



# Stakeholder Consultation For USAID Office of Food for Peace - International Emergency Food Assistance Annual Program Statement



May 2016



Stakeholder Consultation  
for  
USAID's Office of Food for  
Peace  
International Emergency  
Food Assistance Annual  
Program Statement

The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program is the USAID/Food for Peace-funded learning mechanism that generates, captures, disseminates, and applies the highest quality information, knowledge, and promising practices in development food assistance programming, to ensure that more communities and households benefit from the U.S. Government's investment in fighting global hunger. Through technical capacity building, a small grants program to fund research, documentation and innovation, and an in-person and online community of practice (the Food Security and Nutrition [FSN] Network), The TOPS Program empowers food security implementers and the donor community to make lasting impact for millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

Led by Save the Children, The TOPS Program draws on the expertise of its consortium partners: CORE Group (knowledge management), Food for the Hungry (social and behavioral change), Mercy Corps (agriculture and natural resource management), and TANGO International (monitoring and evaluation). Save the Children brings its experience and expertise in commodity management, gender, and nutrition and food technology, as well as the management of this 7-year (2010–2017) US\$30 million award.

**Disclaimer:**

The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program was made possible by the generous support and contribution of the American people through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this guide were created by The TOPS Program and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the U.S. Government.

**Recommended Citation:**

The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program. 2016. *Stakeholder Consultation for USAID/ FFP Annual Program Statement*. Washington, DC: The TOPS Program.

**Contact:**

The TOPS Program  
c/o Save the Children  
2000 L Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036  
[info@thetopsprogram.org](mailto:info@thetopsprogram.org)  
[www.thetopsprogram.org](http://www.thetopsprogram.org)

# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Abbreviations and Acronyms</b> .....  | <b>vi</b> |
| <b>1. Introduction</b> .....   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2. Consultation overview</b> .....  | <b>1</b>  |
| FFP Introduction .....   | 1         |
| Appreciation .....   | 3         |
| Discussion Process .....   | 4         |
| <b>3. Key recommendations for FFP</b> .....  | <b>5</b>  |
| FFP’s award strategy .....   | 5         |
| APS clarity and content .....  | 5         |
| FFP’s selection process & communication of priorities and decisions .....              | 6         |
| Flexibility in program design .....  | 6         |
| Cash-based programming in emergency context .....                                      | 7         |
| Timeliness of the APS process .....  | 7         |
| Cost proposals and evaluating value for money .....                                    | 7         |
| <b>4. Way Forward</b> .....  | <b>8</b>  |
| Appendix 1: Participants (Consultation workshop and pre-consultation interviews) ..... | <b>10</b> |
| Appendix 2: APS Stakeholder Consultation Agenda .....                                  | <b>12</b> |
| Appendix 3: Workshop Evaluation Summary .....  | <b>13</b> |
| Annex 1: Pre-Consultation Interview Notes .....  | <b>16</b> |
| Annex 2: March 29 Consultation Notes .....   | <b>25</b> |
| Event introduction .....   | 25        |
| Overview of meeting .....  | 25        |
| Overview of APS revision .....   | 25        |
| Modality decision-making tool .....  | 26        |
| Appreciations by PVO community: .....  | 27        |
| Breakout Session 1 .....   | 28        |
| Breakout Session 2 .....   | 32        |
| Questions and Answers/ Way Forward .....   | 34        |

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| AOR              | Agreement Officer's Representative                        |
| EFSP             | Emergency Food Security Program                           |
| FFP              | USAID Office of Food for Peace                            |
| FSN Network      | The Food Security and Nutrition Network                   |
| OFDA             | Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance                |
| PVO              | private voluntary organization                            |
| The TOPS Program | The Technical and Operational Performance Support Program |
| U.S.             | United States   |

# 1. Introduction

As a part of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace's (FFP) commitment to consult with the PVO community to improve their processes, FFP requested that the Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) program facilitate a consultation with PVOs to improve processes relevant to the Annual Program Statement (APS) that provides information and guidance for prospective applicants of USAID FFP emergency food assistance awards.

The specific areas of focus of the consultation were 1) how to improve the specific content of the APS and 2) how to improve APS processes in the pre-award phase. The consultation did not address broader USAID/USG rules or regulations that FFP does not have the ability to change or control, or anything that happens after the APS agreement is signed (e.g., implementation activities).

During March 2016 TOPS solicited feedback from FFP-implementing partners through Skype and telephone conversations, face-to-face interviews, and written comments. Sixteen staff members from seven organizations<sup>1</sup> were interviewed; many had gathered suggestions from additional colleagues prior to the interview. TOPS consolidated the feedback and organized it into topical areas. That document (Annex 1) provided a basis for the in-person stakeholder consultation between the PVO community and FFP, held March 29, 2016, at Save the Children offices, Washington, D.C..

This report starts with an overview of the Stakeholder Consultation, including highlights shared by FFP on proposed changes to the APS. Section 3 consolidates the main recommendations from the PVO community to FFP resulting from both the pre-consultation interviews and the in-person consultation. Annexes 1 and 2 contain stand-alone notes for each activity. Three appendices offer all documentation from the consultation workshop.

## 2. Consultation overview

An invitation to attend the March 29, 2016 stakeholder consultation was sent out via the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network. Forty people participated in person (55% PVO staff, representing most of the major implementing organizations; 25% FFP staff; and 20% TOPS Program staff and other technical consultants). Remote participation was not offered at this meeting. Appendix 1 provides a list of participants. Appendix 2 shares the agenda.

### **FFP Introduction**

Susan Bradley, Acting Deputy Director for FFP, started off the session by highlighting proposed changes in the revised APS. Key points from her opening follow.

- The APS is currently being revised by FFP. FFP hopes the revised APS will reflect many of the comments, concerns, and appreciation expressed by the PVO community.

---

<sup>1</sup> ACDI-VOCA, CARE, CRS, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, PCI, and World Vision.

- FFP has been using the APS tool for about 5 years--original design was through a pilot to prove that concepts worked (e.g. cash/ process/ options / flexibility) which drove the design of the APS.
- PVOs have helped prove that flexibility to use different modalities in context-specific ways is the way to go, so now, as FFP redesigns the agency's overall strategy, the focus will shift to program outcomes and efficiencies.
- Flexibility offers the most efficient tool, which in turn enables assistance to reach the greatest number of people (the Office of Management and Budget is a supporter of food aid reform, with most reform focusing on greater efficiency).
- FFP is revamping the concept paper format to try to mirror the steps an organization should take in conducting response analysis, and it is streamlining the Concept Paper Technical Information to three components

1. Emergency Description: What is the Food Security Emergency?

2. Project description / summary: How will PVOs respond to the situation?

3. Rationale for response: Why is the proposed response the best response? Why are the chosen modalities the most appropriate? Basically, why do you think this will work?

