its ability to do so depends upon the quality of applications and their responsiveness to the standards and requirements set forth in the RFA.

Once an application is deemed complete, FFP will review it based on the RFA evaluation criteria and FFP policies. Following its review of a complete application, FFP may accept the application, deny the application, or withhold a decision on whether to accept or deny the application pending resolution of outstanding issues.

4. Oral Presentations

If conditions permit, as determined by FFP, the application process will include two phases. The first phase is the submission and review of an initial application (technical application and cost application). Successful first-phase applicants may also receive letters of invitation to present their applications orally, and to address "topline" issues identified during the initial review of their applications. If they occur, oral presentations will constitute the second phase of the technical review process, and will be a condition of the award. After discussions have concluded, the successful applicant(s) will receive a final issues letter, if necessary, and will be required to submit final technical and cost applications.

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Section F – Federal Award and Administration Information

USAID may (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept applications for reasons other than cost, (c) accept more than one application, (d) accept alternate applications, (e) waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received, and/or (f) drop the oral presentation.

Successful applicants will find award administration information and reporting requirements in signed award documents.

The AO is the only individual who may legally commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds.

Section G – Federal Award Agency Contacts

Agency contacts may be found in Section D. 1. Point of Contact.

Section H – Other Information

1. Branding Strategy and Marking Plan

The Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BS/MP) is required for successful applicants only. Note that because USAID's branding and marking requirements have cost implications, such costs must be included in the application budget even if the applicant does not submit its BS/MP with the application. These rules do not apply to intergovernmental organizations. Special markings may be required in Global Food Security Strategy-focused or -aligned countries.

Under special circumstances USAID approved Marking Plans may be waived.

Agency branding and marking guidance can be found in the recently updated ADS Chapter 320 and at the USAID branding site.

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Annex 1: FFP 2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy

1. FFP Strategy Overview

In October 2016, FFP launched its [2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy](#) with the strategic goal *Food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations improved and sustained.* To achieve this goal, FFP's new strategy sets out two strategic objectives (SOs) that cut across both emergency and development programs: work to support change at the individual and household level, as well as work to strengthen local systems and support more sustainable and transformative change.

The strategy's Results Framework is a global framing of FFP's work, outlining what is considered within FFP's mandate, as well as what is expected to be within the skill sets and capacities of our implementing partners. At the field level, the exact contours of a program will depend on context, need, available resources, and the skills, capacities and roles of other food security actors working in that space.

2. FFP Strategic Objectives

SO1: Lives and livelihoods protected and enhanced
FFP works to protect and enhance the lives and livelihoods of those affected by crisis, and those vulnerable to crisis due to chronic poverty and hunger. In acute emergency situations, this may be by meeting immediate food and nutrition needs of those most vulnerable to food deficits through direct resource transfers accompanied by complementary programming that seeks to maximize the impact of those resources. In recovery and development settings, the emphasis may shift more strongly towards improving the lives of the most marginalized and protecting development investments through capacity building, knowledge transfer, household asset-building, or other productive investments contributing to improved food security and nutrition outcomes across a range of sectors.

SO2: Communities and institutions transformed
Even in the most acute crisis, work that avoids doing harm and succeeds in strengthening local systems can lay an important foundation for transformative change. Under SO2, FFP works to strengthen communities and institutions that then serve as catalysts for greater and more sustainable change in emergency response and long-term development settings alike. SO2 provides a pathway to address root causes and drivers of food insecurity, through efforts at the community level and, where appropriate, up to national policy and planning, in ways that strengthen the capacity of institutions, reduce risks, and provide engines of growth, opportunity and change.

3. FFP Strategy Intermediate Results

The SOs in the FFP Results Framework (RF) are each supported by four Intermediate Results (IRs) that address social protection, nutrition, environmental management, and increasing incomes and assets. The IRs under SO1 focus on the individual- and household-level capacities

