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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

RFI SOLICITATION NUMBER: RFI-DCHA-2018-001

Development of a resource center for evidence-based standards in the
global wheelchair sector

DATE OF ISSUE: July 25, 2018

CLOSING DATE AND TIME FOR APPLICATIONS:
August 17, 2018
5:00 PM (EST)

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

Deadline for Questions: **August 3, 2018, 5:00 PM (EST)**

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

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Issuance of this RFI does not constitute an award commitment on the part of URC, nor does it commit URC/HEARD or the US government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. URC may reject any submission that does not fully comply with requirements of the RFI. Furthermore, funding of successful proposals is contingent on the availability of funds from USAID.

USAID'S HEALTH EVALUATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (HEARD) PROJECT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	i
1. Purpose of the RFI.....	1
2. Successful Applicants	1
3. Background.....	1
4. Overall Objectives	2
5. Time Frame.....	2
6. Expected Activities	3
7. Instructions for Responses	4
7.1 Eligibility Criteria	4
7.2 General Instructions.....	4
7.3 Content of Technical Application	4
7.4 Format Requirements for Technical Application	5
8. Review and Notification Process	5
8.1 Technical Review	5
8.2 Review Criteria for Technical Application.....	5
8.3 Notification Process	6
8.4 Considerations for an Award.....	6
Annex I: Health, Evaluation and Applied Research (HEARD) Project.....	8

1. PURPOSE OF THE RFI

The purpose of the RFI is to identify a technical institution best able to manage a resource center for evidence-based standards in the global wheelchair sector capable of serving as a substantively authoritative consultative and coordinating body for:

1. establishing wheelchair service standards including potential accreditation or credentialing;
2. developing evidence-based wheelchair product standards for adverse conditions; and,
3. promoting the adoption, utilization, and contextualization of product standards, service standards, and related policies.

It is anticipated that the coordinating body will be led by a stakeholder representative governance structure and informed by relevant experts dedicated to advancing evidence-based products, services, and policies which improve access to appropriate wheelchairs and services in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

2. SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

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

- a. In-depth knowledge of the methodology and processes used to establish evidence-based product and service standards;
- b. Established working relationships with wheelchair experts and advocates;
- c. Demonstrated success in the development of product testing;
- d. Capacity and experience in establishing, developing and/or supporting new organizational entities and/or initiatives;
- e. Proven track record of collaborating and engaging successfully with governments, NGOs, donors and technical partners in the wheelchair sector;
- f. Demonstrated managerial, technical, and institutional capacities to achieve the results outlined in this RFI; and
- g. Strong institutional financial and management capacities.

3. BACKGROUND

There are over one billion people with disabilities in the world, with a higher prevalence in lower income countries than higher income countries¹. It is estimated that approximately 75 million people worldwide need a wheelchair for basic mobility yet only 5-15% of people who require assistive technologies (wheelchairs) have access to them². Access to assistive technologies can significantly empower and improve an individual's quality of life, access to employment, education, and community engagement.

¹ http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/factsheet.pdf?ua=1

² <http://www.who.int/disabilities/technology/en/>

USAID has invested in the wheelchair sector since 2002 with the goal of improving mobility and opportunities for people with mobility impairments. Investments have evolved throughout the years from specific organizational earmarks, to country-based and global investments in resources, policy promotion, procurements, and standards.

In 2006, USAID supported a consensus conference on wheelchairs in Bangalore, India. The conference centered around defining best-practices in the wheelchair sector. Subsequent to the meeting, the World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines on the Provision of Manual Wheelchairs in Less-Resourced Settings was published. This document defines best practices in Design and Production, Service Delivery, Training, and Policy and Planning.

Following the development of the WHO Guidelines, USAID has ensured the Guidelines' principles are reflected in all related investments. More recent investments have included the development of the Wheelchair Service Training Packages and the piloting of the packages globally, the development of a central procurement hub for wheelchairs, Consolidating Logistics for Assistive Technology Supply and Provision (CLASP), and the Global Cooperation on Assistive Technologies (GATE) initiative.

In January 2018, a Wheelchair Stakeholders' Meeting was held in Bangalore, India. The event convened participants from a number of stakeholder groups, including USAID, implementing partners, academia, and other sector technical specialists to evaluate wheelchair sector priorities. As a result of that meeting, key objectives for the sector over the next five years and related priority actions required to achieve each objective were collaboratively developed.