- If a concept paper is not selected to submit a full application, the reason why would fall under one of these components.
- Susan expressed appreciation for the information provided in the pre-consultation interview notes. Many issues raised by the PVO community are areas FFP is already thinking about. The pre-consultation interview notes offered good feedback and validation of FFP concerns.
- One point raised in the pre-consultation notes is the observation that AORs have differing ways in which they go about the review process and offer individualized levels of communication during and after the review. FFP has already standardized both the review process and the expected level of communication between PVO and FFP in internal FFP guidance.
- Changes to expect in revised APS
  - Reweighting of the scoring process. More focus will be placed on human-level outcomes.
  - Past performance is no longer a part of the evaluation criteria
  - FFP is trying to cut down on text and narrative in the APS. Applicants can expect to see more tables in the revised version. Tables should allow FFP to systematically track required information and will reduce review time.

John Lamm, FFP Food Security and Marketing Advisor, then talked a bit about APS evaluation criteria and shared a modality decision-making tool that is in development. FFP hopes this tool will help to inform partner response analysis and decisions for emergency food security programs. Key points from his presentation follow.

- The modality decision-making tool is meant to provide a standardized internal process for FFP staff who review APS applications and is also intended to reflect the response analysis that FFP expects to inform partner decisions.



- FFP is revamping the APS evaluation criteria. Criteria will begin with a broad look at the extent to which activities do no harm and then narrow down to a range of options that can be used in an emergency.
- Five key points of evaluation criteria at the concept paper stage:
  1. **Justification** of the need for emergency food assistance
  2. **Appropriateness:** Is the modality appropriate given the market conditions?
  3. **Feasibility:** Does the proposed modality and delivery mechanisms have a reasonable chance of success considering the context, infrastructure, and programming risks?
  4. **Food Security Objective:** Is the modality best-suited to meet programming objectives?
  5. **Cost efficiency:** Is the modality cost-efficient relative to other modalities and in respect to available resources?

Following the presentations by Susan Bradley and John Lamm, TOPS opened the floor to the PVO community for questions.

| PVO QUESTION   | FFP RESPONSE   |
|--|--|
| Any consideration of alignment between OFDA and USAID in relation to reviewing APS applications?         | FFP has a close collaboration with OFDA and have done joint awards. Determination of awards is context specific. OFDA has attended some FFP evaluation meetings for applications if there is relevance. In those cases, both parties review whether OFDA’s needs and FFP’s needs overlap.  |
| Are there opportunities to put something in the APS [that allows a PVO] to work with OFDA on [projects]? | No. This is a structural issue that will remain for the time being. The OFDA field team has the capacity to make decisions on grants, while FFP grants decision-making occurs at HQ level. The redesign of the APS will not address this particular issue, but it may help to improve realignment at HQ level. FFP expects to put out emergency technical chapters that will include FFP / OFDA and be more sector-specific. |
| Is there more nuanced specificity on where OFDA and FFP have priorities?                                 | It is a common sense approach. If the emergency is mainly affecting food security outcomes, then FFP will fund the response, but if food security is only 10% or so of the problem, then OFDA will take the lead. In general, both agencies must have a discussion.  |

## Appreciation

Prior to breaking into discussion groups, participants shared in plenary a round of appreciation for aspects of the APS process that are most-valued. The same exercise was carried out in the pre-consultation interviews. The list that follows represents input from both processes. The points below do not represent a consensus among participants, but rather individual experiences.

### What aspects of the APS process are most valued? Most efficient? Generally, what is working?

- The concept note format – it is simple, clear, and offers a consistent structure.

- The inclusion of complementary services – these allow emergency programs to bridge the gap between humanitarian relief and basic recovery.
- The flexibility of modalities in EFSPs that allows partners to provide the most appropriate response—especially FFP’s increasing openness to cash transfers as a modality.
- The ability to design an unsolicited response. “We love the flexibility to determine where emergencies exist, and potentially bring attention to situations that might be under the FFP radar.”
- The integration of funding streams with OFDA which allow for multidimensional responses.
- The ability to use the APS to complement existing DFAP activities.
- The ability to ask for extensions.
- Frequent trainings for partners.
- Flexibility of Agreement Officer’s Representatives (AOR) to engage with PVOs -- responsiveness during the application process.
- The timely communication provided by some of the AORs regarding concept notes and full applications.
- The inclusion of local and regional procurement. Some PVOs have seen great impact using market-based approaches. Local and regional purchase allows them to respond more rapidly and offer beneficiaries more dignity and satisfaction.
- FFP’s increased engagement overall, and specifically their role as an active partner and supporter in food security emergency working groups.

## **Discussion Process**

Topics that surfaced in the pre-consultation interviews were put to a group vote in order to prioritize discussion points for breakout sessions. In the first breakout session, participants split into five discussion groups, with one to two FFP representatives joining each table and taking detailed notes. Each of the five groups covered the same two topics, with the intent of capturing two to three solid recommendations from each group in plenary. In the second breakout session, participants split into three groups, each group discussing a distinctly different topic with the intent of capturing two to three solid recommendations from each group in plenary.

Prioritized discussion topics were:

### First breakout session

- How does FFP make concept decisions and are there ways FFP can better communicate its priorities and decisions? (Addressing types of data used for justification, opaque FFP rejection letters, data sharing, FFP country priorities).
- How much flexibility can FFP allow partners in program design? (Addressing complementary activities, "flexible design", FFP vs. OFDA activities, and questions about increasing amount of non in-kind programming)

### Second breakout session

- How do we reduce turnaround times on both ends (PVO and FFP)?

- What kind of standard indicators are appropriate for cash-based programming in emergency context?
- What are FFP's expectations on cost proposals and evaluating value for money? (Addressing cost per beneficiary, 50% rule, etc.)

### 3. Key recommendations for FFP

This section provides a synthesis of key recommendations that surfaced during the in-person consultation session and the pre-consultation interviews. Full detailed descriptions of recommended changes are included in Annexes 1 and 2.

#### **FFP's award strategy**

**Recommendation:** Make information about whether funding is available for a specific country or specific emergencies before a concept note is submitted.

**Recommendation:** Provide greater detail on specific regions within a country that FFP has earmarked for funding.

Suggestions to achieve the two recommendations above include discussions with FFP beforehand; a regional APS that supplements the global APS, and provides more funding details; and, more APS amendments that talk about specific priorities at a specific time for FFP.

