REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

RFA SOLICITATION NUMBER: RFA-VAC-2020-001

Title: USAID Child Safeguarding Capacity Strengthening and Implementation Research Efforts

DATE OF ISSUE: August 12, 2020

CLOSING DATE AND TIME FOR APPLICATIONS:

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

12:00 PM (EDT)

Applications must be emailed to: heard@urc-chs.com

Deadline for Questions: **Friday, August 21, 2020, 5:00 PM EDT**

Questions by email ONLY to: heard@urc-chs.com

Contact Person: Samantha Ski, Senior Implementation Research Scientist, HEARD Project

Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under cooperative agreement number AID-OAA-A-17-00002. The project team includes prime recipient, University Research Co., LLC (URC) and sub-recipient organizations.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment, nor does it commit the University Research Co., USAID, or any other entity to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Any submission that does not fully comply with requirements of the RFA may be rejected. Furthermore, funding of a selected proposal will be contingent on both the availability of funds and execution of a contractual agreement.

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1. ACRONYMS

CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CPA	Certified Public Accountant
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DUNS	Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System
HEARD	Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development Project
HHS	Health and Human Services
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NICRA	Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
NIH	National Institutes of Health
RFA	Request for Applications
URC	University Research Co.
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

2. PURPOSE OF THE RFA

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) Project is seeking a partner institution to support strengthening USAID's and its partners' policies, procedures, and practices related to child safeguarding, including available reporting procedures, the quality of investigations stemming from reports, and assessments of new partners child safeguarding policies among all USAID partners.

3. SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Successful applicants will have a highly sophisticated and specific skill set and organizational capacity expected to include:

- Experience (at least five years) in supporting organizations working in a diversity of geographic and cultural settings to assess and strengthen child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices;
- Experience and up-to-date expertise with developing and implementing child safeguarding training resources;
- Ability to obtain, analyze, and evaluate partner's child safeguarding information; to organize, interpret, and present it in verbal or written form for varied audiences; and to provide solid analysis leading to sound decision-making.
- International experience in a variety of regions and countries is required.

- Demonstrated managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve the results outlined in this RFA.
- Strong institutional financial and management capacities.

4.   BACKGROUND

The USAID's HEARD Project is implemented by University Research Co. LLC (URC). The purpose of the HEARD Project is to undertake research efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving USAID's global health and development goals" The HEARD Project focuses on evaluative and targeted research that accelerates research-to-use processes.

USAID has regulations and a policy on child-safeguarding standards that apply to both acquisition and assistance partners as well as to USAID personnel. This includes prioritizing partners in providing international assistance to service-delivery programs for children that adhere to best practices and use family-based approaches. Because of their positive aims and potential for improving children's lives, clear child safeguarding policies and procedures for prevention and response, including screening, training, and monitoring personnel, as well as immediate reporting and action in response to any violations of law or program policies, must also be in place in any activity (U.S. Government's Strategy Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity).

Child safeguarding includes the set of policies, procedures, and practices that are employed to ensure the safety of all children that come into contact with service providers, in any way, including as program beneficiaries. Child safeguarding requires responsibility and preventative actions at the organizational and individual levels to ensure that all children are protected from deliberate or unintentional harm or risk of harm by staff, representatives and third parties, who come into contact with children or impact them through the organization's operations.

The focus of the work under this RFA will be to help strengthen USAID's and its partners' policies, procedures, and practices related to child safeguarding, including available reporting procedures, the quality of investigations stemming from reports, assessments of new partners, and presence of child safeguarding policies among all USAID partners.

5.   TIME FRAME

Activities to start in September 2020 and are projected to continue for 12 months.

6.   TOTAL ESTIMATED AMOUNT

Total funding for this effort is estimated to be up to $375,000 USD.

7. EXPECTED ACTIVITIES

The successful organization(s) will be working closely with the HEARD project team and be responsible for carrying out activities outlined below.