Food for Peace Strategic Results Framework
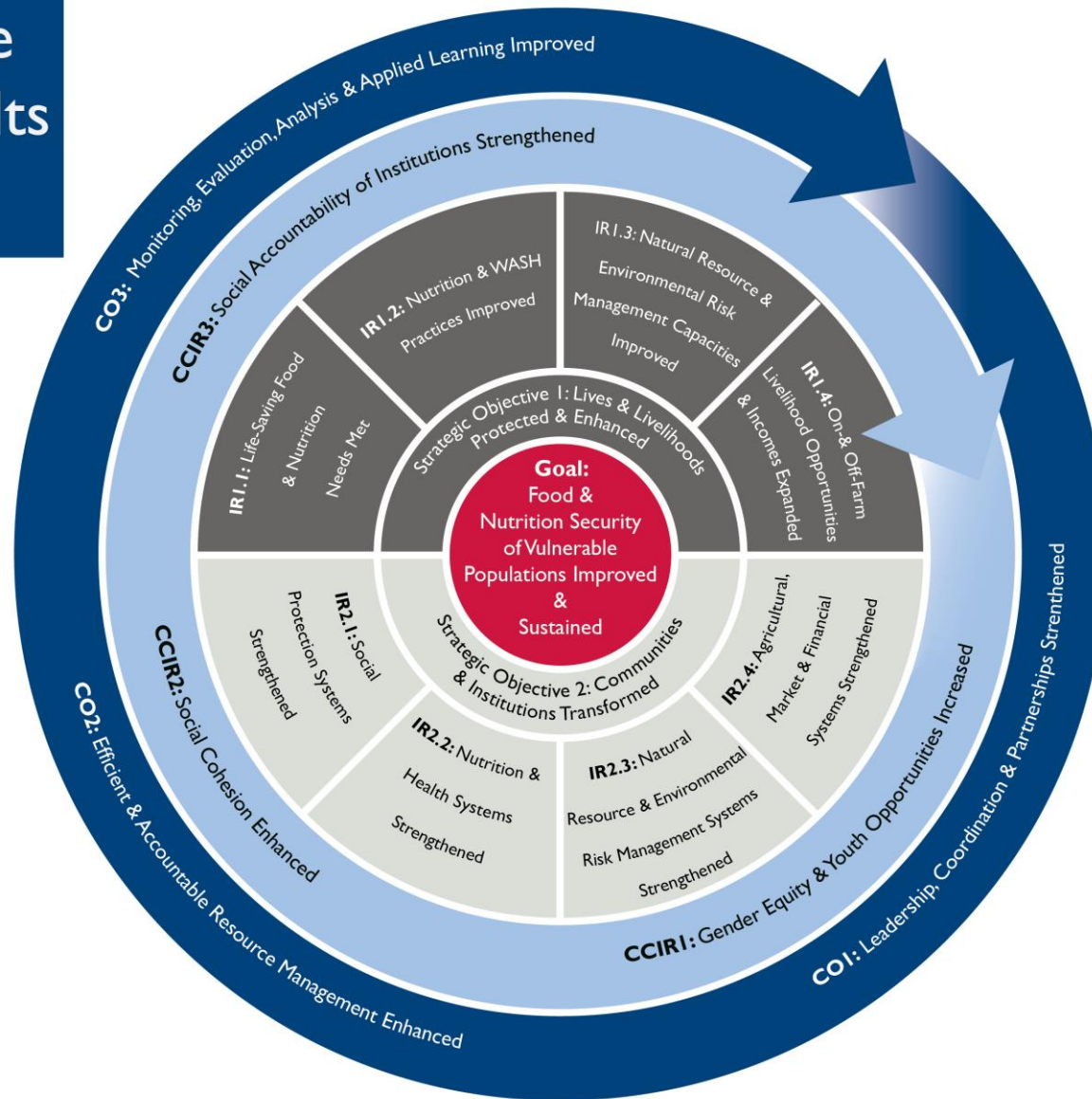
KEY
- Strategic Objective 1 & Intermediate Results (IR)
- Strategic Objective 2 & Intermediate Results (IR)
- Cross Cutting Intermediate Results (CCIR)
- Corporate Objectives (CO)

Goal: Food & Nutrition Security of Vulnerable Populations Improved & Sustained

Strategic Objective 1: Lives & Livelihoods Protected & Enhanced

Strategic Objective 2: Communities & Institutions Transformed

IR1.1: Life-Saving Food & Nutrition Needs Met
IR1.2: Nutrition & WASH Practices Improved
IR1.3: Natural Resource & Environmental Risk Management Capacities Improved
IR1.4: On-& Off-Farm Livelihood Opportunities & Incomes Expanded

IR2.1: Social Protection Systems Strengthened
IR2.2: Nutrition & Health Systems Strengthened
IR2.3: Natural Resource & Environmental Risk Management Systems Strengthened
IR2.4: Agricultural, Market & Financial Systems Strengthened

CCIR1: Gender Equity & Youth Opportunities Increased
CCIR2: Social Cohesion Enhanced
CCIR3: Social Accountability of Institutions Strengthened

CO1: Leadership, Coordination & Partnerships Strenthened
CO2: Efficient & Accountable Resource Management Enhanced
CO3: Monitoring, Evaluation, Analysis & Applied Learning Improved

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required for positive change, while those under SO2 address the community and institutional capacities required to promote, support and sustain those changes.