**Recommendation:** Provide greater transparency on countries and regions where FFP prefers to use WFP as the implementer for emergency food security assistance.

**Recommendation:** Provide more structure and guidelines regarding joint OFDA/FFP awards. Provide some guidance on when to submit a concept or proposal to only one agency or the other.

**Recommendation:** Enhance communication between FFP Country Missions and FFP D.C. about FFP strategy to address shocks. Ensure that PVOs do not get conflicting messages from FFP D.C. and FFP Country Missions.

#### **APS clarity and content**

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity on what data NGOs should include in concept paper. (*FFP states tables in revised APS should resolve this.*)

**Recommendation:** Require a lighter version of the concept note with no market assessment.

**Recommendation:** If market analysis is required in concept note, provide more guidance on the type of analysis requested, minimum standards and level of specificity for assessment data, preferred tools. (*FFP states proposed modality decision tool will help solve this challenge.*)

**Recommendation:** Review the gender analysis portion of the APS requirement and ensure that all required points are realistic in a 12-month emergency program.

**Recommendation:** Tailor the wording of the environmental section, such that applicants understand they do not need to submit a full IEE, but rather a statement showing how an emergency program will have minimal impact on the environment.

## **FFP's selection process & communication of priorities and decisions**

**Recommendation:** Have a consistent FFP review team that participates from start to finish on specific applications.

**Recommendation:** AORs provide more consistent, specific feedback to applicants in rejection letters that explain why concept paper was not selected and after evaluation of full applications. Rejection letters should provide feedback along the concept area guidelines.

**Recommendation:** Improve communication flows between FFP and partners. Several suggestions on how to do this include:

- Allow partners to informally talk to FFP about concepts before a concept note is prepared.
- Increase informal regular communication between AOR and submitting applicant, so PVOs are apprised of concept paper "status" and know it's still in process.
- FFP could create a blog or a specific Q&A every 3 months or so for partners to ask questions on priorities and APS as those are evolving throughout the year.
- Have a meeting twice a year to talk about questions with partners.

## **Flexibility in program design**

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity and guidance on the parameters of a "flexible design."

- Guidance on changes to beneficiary benefits (up or down) in response to changing conditions on the ground such as increasing/decreasing market prices.
- Guidance on price increase thresholds (10%, 15%, 20% in either direction) before triggering a modification to the program design.
- Guidance on moving from one modality to another based on changing circumstances. If it becomes necessary to switch from cash transfers to commodities, will it be possible to get them quickly?
- Specific guidance on conflict environments vs. natural hazards. Does FFP prefer one modality over another in these situations?

**Recommendation:** In place of the strict 20%, consider a sliding scale in budget guidance for complementary services--a small percentage at the beginning of a program and a greater percentage at the end.

**Recommendation:** Include modality-specific questions to guide selection of modality. Partners need to understand how FFP evaluates the selection of one modality over another.

**Recommendation:** In an emergency, there could be multi-sectoral needs (shelter, WASH). The APS should clearly indicate what would be supported and how FFP sees multi-sectoral needs within a given emergency.

### **Cash-based programming in emergency context**

**Recommendation:** Indicators should pertain to food security outcomes not cash programming. Modalities are less important than what we are trying to achieve.

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity on the requirement to use e-payment for cash-based interventions (CBI) and the implications of not using e-payments.

**Recommendation:** Review the specific type of electronic transfers that are deemed acceptable to FFP.

### **Timeliness of the APS process**

**Recommendation:** Consider coming to agreement on average processing time and provide more detail in APS on how long approval should take.

**Recommendation:** Increase informal regular communication between AOR and submitting applicant, so PVOs are apprised of concept paper “status” and know it’s still in process.

**Recommendation:** Submitting organization ensures that all regulations in APS are provided in application.

**Recommendation:** Various checklists could help processes be timelier. Two ideas are a FFP checklist showing grants reviewed by OAA have everything concluded and a checklist for submitting organizations showing all APS regulations have been addressed.

### **Cost proposals and evaluating value for money**

**Recommendation:** In the APS, define what is meant by efficiency and provide more clarity about how FFP looks at cost of outputs.

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity and guidance on calculating average cost per beneficiary by activity and by month to be sure that all applicants are calculating it the same way.

**Recommendation:** In the APS, provide additional guidance on budget break down for the different cash-based interventions: in-kind vs voucher vs cash vs market support.

**Recommendation:** Ensure consistency among reviewers regarding the requirement that emergency food assistance modalities and transfer costs comprise the majority of total proposed costs. Sometimes it must be more than 50% of the cost/ sometimes more than 30% of the cost.

**Recommendation:** Provide guidance on what can be used in lieu of cost data, when those data are not available in an emergency.

## 4. Way Forward

Following the breakout discussions, the floor was opened for final questions.

| PVO QUESTION   | FFP RESPONSE   |
|--|--|
| Is FFP accepting applications for horn of Africa?                                    | Contact the field level missions in the area.<br><br>Yes, there are applications in individual countries in response to droughts   |
| Should we continue with current APS application/standards?                           | Yes, continue using the current APS. It will take FFP a few weeks to go over comments, discuss with technical teams certain components, and fine tune the revised APS. The original date for the release of the revised new draft was April 10, 2016, but now with the consultation, it may be pushed 2-3 weeks later. That release will be open to public comment for 45 days.<br><br>Ideally, FY 17 will start off with the revised APS. |
| What is the relation of the revised APS to FFP's revision of its long-term strategy? | FFP is finalizing the long-term strategy now.<br><br>The draft APS is significantly different than any of the other APS documents in the last 5 years.<br><br>The revised APS will reflect lots of the changes FFP is striving for in the strategy but there is not an immediate interface between the two.  |
| Does FFP prioritize local organizations in emergency programs?                       | FFP hopes that even emergency programs strengthen capacity of local organizations.   |

Susan Bradley and John Lamm ended by reiterating that the comments from the consultation will be taken back to FFP for consideration. While the objective of the consultation was to develop some immediate recommendations to FFP to improve APS content and processes, Bradley and Lamm stressed that the consultation process would not end at the close of the session and that there will be opportunities to clarify and further develop recommendations in the future. They want to make sure the communication line is open throughout the process. They further stated that FFP is committed to making the process smoother and more collaborative between the PVOs and FFP.

Sixteen people filled out the post-consultation satisfaction survey, the majority from the PVO community (Appendix 3). Responses from this small sample suggest that the majority of those in attendance were satisfied with the event and found the pre-interview consultation notes to be valuable and relevant.