1. Review of child safeguarding policies across the U.S. Government (including e.g., Departments of Labor, State, Health and Human Services, USAID and the Peace Corps,) and other key stakeholders.
2. Building off of USAID's existing Tracking Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Business Process Review, conduct an analysis of USAID's current child safeguarding reporting and investigations, and provide recommendations to strengthen processes including integration of survivor-centered approaches and how child safeguarding practices are coordinated with other accountability and safeguarding initiatives (including sexual exploitation and abuse, countering trafficking in persons, etc.)
3. Develop capacity strengthening materials and training for USG staff to strengthen institutional-level procedures and policies and staff-level knowledge, attitudes and practices needed to implement strong Agency safeguarding practices, and to support the same among partners. These could include:
    o Online module(s)
    o Child safeguarding trainings for Missions and partners
4. Direct support in 3-5 countries, possibly including:
    o Support to child safeguarding platforms in countries to facilitate observation and learning on best practices in child safeguarding, child safeguarding frameworks, processes for investigating and responding to child safeguarding violations using a survivor-centered approach;
    o Trainings with partners in select countries;
    o Policy and advocacy support nationally or locally; and
    o Understanding partner's risk levels depending on their interactions with children and provide recommendations on levels of accountability.
5. Support to investigating implementation research questions, e.g., questions related to:
    o Increasing organizational behavior around child safeguarding and the shifts required to effectively address it, building off previous reviews and recommendations, and including process documentation of USAID's experience;
    o Measuring the effectiveness of developing and implementing training resources in shifting knowledge, attitudes, practices, and other measures of effectiveness; and
    o Providing a cost benefit analysis towards the affordability relative to the outcomes of child safeguarding investments and effective promotion of the importance and value of preventive work.

8. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE APPLICATIONS

8.1. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the award under this RFA, applicants must meet the requirements stated below.

1) Be a U.S. or non-U.S. based NGO; or

2) Be a U.S. or non-U.S. based for-profit, not-for-profit, international organization, or private voluntary organization, inclusive of universities. In the case of for-profit organizations, no fee or profit will be allowed.
3) The Recipient must be a responsible entity and have the necessary organizational, experience, accounting, and operational controls and technical skills in order to achieve the objectives of this activity and comply with the terms and conditions of the award.
4) Foreign governments and foreign government-owned parastatal organizations are not eligible to apply for funding under this program.
5) The Applicant must be able to contribute cost share from their own, private, or local sources for the implementation of this project over the course of the sub-agreement. Specifically, such funds may be mobilized from the recipient; other multilateral, bilateral, and foundation donors; host governments; and local organizations, communities and private businesses that contribute financially and in-kind to the implementation of activities at the country level.

Responses from organizations that do not meet the eligibility criteria listed above will not be reviewed and evaluated.

8.2. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Key Information

- Due date for questions about RFA: **Friday, August 21, 2020, 5:00 p.m. EDT**.
- Due date for applications: **Wednesday, September 2, 2020, 12:00 p.m. EDT**
- Number of award(s) expected: One or more
- Maximum page length of technical application: 11 pages maximum (not including Cover Page, Table of Contents, Acronyms, Annexes)
- Language for technical and cost applications: English only
- Submitted via Microsoft Word (preferably) or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel.
- The technical application must be in searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate.
- The Cost Application must include an Excel spreadsheet with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets. A PDF version of the Excel spreadsheet may be submitted in addition to the Excel version at the applicant's discretion; however, the official cost application submission is the unlocked Excel version
- Applications must be submitted by email to heard@urc-chs.com. Email submissions must include the RFA number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application.

Both the Technical and Cost Applications must include **a cover page** containing the following information:

- Date of submission
- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the

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alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address)
- Program name
- Request for Application (RFA) number

All applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications and may be determined to be nonresponsive if they do not follow the instructions in the RFA. Section 10 addresses the technical evaluation procedures and criteria for the applications. Applicants are advised to read the instructions carefully.

8.3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TECHNICAL APPLICATION

The technical application must be specific, complete, and presented concisely, demonstrating the applicant's organizational capabilities and technical expertise with respect to achieving the activities described in the RFA. The application should take into account the activity description and review criteria found in this RFA.

