Q&A Notes from Protecting Rights of Vulnerable Communities RFA Bidders’ Conference on 15 October 2020

A total of 63 participants from 36 CSOs attended the Bidders Conference and 21 CSOs raised questions in the Q&A session.

Questions and Answers (Updated October 26, 2020)

1) **What do the amounts of US$100,000 and US$1 million stand for in this RFA?**

   The estimated maximum award amount for each selected applicant is US$100,000 and the total estimated amount of funding available under this RFA is US$1 million. An organization can propose up to US$100,000 in the budget as it is the ceiling amount for each proposal. Approximately 10 organizations will receive a subaward under this RFA. However, ACE reserves the right to adjust the RFA and subaward ceilings or issue no subawards at all.

2) **Can an organization apply for funding under this RFA to continue existing activities under another project that is currently being implemented in Kyainseikgyi and Hlaingbwe Townships? Would the organization be eligible to receive a grant for such activities?**

   Organizations are welcome to apply as long as the proposed activities are aligned with this RFA and will take place within Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, southern Shan State, northern Tanintharyi Region, or eastern Bago Region, are not funded by another donor, and meet USAID rules and regulations, then they are eligible for submission for consideration. The eligibility of each application will be determined based on the criteria stated in the RFA.
3) **We are a civil society organization that is not yet registered. Are there any restrictions for unregistered organizations?**

Registration is not required for organizing applying for this RFA. Regardless of registration status, eligible organizations can submit an application. Those with official registration need to include a copy of their registration and registration number in the application.

4) **What is the Myanmar Zawgyi font size required by the application in the RFA?**

As stated in the RFA, Zawgyi size 12 font should be used in applications.
5) Can applicants propose to implement virtual activities using online systems?

Organizations are encouraged to propose innovative activities to support vulnerable communities, including online and virtual options where relevant. Applicants should articulate how their approach will encourage participation in activities by key stakeholders.

6) Can joint proposals be submitted? For example, can an INGO apply together with NGOs as a consortium?

ACE does not recommend the submission of joint proposals; funding will be provided directly to selected individual applicant organizations. Applicants may propose to hire another organization to conduct a service on a contract basis if relevant.
7) **What is the SARRA?**

SARRA stands for the Subaward Risk and Responsibility Assessment, and it is Pact’s approach to conducting due diligence on applicants. As part of the RFA technical application, applicants must attach a completed SARRA cover page, which is included as an attachment in the application package.

8) **Pekon Township is specifically mentioned in the RFA. Can applicants only apply for Pekon Township or can other remote areas in southern Shan be included? In the RFA, Thanbyuzayat Township in Mon State is specifically mentioned. Can organizations implement in the other 10 townships in Mon State?**

As mentioned in the RFA, any townships in southern Shan State can be considered. Pekon Township can be included but is not mandatory. Applicants can propose activities in any part of Mon State.

9) **Our organization’s head office is in the UK, and we have recently also registered in the US to expand our financial partnerships there. With this in mind, and given the requirement that applicants should not be established in the US, would we still be eligible to apply?**

This RFA will consider applications from entities not based in the US with a preference for local organizations.
10) If an organization has been selected for an award under another ACE funding mechanism, can it apply for this RFA?

Eligible organizations that wish to submit an application under this RFA may do so even if they are currently an existing ACE partner under another funding opportunity.

11) Can proposals be submitted for the same target areas and implement in the same communities?

Proposals with more than one geographic area within southeastern Myanmar will be considered. For ACE, southeastern Myanmar consists of Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, southern Shan State, northern Tanintharyi Region, and eastern Bago Region.
12) After the first 12 months of funding, can organizations expect additional funding for project activities to ensure longer term impact? Can the implementation timeline be flexible if a conflict happens due to political unrest?

Applicants should develop a feasible and realistic proposal that would achieve its programmatic objectives in a 12 month period. ACE is not in a position to commit to additional funding at this time.

13) As a Loikaw-based organization, we are considering focusing on activities for returnees that want to return from the Thai-Burma border back to their home in Kayah State. Is the geographic area eligible?

Activities along the Thai-Burma border to support communities in Kayah State would be eligible based on the geographic requirements listed in the RFA.