Participants greatly valued the opportunity to engage with USAID about their requirements, were grateful that so many FFP representatives came to the event, and generally appreciated the lively discussions. Suggestions to improve the next stakeholder consultation include having more structure within the discussion groups, an increased amount of time for the exchange and plenary sessions, access to preliminary reading materials further in advance, and an opportunity for remote participation.

## Appendix I: Participants (Consultation workshop and pre-consultation interviews)

| Name        |               | Organization                         |
|-------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Krystle     | Corpuz        | ACDI/ VOCA                           |
| Mazen       | Fawzy         | ACDI-VOCA                            |
| Mustafa     | Aslamy        | Action Against Hunger                |
| Daniel      | Rupp          | Action Against Hunger                |
| Eduardo     | Viera         | ADRA                                 |
| Nathalie    | Cornet        | American Red Cross                   |
| Dalmar      | Ainashe       | CARE                                 |
| Camille     | Davis         | CARE                                 |
| Justus      | Liku          | CARE                                 |
| Vidyha      | Sriram        | CARE                                 |
| Jenny       | Coneff        | Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)     |
| Erin        | Fleming       | Catholic Relief Services             |
| Hans        | Fly           | Catholic Relief Services             |
| Colette     | Powers        | Catholic Relief Services             |
| Christopher | Goldthwait    | Consultant                           |
| Susan       | Bradley       | FFP                                  |
| Margarita   | Brunn         | FFP                                  |
| Elizabeth   | Ceryak        | FFP                                  |
| Kim         | Cook          | FFP                                  |
| Alisha      | English       | FFP                                  |
| John        | Lamm          | FFP                                  |
| Juli        | Majernik      | FFP                                  |
| Rob         | Mergenthaler  | FFP                                  |
| Arif        | Rashid        | FFP                                  |
| Ruco        | Van Der Merwe | FFP                                  |
| Laura       | Glaeser       | FHI360                               |
| Brett       | Sedgewick     | Global Communities                   |
| Amit        | Smotrich      | InterAction                          |
| Joseph      | Bangnikon     | International Medical Corps          |
| Sarah       | Jaber         | International Relief and Development |
| Matthew     | Law           | International Relief and Development |
| Rebecca     | Anzueto       | Lutheran World Relief                |
| Penny       | Anderson      | Mercy Corps                          |
| Cathy       | Bergman       | Mercy Corps                          |
| Emily       | Farr          | Oxfam                                |
| Jim         | DiFrancesca   | PCI Global                           |
| Dan         | Enarson       | Samaritan's Purse                    |



| <b>Name</b> |          | <b>Organization</b>       |
|-------------|----------|---------------------------|
| Nicholas    | Anderson | Save the Children         |
| Sara        | Harden   | Save the Children         |
| Brian       | Kriz     | Save the Children         |
| Laurel      | MaClaren | Save the Children         |
| Sara        | Netzer   | Save the Children         |
| Julia       | Crowley  | TOPS/ Save the Children   |
| Mark        | Fritzler | TOPS/ Save the Children   |
| Lauren      | Jessup   | TOPS/ Save the Children   |
| Adam        | Keehn    | TOPS/ Save the Children   |
| Laurie      | Starr    | TOPS/ TANGO International |
| Adrienne    | Todela   | TOPS/ CORE Group          |
| Paul        | Forsythe | World Vision              |
| Amelia      | Kendall  | World Vision              |
| Daniel      | Valle    | World Vision              |
| Diana       | Welkener | World Vision              |

# Appendix 2: APS Stakeholder Consultation Agenda

## Stakeholder Consultation: USAID/FFP Annual Program Statement (APS)

Tuesday, March 29, 2016, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
Save the Children 2000 L Street NW – 5th Floor

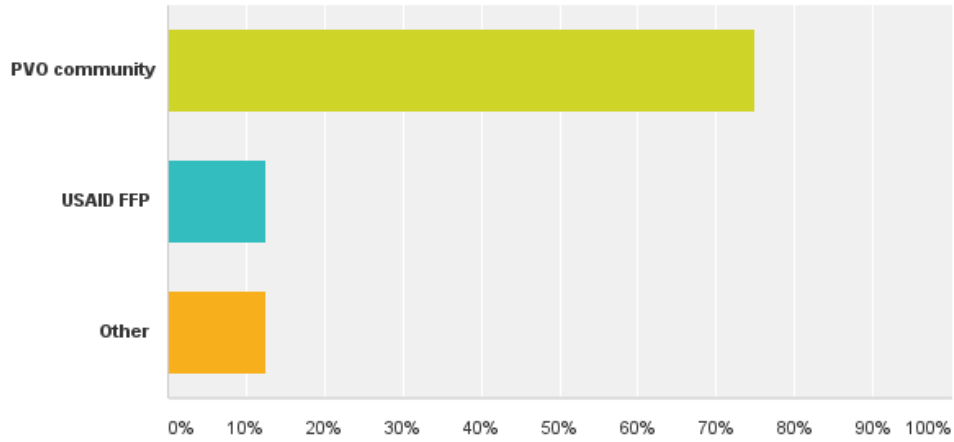
| Start Time            | Subject  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1:00-1:25             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FFP introduction               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight proposed changes in revised Annual Program Statement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| 1:25-1:45             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plenary brainstorm               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What aspects of the APS process are most valued? Most efficient?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| 1:45 – 2:30           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breakout session - key themes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each group focuses on challenges and resolutions in the same 2-3 key themes.</li> <li>Ensure there is a note taker from FFP at each table. We will need 2-3 bullets on each theme.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>      |
| <b>BREAK (10 min)</b> |  |
| 2:40 -3:00            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plenary share out (5 groups - 4 minutes each)</li> </ul>  |
| 3:00 -3:30            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breakout session: specific topical areas.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each group focuses on challenges and resolutions within topical areas.</li> <li>Ensure there is a note taker from FFP at each table. We will need 2-3 bullets on each area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 3:30 -3:40            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share unique highlights in plenary.</li> </ul>  |
| 3:40 -3:55            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Way forward               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commentary by FFP / Q&amp;As</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| 3:55 – 4:00           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrap up – TOPS               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thanks everyone for your interest and help!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

# Appendix 3: Workshop Evaluation Summary

The results that follow only represent the 16 people who responded to the after consultation satisfaction survey.