The Technical Application must be:

- Written in English
- Typed in a Microsoft Word compatible program, single-spaced with a 12-point font and one-inch margins
- Saved and submitted as one document in PDF or Word format, with all sections and appendices put together
- Labeled with page numbers, the RFA number and the name of the applicant organization on every page
- Technical Application must not exceed 14 pages, not including cover page, acronyms list, table of contents, executive summary, and annexes.

The Technical application must include the following sections:

1. **COVER PAGE** (See Section 9.2 above for requirements - not included in the page limit)

2. **ACRONYMS LIST** (not included in the page limit). The Acronyms page must include a list of acronyms from the technical application.

3. **TABLE OF CONTENTS** (Not included in the page limit).

4. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (limit 1 page).** The Executive Summary must provide a high-level overview of key elements of the Technical Application. This section should contain the information that the applicant believes best represents its proposed implementation approach/plan, anticipated results, and how the overall activity will be managed.

5. **TECHNICAL APPROACH AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (up to 8 pages):** The Applicant must provide a description of the planned technical approach related to each of the expected activities (see Section 7), as well as an implementation plan describing proposed timeline for expected activities, including benchmarks and anticipated deliverables. The Applicant is expected to provide a Gantt chart,

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showing the main categories of activities and the activities in each category with implementation timeline. The Gantt chart can be placed in Annex.

6. **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE (up to 4 pages)**

   Section 1: Experience and current expertise related to supporting organizations working in a diversity of geographic and cultural settings to assess and strengthen child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices (**limit 1 pages**);

   Section 2: Experience and current expertise related to developing and implementing child safeguarding training resources (**limit 1 pages**);

   Section 3: Experience related to obtaining, analyzing and evaluating institutional child safeguarding information; organizing, interpreting and presenting it in verbal or written form for varied audiences, as well as providing solid analysis leading to sound decision-making **(limit 1 page)**;

   Section 4: Geographic experience and institutional capacity to coordinate and implement the above-mentioned activities; including technical, financial, and administrative management capacity (**limit 1 page**).

7. **KEY PERSONNEL AND STAFFING PLAN** (limit 1 page): Applicant must describe Proposed Key Personnel summarizing his/her specific training, role, and experience with leading activities described under this RFA. CV(s) must be included in Annex.

8. **ANNEXES:** CV(s), Gantt Chart.

8.4. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COST APPLICATIONS

The Cost Application must be submitted by email at the same time the technical application is submitted. The applicant should propose a line item budget for the period of the assessment. There will be no profit/fee allowed for this award.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections:

1. **COVER PAGE**: The Cost Application cover page must contain the same information as the Technical Application cover page).

2. **BUDGET:** The budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year, including itemization of the federal and non-federal (cost share) amount. Budget items with the total zero value should not be included in the budget. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make award and will result in a rejection of the cost application. The budget must include the following worksheets or tabs at a minimum:

    - **Summary budget,** must be inclusive of all project costs (USAID-funded and cost share), broken out by major budget category for activities implemented by the applicant for the entire period of the performance.

- **Detailed budget**, which is a detailed version of the Summary Budget. The detailed budget must reflect each estimated cost item, broken out. Detailed budget must include a breakdown by year (if applicable), by budget category and budget line items for all federal funding (core and field support) and cost share for the entire implementation period of the project. Each cost must be specified. Unallowable costs and costs without a clear definition (such as "Miscellaneous" and "Other") will not be accepted.
- **Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient**, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category, for the entire implementation period of the project.

The detailed budgets for the applicant and each sub-applicant must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

- **Personnel:** must be separated into expatriate and local personnel and include direct salaries and wages only (not consultants or sub-recipients). All personnel must be proposed in accordance with each company's personnel policies. All rates must be proposed as unburdened rates exclusive of benefits and/or fees (if any). The budget narrative must include as much information as possible about the personnel's name, labor category, and unburdened daily rate, level of effort and salary escalation factors. Explain all assumptions in the budget narrative.