USAID is committed to helping address the severe gaps in the availability of and accessibility to appropriate wheelchairs and wheelchair services in the developing world, and supporting a comprehensive approach to the provision of suitable wheelchairs and the associated research, education, and training that must inform and accompany this work.

4. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Through this effort, the HEARD Project aims to support the development of evidence-based standards for the global wheelchair sector to be housed in an independent, stakeholder-led resource center. The resource center will be capable of serving as a substantively authoritative consultative and coordinating body for:

- a. establishing wheelchair service standards, including potential accreditation or credentialing;
- b. developing evidence-based wheelchair product standards for adverse conditions;
- c. promoting the adoption, utilization, and contextualization of product standards, service standards, and related policies in LMICs; and
- d. maintaining coordination among the wheelchair sector.

5. TIME FRAME

Activities are anticipated to start in September 2018 and are projected to continue for approximately three years.

6. EXPECTED ACTIVITIES

It is anticipated that the activities to be carried out by the successful applicant will include efforts to:

a. Promote Collaboration within the Wheelchair Sector, including to:

- Maintain committees to lead identified priority focal areas with targeted results;
- In collaboration with WHO, support the process to develop recommendations to update and ensure wheelchair guidelines and support materials are current and evidence-based;
- Coordinate efforts for wheelchair service standards; wheelchair product standards; and adoption, utilization, and contextualization of standards;
- Develop a representative governance board to drive sector priorities and establish an entity to house this governance board, as needed.

b. Establish Wheelchair Service Standards encompassing potential accreditation or credentialing, including to:

- Develop a globally representative committee to lead the process of developing service standards;
- Determine through mapping processes the most appropriate method of recognition for wheelchair service providers;
- Develop testing methods for wheelchair providers that are easily accessible in both LMIC's and resourced locations;
- Define personnel titles, variations of competency levels; and recognition methods for wheelchair personnel; and
- Socialize and promote competency standards through formal educational institutions and accreditations (i.e. physical therapist, occupational therapist, prosthetist and orthotist), country and regional policy networks.

c. Develop Wheelchair Product Standards for Adverse Conditions, including to:

- Develop evidence-based product standards with pass and fail thresholds for wheelchairs in adverse conditions;
- Create target product profiles for wheelchairs to improve quality procurement;
- Develop test methods and support the installation of testing centers which are accessible to product manufacturers, suppliers, and buyers;
- Support product development and selection through testing, dissemination of product reviews, and field evaluations;
- Promote testing by governments that fund wheelchair purchases; and
- Collect ongoing data through partners to verify and refine testing methods.

d. Promote the Adoption, Utilization, and Contextualization of Product Standards, Service Standards and Related Policies, including to:

- Develop tools, examples, and resources for the development of policies related to wheelchairs;
- Support the development of regional, national, or sub-national affiliates/chapters to advocate for policies and support the adoption and utilization of product and service standards; and
- Identify partnerships that allow for expansion of national or sub-national affiliates/chapters through complimentary networks, where appropriate.

7. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONSES

7.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Both U.S. and non-U.S. technical organizations are invited to apply. The applicant must be an organization of one of the following types:

1. Institutions of higher education;
2. Non-profit organizations (if a US organization, it must be a 501(c)(3) certified non-profit); or
3. For-profit research organizations (no fee or profit will be allowed).

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

7.2 GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Key Information

- Due date for questions about RFI: **August 3, 2018, 5:00 PM (EDT)**
- Due date for applications: **August 17, 2018, 5:00 PM (EDT)**
- Number of award(s) expected: one
- Maximum page length of technical response: 9 pages maximum (not including Cover Page, Annexes)
- Language for technical response: English only

All responses received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in Section. Applications may be judged as nonresponsive if they do not follow the instructions in the RFI. Section 4 addresses the technical evaluation procedures and criteria for the responses. Applicants are advised to carefully read the instructions.

Questions about the RFI must be written in English and emailed heard@urc-chs.com by **August 3, 2018, 5:00 PM (EDT)**.

Responses to the RFI must be submitted in English and emailed to heard@urc-chs.com by **August 17, 2018, 5:00 PM (EDT)**.