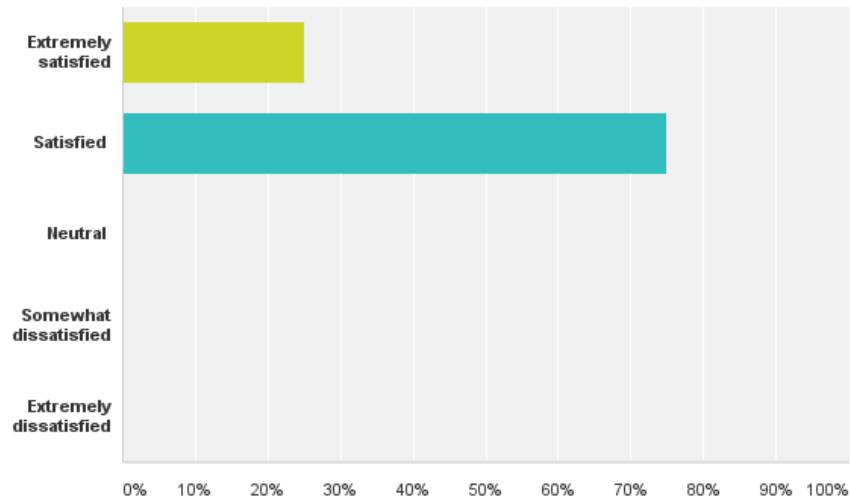
## Q1 Affiliation

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



## Q2 Please rank your overall level of satisfaction with the consultation session.

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



Optional: Please briefly explain what was dissatisfying or satisfying with the consultation session.

| # | Responses   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Opportunity to engage with USAID about their requirements is awesome.   |
| 2 | Well organized, participatory event. Especially appreciate the small group work/discussions and the good FFP representation/participation   |
| 3 | It was great to have FFP reps at the table. Also, I was pleased with the liveliness of the discussions.   |
| 4 | I liked the group work. It provided all parties to better understand challenges, needs, etc.  |
| 5 | we never have the opportunity to give feedback to USAID about their processes, so this was a really nice opportunity.   |
| 6 | Good information from FFP about evaluation criteria related to the concept note. More concrete recommendations to resolve issues would have been good.  |
| 7 | Exchange with FFP and other partners on technical issues  |
| 8 | I wasn't sure what to expect as I hadn't attended one of these before, but it was a great opportunity to express opinions and everyone had an equal chance to share. It was also great to have so many USAID/FFP representatives present. |

Optional: Please offer any suggestions on how to make consultations between the PVO community and FFP even more satisfying and productive for all involved.

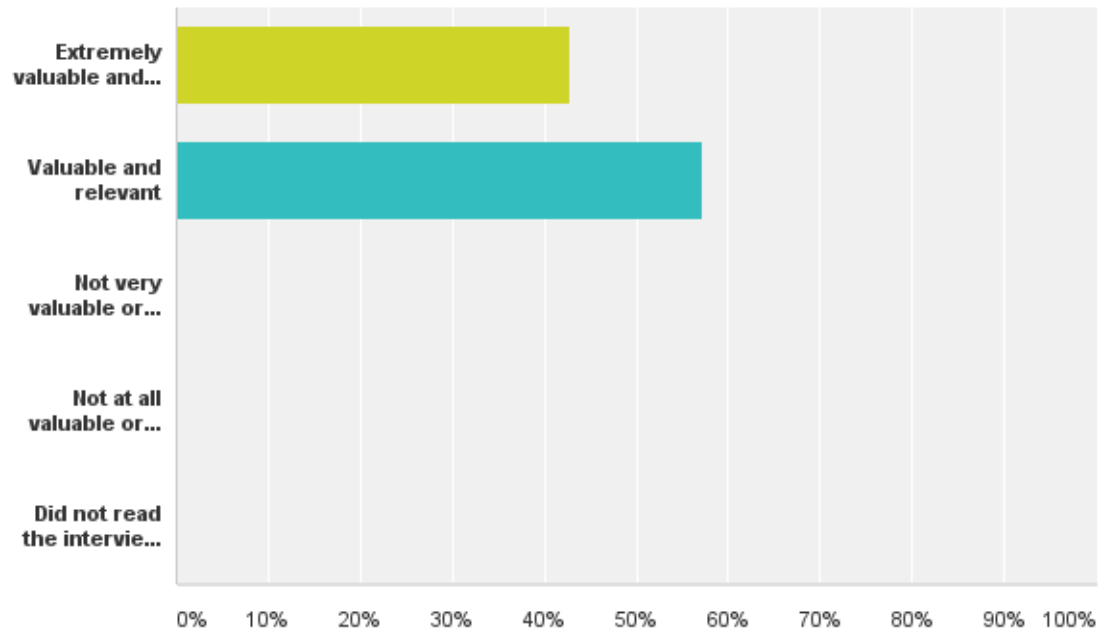
| # | Responses   |
|---|---|
| 1 | More structure would be beneficial, while it <del>was</del> interesting to discuss the topics, it would have been more productive to have specific topics to focus on.  |
| 2 | I like the targeted consultations - where a specific topic receives a robust examination. I'm not always sure it leads to big changes - more likely gradual - but giving a voice to a topic fills fulfilling to participants. |
| 3 | An early draft of the APS would provide a lot more specificity in guiding the discussion.   |
| 4 | No suggestions  |
| 5 | Increase the time for the exchange sessions   |
| 6 | I would have liked to have the materials a little bit earlier to solicit feedback from colleagues prior to attending the event.   |
| 7 | PVOs should send representatives who are knowledgeable of the topic, as well as brand new staff who are wetting their feet if they are interested.  |

Optional: please offer suggestions for how TOPS can improve facilitation of consultation sessions.

| # | Responses   |
|---|---|
| 1 | The consultation intended to leave some space for open questions, but it didn't work very well. I had some ideas in mind without the opportunity to express them. That's ok, but some means of being more open (and possibly anonymous) without derailing the process might also be nice. |
| 2 | The time for the plenary discussions should be extended.  |
| 3 | Call in option is always helpful to participants who need it. I liked the sharing of pre-reads before this session.   |
| 4 | I thought it was really good. The instructions on the last session were a bit confused, whether or not we should focus on the remaining issues and/or continue discussions from the previous session.   |
| 5 | Facilitation was great!   |
| 6 | Great job - thank you!  |

### Q6 How valuable / relevant to your concerns are the pre-consultation interview notes?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 2



# Annex 1: Pre-Consultation Interview Notes

## Annual Program Statement (APS)

### Stakeholder Consultation

#### Results of pre-consultation interviews

As a part of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace's (FFP) commitment to consult with the PVO community to improve their processes, FFP requested that TOPS facilitate a consultation with PVOs to improve processes relevant to the Annual Program Statement (APS) that provides information and guidance for prospective applicants of USAID FFP emergency food assistance awards.