- **Fringe Benefits:** if the company has a fringe benefit rate that has been approved by a federal agency, such rate should be used and evidence of its approval should be provided (i.e. a copy of the organization's NICRA). If a fringe benefit rate has not been approved, the applicant should include all benefits as direct costs or propose a rate for budgeting purposes and explain how the rate was determined; in this case, the narrative must include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, FICA, etc.) and the costs of each.

- **Consultants:** if the applicant proposes consultants, whose services are directly related to the project, the budget must contain a line item for each such consultant, using unburdened daily rates. Similar information should be provided for Consultants as provided for Personnel. Consulting services not part of the technical scope/delivery of the award (logistical support services such as audit services, IT support, security, etc.) must be included under Other Direct Costs.

- **Travel & Transportation:** must be separated into international and domestic travel. Travel costs may include transportation, per diem, taxi transfers to/from airport, insurance, etc. For international travel, costs may also include visa, inoculations, MedEvac and DBA (when applicable). Within each category, details must be provided to explain the purpose of the trip, the number of trips, the mode of travel (airfare, train or other), the departure and arrival cities, the number of travelers, and the duration of the trips. Per diem must be based on the organization's travel policies, as well as align with the Department of State's Standardized Regulations (DSSR). When appropriate please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as the organization's travel policy, and include all assumptions in the budget narrative.

- **Equipment:** must contain a line item for each type of equipment, including information on estimated models, cost per unit and number of units. The budget narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and the basis for the estimates. Explain all assumptions in the budget narrative, including the proposed number of units and annual escalation factors (if any).

- **Supplies:** must include a line item for each type of supply, including information on cost per unit and quantity. The budget narrative must include the purpose of the supplies and the basis for the estimates. Explain all assumptions in the budget narrative, including the proposed number of units and annual escalation factors (if any).

- **Sub-awards/Sub-contracts:** specify the services or goods provided by the sub-applicants. The sub-applicants must prepare similar detailed budgets and budget narratives that align with the same requirements as the applicant. Contractual services not part of the technical scope/delivery of the award (logistical support services such as audit services, IT support, security, etc.) must be included under Other Direct Costs.

- **Other Direct Costs:** Explain all assumptions in the budget narrative, including rates, quantity.

- **Indirect Costs** – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200.414. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only
- Eligibility: Any applicant
- Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
- Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA
- Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)
- Eligibility: Any applicant that has never received a NICRA
- Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200.414(f) for further information.

Indirect Costs must be supported with information to substantiate the calculation of the indirect cost. If the applicant (and each sub-applicant, if applicable) has received one of the following, it must provide the document in the cost application to substantiate the indirect cost: 1) a letter from a cognizant U.S. Federal audit agency or a Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement (NICRA); or 2) a narrative that supports how the indirect rates were calculated.

If the Applicant does not have a NICRA, the applicant must submit the following:

Reviewed Financial Statements Report: a report issued by a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) documenting the review of the financial statements was performed in accordance with Statements

on Standards for Accounting and Review Services; and that management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation. The accountant must also state that he or she is not aware of any material modifications that should be made to the financial statements; or

Audited Financial Statements Report: An auditor-issued report documenting the audit was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS), and the financial statements are the responsibility of management. It also provides an opinion that the financial statements present fairly in all material respects, and the financial position of the company and the results of operations are in conformity with the applicable financial reporting framework (or issues a qualified opinion if the financial statements are not in conformity with the applicable financial reporting framework).

Cost Share: Applicants must propose cost share of no less than ten (10%) percent of the total proposed budget. The applicant and each sub-applicant proposing cost share must confirm that:
   o   The proposed cost share contributions are not included as cost share contributions for any other U.S. Government (USG)-assisted program; and
   o   Are necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of this award's objectives.

3. **BUDGET NARRATIVE:** The cost elements provided in the Detailed Budget must also be provided in the Budget narrative, but with text that explains the rationale for the costs and any budget assumptions. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail so that reviewers can read the document while reviewing the Detailed Budget and understand the proposed costs. Explain all assumptions in the budget narrative.