Across all IRs, FFP's strategy calls for a broadened concept of risk management that, in addition to natural hazards such as drought and flooding, addresses risks posed by fragility, conflict, pandemic disease and climate change, as well as idiosyncratic shocks, such as the death of a household head. Working at multiple levels, protecting and enhancing the lives and livelihoods of individuals and households while also strengthening local systems, creates synergies between the two SOs and the IRs under them. It also increases the need for FFP and its partners to layer, sequence and integrate activities within FFP programs, as well as with other USAID and donor-funded efforts.

4. FFP Strategy Cross-cutting Intermediate Results

A set of cross-cutting IRs underpins the SOs and IRs, to support the empowerment of women and youth, enhance social cohesion, and strengthen social accountability. They are intended to bring new focus and clarity to work to positively influence the environment in which FFP emergency and multi-sectoral development food security activities are implemented.

5. FFP Strategy Corporate Objectives

The FFP strategy also includes three Corporate Objectives, relevant to FFP and partners alike. These are designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of FFP's work through strengthening partnership and influence, capacities of staff and systems, and the evidence base underlying work in food security.

6. Other U.S. Government and USAID Strategic Priorities

The FFP Strategy and programming contribute to USAID's mission to end extreme poverty and promote resilient democratic societies, and to the DCHA Bureau's strategic objectives, notably "Supporting areas of recurrent crisis to become more resilient" and "Providing timely, effective, and lifesaving humanitarian response." The FFP Strategy also contributes to and reflects the USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025, USAID policy and program guidance "Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis," USAID's policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment; USAID's policy on Youth in Development, and USAID's Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Strategy. Notably, through FFP's development food security activities, the Strategy also contributes to the U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy, 2017-2021, launched in October 2016.

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Annex 2: FFP Support to Implementer-Focused Collaborative Learning and Capacity Strengthening

FFP has supported the improved performance and capacity of its NGO partners through a variety of mechanisms for nearly three decades beginning with an Institutional Support Grants Program in the early 1990s.

In 1998, FFP moved to a collaborative model, with the Food Aid Management Institutional Support Assistance Program (1998-2003), which sought to improve food security and nutrition guidance and tools, and foster information exchange and collaboration to improve the knowledge base of implementing partners, FFP staff, and other stakeholders. The activity carried out program improvement efforts through organized working groups, a website, and thematic workshops.

Meanwhile, between 2003 and 2008, FFP's Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) program provided 14 grants directly to implementing partner organizations to develop and/or implement workshops, trainings and assessments, and design specialty tools. The ICB program also provided financial and technical support to key personnel.

Based on the recommendations of interim evaluations, as well as a 2008 meta-evaluation of the 14 ICB grants, FFP designed a hybrid mechanism, TOPS, that reflected the best of both models, along with applied learning from close to three decades of support to focused capacity strengthening and collaborative learning efforts. TOPS was awarded in August 2010 as a five-year LWA cooperative agreement with a strategic objective: *Highest quality information, knowledge, and best practices for improved methodologies in Title II food aid commodity program performance identified, established, shared and adapted through individual, collective and/or formalized knowledge management, skills training, operations research and information dissemination activities.*

As a consortium of PVOs, universities, and other food security and nutrition experts, TOPS established an inclusive implementation-focused global platform, the FSN Network for FFP awardees and other partners that fostered knowledge sharing; collaboration around identification of best and promising practices and development of program support tools; capacity strengthening in prioritized focus areas; and an innovative grants program to allow partners to test promising practices and tools and share their findings with others.

The midterm evaluation of TOPS highlighted the effectiveness of the TOPS approach to strengthening the knowledge base and capacity of implementing partners. Specific accomplishments and programmatic strengths of the TOPS activity noted by the mid-term evaluation include:

- The creation of an inclusive global platform for FFP implementing partners that deliberately and consistently reached beyond the Awardee consortium to

represent the interests and aggregate the diverse voices of the broader FFP implementing partner community.

- An evidence-based knowledge sharing and collaborative learning strategy featuring participatory and dialogue-based peer-to-peer technical learning events that provided what are described as crucial opportunities to bring PVO, FFP and other actors together to share experiences, problem solve, and build social capital.
- High quality technical trainings based on clear assessment of implementer capacity gaps and need. A reliance on face-to-face training was lauded in the evaluation, based on the social connections and ongoing relationships these helped to forge.
- A small grants component that served as a source of demand-driven funding that implementing partners could apply to context specific, needs-based and innovative capacity strengthening activities, such as development of tools, piloting of approaches, and sharing and application of evidence and knowledge. While the implementation of the small grants component was noted as problematic during the period covered by the midterm evaluation, the value of this work was still noted.

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