Since early March 2016, TOPS has solicited feedback from FFP-implementing partners through Skype, phone, and face-to-face interviews. Some partners elected to supply written feedback in addition to the verbal interview. Sixteen staff members from seven organizations<sup>2</sup> contributed to the information presented in this draft; many had gathered suggestions from colleagues prior to the interview. TOPS consolidated the feedback and organized it into six topical areas, four of which are a concern to almost all interviewed members of the PVO community. Based on this information, TOPS developed draft recommendations to provide a basis for discussions in the March 29, 2016, Stakeholder Consultation. The views and recommendations expressed are those of the PVO community and do not necessarily reflect the views of TOPS.

The outline that follows provides an overview of key themes that emerged through the PVO interviews. At the start of the March 29<sup>th</sup> stakeholder consultation, participants will prioritize areas for discussion by group vote.

### 1. What is most-valued?

In addition to discussing concerns and challenges, TOPS probed to understand key elements of the FFP APS guidance document and process that are valued.

The majority of interviewed members of the PVO community greatly appreciate:

- The flexibility of modalities in Emergency Food Security Programs (EFSPs) that allows partners to provide the most appropriate response—especially FFP's increasing openness to cash transfers as a modality.
- The addition of complementary services in EFSPs allowing PVOs to more efficiently ease the transition from emergency to basic recovery
- The ability to ask for extensions.

Several PVOs express gratitude for:

---

<sup>2</sup> ACDI-VOCA, CARE, CRS, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, PCI, and World Vision.

- The timely communication provided by some of the AORs regarding concept notes and full applications. FFP’s willingness to offer feedback on concept notes that they are willing to fund, but which might not yet be of top quality. “This allows us to respond to the specific guidance and improve the full application.”
- The inclusion of local and regional procurement. Some PVOs have seen great impact using market-based approaches. LRP allows them to respond more rapidly and offer beneficiaries more dignity and satisfaction.
- FFP’s increased engagement overall, and specifically their role as an active partner and supporter in food security emergency working groups. PVOs relate that when there are strong relationships with FFP, “it’s a good feeling to all be working toward the same goal.” Examples include Cash Transfer WG in Sierra Leone and the USAID/FFP Africa Ebola Unit (AEU), which brought together FFP-funded partners implementing Ebola-response in the region (West Africa) for quarterly meetings in DC. “As a result of this meeting, we’ve learned and hence established a more enduring relationship with our AOR and vice versa.”
- The unsolicited application. “We love the flexibility to determine where emergencies exist, and potentially bring attention to situations that might be under the FFP radar.”

## 2. Draft recommendations based on key concerns and challenges

The four key topical areas that surface from interviews are:

- **The timeliness of the APS process**
- **FFPs award strategy / selection process:** this includes the non-specific APS versus a solicited response; FFP regional priorities for partners, and OFDA versus FFP sectors.
- **Communication:** this includes communication during the application process; communication related to unsuccessful concept notes and applications; and a consistent PVO communication strategy for FFP Washington and Country Missions.
- **The level of clarity in the content of the APS:** this includes guidance for cash-based interventions, flexible program design, finances, complementary activities, targeting, and logistics.

Additional issues mentioned by several PVOs are **existing data and monitoring systems** to enable PVOs to justify a response and the **recommended structure** for concept notes and full applications.

### Timeliness of APS process

**Recommendation:** Strive to reduce FFP response time in all stages of the APS process. FFP’s excellent response time when the APS was new (2010- 2011) is considered a good standard to strive for.

*Basis for recommendation:* The majority of PVOs interviewed relate that the length of time from concept note to getting agreements in place can be as long as 2-6 months. “This time lapse jeopardizes [a PVO’s] ability to respond to a pressing emergency situation [in sufficient time to significantly] reduce the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations.” PVOs try to be very strategic in selecting start dates (e.g., planning distributions at start of lean season). The long delays between concept note and full award result in the inability to meet planned-for start dates and can completely upend program design. The lengthy process makes it difficult to deliver high quality programming. Because every stage of the APS process is perceived as too long, **PVOs are reluctant to use APS mechanisms to address sudden-onset emergencies.** Many PVOs interviewed believe that the current approval structure and funding processes are only useful for slow-onset shocks and are not efficient mechanisms for addressing rapid states of emergency.

The PVO community recognizes that FFP slim staffing contributes to a slow application process, but some believe that enhanced guidance from FFP on priority emergency food security areas (see section 2.2) would reduce the number of proposals submitted, thereby reducing FFP workload, enabling a more rapid response for the PVO community, and ultimately saving more lives.

**Recommendation:** Outline more-equitable time parameters for FFP and applicants in each phase of the APS process. More specifically, reduce the amount of time that FFP holds onto a concept note and extend the time that PVOs are given to respond to issues letters.

*Basis for recommendation:* “Five days to respond to issues letters does not allow the applicant to respond with ideas and documents of sufficient quality.” Sometimes comments entail strategic changes that are time-consuming to address. PVOs face challenges in setting aside staff time to respond, because it is impossible to project when they may receive an issues letter.

**Recommendation:** Consider modeling OFDA processes to speed up response time. *[TOPS note: specific OFDA processes were not specified].*

*Basis for recommendation:* OFDA is much quicker at responding to concept notes than FFP. Those interviewed from the PVO community believe that part of this may be due to OFDA’s country-specific call for proposals. PVOs can clearly see whether a proposed response will align to the country response strategy, and as a result take a more strategic approach to assigning staff time toward proposal development.

**Recommendation:** Limit the number of iterations during the review in order to speed the emergency process.

*Question:* Are other funding mechanisms being considered that would allow for more timely allocation of resources?



## FFP award strategy/ selection process

### Unsolicited vs. solicited response

Members of the PVO community who took part in pre-consultation interviews are not in agreement about whether the unsolicited proposal process is a positive or challenging factor, but it is more commonly discussed as a challenge. Advocates state they value the flexibility to determine where emergencies exist and to bring geographic areas into focus that FFP may not have prioritized. Those who appreciate the unsolicited nature of the APS seem to have a strong relationship with country missions who are able to provide good guidance on whether a proposal may or may not be considered.

Those who describe the unsolicited structure of the APS as a challenge feel that the PVO community needs more country guidance and specificity to steer them toward effective program design that is aligned to FFP strategy. “Without any steer from FFP, NGOs are cranking out proposals, but we don't know if they will align to FFP priorities.” The El Niño crisis affecting many countries is cited as an example ... “It’s like throwing everything at a wall to see what sticks.” Another PVO states “Open calls are very difficult. It takes 2-4 weeks to develop a concept note, using 2-3 HQ staff and 5-7 country office staff. This takes away from other programming. More guidance from FFP about what they want and why, would allow us to use human resources more strategically.”