4. **REQUIRED CERTIFICATIONS, ASSURANCES, AND SOLICITATION PROVISIONS:** Applicants must complete the "Certifications, Assurances, and Representations" document found in the link below, and include a signed copy with their application:
   http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf

5. Applicant must provide a valid **DUNS** (Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System) number in its application.

9.   REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

9.1.   TECHNICAL REVIEW

A Technical Review Committee will evaluate the applicants' Technical Expertise and Organizational Capacity taking into account the eligibility criteria (Section 8.1) and the technical review criteria (Section 9.2) found in this RFA.

9.2.   EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR TECHNICAL APPLICATIONS

Technical applications will be reviewed and evaluated against the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated experience and expertise related to supporting organizations working in a diversity of geographic and cultural settings to assess and strengthen child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practice;

2. Demonstrated experience and expertise related to developing and implementing child safeguarding training resources;

3. Demonstrated experience related to obtaining, analyzing, and evaluating institutional child safeguarding information; organizing, interpreting, and presenting it in verbal or written form for varied audiences, as well as providing solid analysis leading to sound decision-making;

4. Demonstrated institutional capacity, including financial and administrative management capacity required to manage U.S. Government funds;

5. Proposed key personnel possesses demonstrated leadership, specific training, expertise, and experience relevant to the activities described under this RFA.

Once the technical review of the applications is completed, HEARD Project will evaluate **Cost Application** of the apparently successful applicant for cost reasonableness, allocability, allowability, cost effectiveness and realism, adequacy of budget detail, financial feasibility, and consistency with elements of the Technical Application. There will be no points given for the Cost Application. However, final selection of award will take into consideration cost realism and best value for the HEARD Project and the U.S. Government.

9.3.   NOTIFICATION PROCESS

HEARD project will review and select responses submitted in accordance with the guidelines and criteria set forth in this RFA. Short-listed applicants will be contacted to answer further questions.

HEARD project reserves the right to disregard any applications that do not meet the requirements. The HEARD project is not obligated to issue a financial instrument or award as a result of this RFA.

ANNEX I: HEALTH, EVALUATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH (HEARD) PROJECT

The purpose of the HEARD Project is to undertake research and evaluation efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving USAID's global health and development goals, including Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Death, achieving an AIDS Free Generation, and Protecting Communities from Infectious Diseases Initiatives, including the Global Health Security Agenda. The HEARD Project will focus on evaluative and targeted research that accelerates research-to-use processes.

The HEARD Project is engaged with building a partnership around IS through the creation the Implementation Science Collaborative (ISC). The ISC is comprised of organizations that work to advance global health goals as implementation support organizations, regional health bodies, policy advocacy groups, civil society based evidence advocates, research organizations, and academic institutions. This strategic mix of partners will help to inform which research questions are prioritized in different contexts, to generate and analyze evidence, and to better package and move evidence through channels which render it more accessible to inform policy and practice.

The HEARD Project and the ISC will seek to:

- Effectively respond to evaluation and research-to-use global health priorities: developing the study designs and issue-specific partnerships required to navigate a complex effort along a strategic research-to-use pathway;
- Actively engage national, regional, and global-level stakeholders for the development of those priorities: engaging and supporting a growing community of interested implementers, policy makers, and investigators in shaping and promoting a more relevant research-to-use agenda and capacity; and by
- Strengthening and connecting the institutional applied research capacities required to sustain a vigorous implementation science agenda in support of global health goals, emerging threats and new opportunities.

Our approach is illustrated in Figure 1, below. Emphasizing effective stakeholder engagement and knowledge management throughout, the four main strategies of the HEARD Project are: (1) partnership and agenda development; (2) data liberation and evidence strengthening; (3) research and evaluation study design and implementation; and (4) the acceleration of evidence-to-use processes.

Figure 1. Key strategies for accelerating research-to-use