7.3 CONTENT OF 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 RFI. The applicant's statement of Organizational Capabilities and Technical Expertise must include the following areas:

- Section 1. Experience and current expertise related to wheelchair product standards (**limit 2 pages**);
- Section 2. Experience and current expertise related to wheelchair service standards, including accreditation or credentialing (**limit 2 pages**);
- Section 3. Experience and current expertise leading and/or engaging in policy and advocacy-related activities that advance the development, utilization, and contextualization of wheelchair product standards, service standards, and related policies. Include names and nature of engagement with key partners involved (**limit 2 pages**);

- Section 4. Experience and current expertise establishing, developing, and supporting new organizational entities and/or initiatives (**limit 1 page**);
- Section 5. Proposed Project Director summarizing his/her specific training, role, and experience with assistive technologies, specifically wheelchairs (**limit 1 page**); and
- Section 6. Institutional capacity to coordinate and implement the above-mentioned activities; including technical, financial, and administrative management capacity (**limit 1 page**).

7.4 FORMAT REQUIREMENTS FOR TECHNICAL APPLICATION

- a. The technical application should 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 RFI number (RFI-DCHA-2018-001) and the name of the applicant organization on every page
 - Limited to nine (9) pages not including cover page and annexes
- b. The technical application should have **Cover Page** (not included in the page limit) with the following information:
- Program/Project title;
 - RFI reference number;
 - Name of organization applying to the RFI;
 - Contact person, telephone number, fax number, address, and types name(s) and title(s) of person(s), who prepared the application, and corresponding signatures.
- c. **Curricula Vitae (CVs)** of proposed Project Director and other personnel will be included in Annex.

8. REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS

8.1 TECHNICAL REVIEW

A Technical Review Committee will evaluate the applicants' Organizational Capacity and Technical Expertise Statement taking into account the eligibility criteria (Section 7.1) and the technical review criteria (Section 8.2) found in this RFI.

8.2 REVIEW CRITERIA FOR TECHNICAL APPLICATION

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

1. Demonstrated experience and expertise related to wheelchair product standards;
2. Demonstrated experience and expertise related to wheelchair professional and service standards, accreditation and credentialing;
3. Access to and collaboration with existing working wheelchair professionals network(s) and demonstrated institutional ability to create partnerships and linkages among technical, policy, and service delivery stakeholders to successfully facilitate coordination and collaboration;

4. Demonstrated experience and expertise supporting the development of new organizational entities and/or initiatives;
5. Proposed Project Director and team that possess demonstrated leadership, expertise, and experience in the area of wheelchair product and service standards; and
6. Demonstrated programmatic experience and financial and administrative management capacity required to manage USG-funded projects.

8.3 NOTIFICATION PROCESS

URC will review and select responses submitted in accordance with the guidelines and criteria set forth in this RFI. Short-listed applicants will be contacted to answer further questions and will be invited to submit full application to undertake the work referenced in this RFI.

URC reserves the right to disregard any responses that do not meet the guidelines. URC is not obligated to issue a financial instrument or award as a result of this RFI.

If URC's review of the applicant's response will result in a decision to request a full application, URC will provide specific requirements and instructions for the full application.

8.4 CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN AWARD

To be eligible to receive U.S. Government funding, organizations must meet certain requirements. While these requirements do not have to be met in order to submit a technical response under the RFI, they will need to be met if the applicant is requested to submit a full application. Among those requirements are:

- A. All first-time applicants for USAID funding are subject to a pre-award assessment to verify that the applicant has proper procedures in place to receive USAID funding (ADS 303.3.8)
- B. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:
 - i. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application (**Please allow several weeks for processing through SAM.GOV**);
 - ii. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. To obtain information regarding the preceding, see the respective links: <http://www.dnb.com> and <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>
 - iii. Provide a valid DUNS number in its application (**Note: the DUNS number must be submitted with the application (it is required on the SF-424)**).
- C. Submission of relevant SF 424 Forms on request:
 - i. SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance;
 - ii. SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-construction Programs; and
 - iii. SF-424B, Assurance – Non-construction Programs
- D. Submission of a Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative
- E. Submission of additional documentation and certifications including:

- i. Negotiated Indirect Costs Rate Agreement (NICRA) or audited financial statements to support indirect rates.
- ii. A signed copy of ADS 303mav, Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements of the Recipient and Solicitation Standard Provisions.
- iii. Complete Pre-Award Assessment Questionnaire,
- iv. Organization's registration (e.g., certificate of incorporation, business license, certificate of registration with government).
- v. Organization chart or list of company officers.
- vi. Audited financial statements for the last two fiscal years.

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