PVOs also mention that the non-specific APS impacts FFP because FFP staff must review all the proposals that are not aligned to FFP priorities, contributing to a delay in FFP response (see section 2.1), and very short, non-detailed rationale for why concept notes are rejected (see section 2.3).

*Question:* “When evaluating concept notes, how much weight is really placed on program justification section? We know the weight is 15%, but want to know if this plays out in reality.”

### FFP regional priorities – implementing partners and funding

**Recommendation:** Provide greater transparency on countries and regions where FFP prefers to use WFP as the implementer for emergency food security assistance.

*Basis for recommendation:* Most in the PVO community perceive that there are countries where USAID prefers WFP as the implementing partner. “We may not agree with FFP regional priorities, but could accept the decision and would not devote staff’s valuable time trying to respond to an area that will not be awarded to a PVO.”

**Recommendation:** Provide greater detail on specific regions within a country that FFP has earmarked for funding.

*Basis for recommendation:* Similar to the challenge mentioned above, limited information about FFP’s regional funding priorities, is viewed as a contributor to using valuable staff resources to develop concept notes that will never be funded.

## OFDA sectors

**Recommendation:** Include a list in the APS of the sectors for which OFDA is responsible versus those for which FFP is responsible. Provide some guidance on when to submit a concept or proposal to only one agency or the other.

*Basis for recommendation:* "On p. 5 the APS says: "FFP will confer with the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in evaluating and making a final determination for applications that involve sectors where OFDA is the designated lead USAID emergency response office."

## Communication

### Application process

**Recommendation:** Have a consistent FFP review team that participates from start to finish on specific applications.

*Basis for recommendation:* The iterative review process has been frustrating for a number of PVOs, particularly when new reviewers are brought in during later stages and guidance begins to conflict with earlier guidance.

**Recommendation:** Provide a window of time for an oral dialogue that allows PVOs to better explain intended program design.

*Basis for recommendation:* The 5-page limit does not allow an applicant to provide sufficient detail. This specifically affects innovative approaches that may be less understood by reviewers.

### Unsuccessful applications

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity and transparency in communications to unsuccessful applicants.

*Basis for recommendation:* Many members of the PVO community interviewed prior to the consultation expressed frustration related to FFP communications regarding unsuccessful concept notes and full applications. Receiving the rejection rationale that a concept note is "not technically sound" is vexing. A greater understanding of the technical areas that do not meet FFP expectations would help the PVO community to avoid repeating the same mistake. The most confusing reason for rejection is the rationale that "activities proposed are not consistent with country food assistance strategy." PVOs have a hard time understanding how this rationale aligns to what they know of country strategies. "We don't expect a debrief, but we would like more detail."

One PVO related that often they get no response at all to submitted concept note. "We would like to understand the reason for rejection and guidance on how to improve. Internally we surmise that it is because we are submitting for areas that FFP does not consider to be priority areas."

## Consistent Communication within FFP

**Recommendation:** Enhance communication between Country Missions and DC about FFP strategy to address shocks. Ensure that PVOs do not get conflicting messages from FFP DC and FFP Country Missions.

*Basis for recommendation:* At times PVOs are pressured by the Country Missions to propose an EFSP. PVOs devote substantial resources to the development of a concept note only to find FFP Mission's enthusiasm for an emergency response is not matched by the DC office. "Country Missions need to be informed if USAID strategy is to use WFP in a country. Staff are drafting proposals that are dead before they're even reviewed."

## Level of clarity in the content of the APS

Areas of the APS that are unclear to PVO staff are diverse. Some issues that are troubling to one PVO are clearly understood by another, and vice versa. Three key areas where PVOs agreed they would like additional specific guidance are: cash-based interventions, "program flexibility" parameters, and finance and budget requirements, especially cost per beneficiary.

### Cash-based interventions

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity on the requirement to use e-payment for cash-based interventions (CBI) and the implications of not using e-payments.

*Basis for recommendation:* Security concerns and poor coverage result in many situations where it is not appropriate to use electronic transfers. "Do we need written exception from the AOR if we make explicit in the application that we will not use e-pay?"

**Recommendation:** Review the specific type of electronic transfers that are deemed acceptable to FFP.

*Basis for recommendation:* Current understanding is that transferring money through cellphones is not acceptable unless the recipient is able to do something besides just withdraw the money (e.g., move the money to electronic savings or other financial mechanism). This limits use in contexts where financial infrastructure is not developed sufficiently to support such transfers.

**Recommendation:** Provide standard indicators for assessing CBI program performance (process and outcome/ impact).

*Basis for recommendation* – the increasing trend to perform joint final evaluations of USAID/FFP-funded interventions programs heightens the need for standard indicators. Currently there are many differences in CBI program modalities and time frames. The lack of common CBI indicators would be challenging in joint evaluations.

### Flexibility in program design

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity and guidance on the parameters of a "flexible design."

- Guidance on changes to beneficiary benefits (up or down) in response to changing conditions on the ground such as increasing/decreasing market prices.
- Guidance on price increase thresholds (10%, 15%, 20% in either direction) before triggering a modification to the program design.
- Guidance on moving from one modality to another based on changed circumstances.
- If it becomes necessary to switch from cash transfers to commodities, will it be possible to get them quickly?

## Complementary activities

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity and guidance on the parameters of appropriate complementary activities. *TOPS note: As there are numerous examples of potential complementary activities in the APS, this issue appears to be a perceived disconnect between the examples listed and what has been awarded. This concern likely links to the broader communications issues outlined in section 2.3, or perhaps the perceived recent trend to not fund any complementary activities (below).*

**Recommendation:** Do not eliminate complementary activities from next APS.

*Basis for recommendation* – PVOs claim that in the last few months FFP priorities have changed and complementary activities are no longer funded, although they are outlined in the APS. The addition of complementary activities is seen as one of the most effective aspects of the current APS. The complementary activities funded in EFSPs are often the only efforts in an emergency area that help to jump-start recovery at the most basic level. The PVO community understands that saving lives is the highest priority, but unless it is coupled with activities to help get people back on their feet, lives may only be saved for the duration of emergency food assistance.

## Finances/ budget

### *Guidance on cost per beneficiary*

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity and guidance on calculating average cost per beneficiary by activity and by month to be sure that all applicants are calculating it the same way.

*Basis for recommendation:* “Is beneficiary cost by activity the same as by modality? Using the table format provided for the cover page makes it look like it lines up to the modality and should be the same, but the wording is inconsistent. Later in the APS, there is additional guidance on breaking down costs by activities that do not align with the modalities (see page 28).”

The APS says: “Provide the estimated number of beneficiaries for each modality and the average cost per beneficiary per month for each modality.” If no beneficiaries are receiving assistance in the first and last months of the project, then should these two months be subtracted from the total number of months when calculating costs per month? Would there still be cost per beneficiary for those two months?”