14) We are a UK-based organization working on human rights documentation and advocacy. We are supporting advocacy efforts for the Salon ethnic group in the Andaman Islands. We focus on ethnic and citizenship issues in different geographical locations. Would this be an eligible activity for this RFA?

ACE’s geographic focus includes northern Tanintharyi Region. If this aligns with your organization’s activities, please feel to apply.
15) What is the lowest amount of funds awarded and do we have to submit the RFA in English?
There is no minimum amount of budget for RFA applicants. Proposals can be submitted in Myanmar language, as stated in the RFA. Successful applicants will work with the ACE team to develop award documents in English.

16) We are working in EAO- and mixed-controlled areas. Can EAO members participate in any activities that will be implemented by the project? What are USAID restrictions for working with EAOs e.g. per diem, travel allowance and engagement with other stakeholders?
Subject to donor approval, activities can be conducted with any authorities in southeastern Myanmar, including EAO representatives. Applicants should clearly explain how they will work with authorities in their technical and cost applications. USAID approval is required for some costs and will be discussed with shortlisted applicants. Perdiem or any type of direct payment to authorities is not allowable under this RFA. However, the arrangement and facilitation of meals, refreshments and accommodation are acceptable provided that they are justified by the activity and approved by USAID.
17) Why has the ACE project stated specific areas in Southeastern Myanmar conflict area such as Kyainseikgyi Township in Kayin State? Can applicants work in KNU-controlled areas?

The ACE project areas in southeastern Myanmar consist of Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, southern Shan State, northern Tanintharyi Region, and eastern Bago Region. ACE can accept applications that propose to work in any areas under the control of any authorities in these regions.

18) What format should applicants use for presenting financial information? What is defined as direct costs and indirect costs when calculating the budget?
Applicants should use the cost application template to present their proposed budget. The cost application is a required part of the submission process. Direct costs can be defined as any expenditure that is incurred directly for activities such as direct staff salaries, fringe benefits, travel, project activities, equipment, and venues used for project activities etc. As per USAID regulations, any organization that has a NICRA (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement) with USAID can apply their NICRA rates to calculate indirect costs for this proposal. Otherwise, the indirect costs will be calculated as per USAID 10% de minimis rate on their modified total direct costs. The cost application includes formulae links, and applicable and eligible indirect costs will be reflected in it.


19) For direct costs and indirect costs, can ACE accept shared costs across project, for example for personnel and their level of effort (LOE)?

For personnel and some other budget lines, ACE will accept shared costs as long as they are appropriate for the proposed project’s needs. Indirect costs should be calculated based on an organization’s NICRA (if they have one) or based on the USAID 10% De Minimis methodology.

20) Can we forward the presentation to our CSOs network?
Please feel free to share this presentation to all of your relevant networks.

21) As the project period is 12 months, can we start the project when we wish?
When applicants submit proposals, a proposed timeframe for implementation must be included. The exact start and end date will depend on the selection and negotiation processes. The estimated award timeframe is February 2021.

22) If an organization wants to propose a similar set of activities in three States (Kayah, Kayin and Mon), should the applicant submit one proposal or three?
Applicants should propose activities in a strategic way to demonstrate how all of the activities across geographic areas fit together. The same design in different areas should be packaged together in one proposal.
23) We are a government-organized non-governmental organization working with youth. Our organization is comprised of 40% government and 60% youth, and our Chairman is the State minister for Social Affairs. Can this type of organization apply to this RFA?

Eligible non-governmental organizations can submit an application; semi-government organizations are not deemed eligible under this RFA.

24) Do you have a plan for how many partners you will select in a state?

ACE will select the most qualified proposals based on the selection criteria; there is no pre-determined selection plan.

25) In the RFA, there is a requirement for organizations to describe two pages of past experience. Can you advise how to write the past experience section?

In this section, applicants should express how they have conducted similar activities or approaches to those listed in their application to ACE. Feel free to emphasize your achievements and experiences as appropriate.
26) The RFA states “5.3. Cost application Operating/administrative costs: rent, communications, electricity, telephone, audit, and office supplies; Pact will not fund office start-up costs or proposal development costs.” Does that mean ACE will not cover the costs of office supplies including office rent during the project implementation period?

ACE will not cover any costs, including office supplies and rent, that are incurred prior to the start date of the project. Any required and reasonable costs for implementation will be allowed during the project period, subject to approval by USAID.