### *Other budget guidance*

**Recommendation:** Ensure consistency among reviewers regarding the requirement that emergency food assistance modalities and transfer costs comprise the majority of total proposed costs. Sometimes it must be more than 50% of the cost/ sometimes more than 30% of the cost.

**Recommendation:** Provide more clarity on requirement that emergency food assistance modalities and transfer costs comprise the majority of total proposed costs. Make clear which items are considered “transfer costs.”

**Recommendation:** Calculate the 50% or agreed upon percentage before adding NICRA. It is challenging to put in overhead and still meet the 50% mark and results in making cuts that impact program quality, such as leaner number of field staff or reduced M&E.

**Recommendation:** Provide additional guidance on budget break down for the different cash-based interventions: in-kind vs voucher vs cash vs market support.

*Question:* To what extent might the ‘non-in-kind’ budget share of FFP’s International Disaster Assistance (IDA) fund be increased?

### **Additional requests for clarity in APS**

- Need more guidance on expectations for targeting.
- Need more clarity on what FFP wants in Logistics section when project does not intend to use commodities.
- Need more clarity and guidance on FFP MIS submissions (e.g., calculation of various categories under Project Funds tab; incongruence between required documents listed in the APS and those required in “Partner Document” tab; difference between DFAP and EFSP submissions; necessity of consolidated cost sheet summary for LRP, incongruence between required disaggregation in APS and FFP MIS).

### **Communication about unclear areas**

**Recommendation:** Provide a blog where all questions about the APS can be asked in public so that no-one will have an advantage over another.

*Basis for recommendation:* Most AORs will not give any guidance or clarity on unclear areas of the APS. A typical response is "this is a competitive process; we can't give you an advantage."

### **Data and monitoring systems to justify response**

**Recommendation:** Help PVOs coordinate better to share data that will inform the onset of crisis. FFP could lead in the development of one channel where all data are funneled. This could be a repository where in addition to data, templates are stored to ensure that sampling strategies are consistent across PVOs. It could help to ensure that everyone is measuring the HDDS in the same way.

*Basis for recommendation:* The PVO community needs access to more data ahead of crises. Usually there is not sufficient evidence available to provide a solid evidence base. Data that are available are often not reliable. PVOs use these data points to design programs and then find out the reality on the ground is much different.

*Question:* “Are there already systems in place for storing and sharing data? How can we [PVOs] get better at using these systems to justify responses?”

**Recommendation:** Develop guidance on the specific type of data that PVOs should collect to justify a response.

*Basis for recommendation:* When there is a budget to collect data (often there is not) PVOs spend a lot of time collecting information that FFP may or may not find valid.

*Question:* “Can there be a balance point? We provide some information, but not all of it, especially in rapid onset emergencies.”

## Recommended structure of application documents

The few comments that pertain to this area express a perceived redundancy in the full application structure and a concern about the page limits of the concept note.

**Recommendation:** Modify the current recommended structure of the full application to improve flow.

*Basis for recommendation:* the number of pages does not allow room for redundancy, yet the required structure promotes redundancy. The justification section asks for the same information that is provided in the rationale section.

**Recommendation:** Make explicit whether the map required in the concept note counts against the 5-page limit, or if it can be in an annex.

---

The stakeholder consultation will take place March 29, 2016 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the offices of Save the Children, 2000 L Street NW. 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Conference

For more information contact [laurie@tangointernational.com](mailto:laurie@tangointernational.com).

# Annex 2: March 29 Consultation Notes

29 March 2016 - APS Stakeholder Consultation – Draft Notes

## Event introduction

**Mark Fritzler, Director of the TOPS program**

- Mark emphasized the great value in conducting consultations between USAID/FFP and the PVO community on new strategies or changes to existing policies.
- The collaboration that goes on during these meetings is key. At the end of the day when the final draft of a strategy or the revision of a policy comes out, both actors (FFP and the partners) know their input has been considered.

## Overview of meeting

**Laurie Starr, Senior Specialist TOPS/TANGO**

- Scope of consultation is pre-award phase and areas that are within FFP's ability to modify
  - Specific content of the APS.
  - How to improve APS processes.
- Outside the scope of the consultation are:
  - Anything that happens after the agreement is signed: e.g., implementation activities.
  - Broader USAID/ USG rules or regulations that FFP does not have the ability to change or control.

## Overview of APS revision

**Susan Bradley, Acting Deputy Director FFP**

- APS is currently being revised by FFP, and FFP hopes the revised APS will reflect many of the comments, concerns, and appreciation expressed by the PVO community.
- FFP has been using the APS tool for about 5 years--original design was through a pilot to prove that concepts worked (e.g. cash/ process/ options / flexibility) which drove the design of the APS.
- PVOs have helped prove that flexibility to use different modalities in context-specific ways is the way to go, so now, as FFP redesigns overall strategy, the focus will shift on program outcomes and efficiencies.

- Flexibility offers the most efficient tool, which in turn enables assistance to reach the greatest number of people (the Office of Management and Budget is a supporter of food aid reform, with most reform focusing on greater efficiency).
- FFP is revamping the concept paper format to try to mirror the steps an organization should take in conducting response analysis, and it is streamlining the Concept Paper Technical Information to three components
  1. Emergency Description: What is the Food Security Emergency
  2. Project description / summary: How will PVO respond to the situation
  3. Rationale for response: Why is the proposed response the best response? Why are the chosen modalities the most appropriate? Basically, why do you think this will work?
    - key consideration: if a concept paper is not selected to submit a full application, the reason why would fall under one of these components.
- Susan expressed appreciation for the information provided in the pre-consultation interview notes. Many issues raised by the PVO community are areas FFP is already thinking about. The pre-consultation interview notes offered good feedback and validation of FFP concerns.
- One point raised in pre-consultation notes is the observation that AORs have differing ways in which they go about the review process and offer individualized levels of communication during and after the review. FFP has already standardized both the review process and the expected level of communication between PVO and FFP in internal FFP guidance.
- Changes to expect in revised APS
  - Reweighting of the scoring process. More focus will be placed on human-level outcomes.
  - Past performance is no longer a part of the evaluation criteria
  - FFP is trying to cut down on text and narrative in the APS. Applicants can expect to see more tables in the revised version. Tables should allow FFP to systematically track required information and will reduce review time.

## Modality decision-making tool

### FFP John Lamm, Food Security and Marketing Advisor

- The modality decision-making tool is meant to provide a standardized internal process for FFP staff who review APS applications and is also intended to reflect the response analysis that FFP expects to inform partner decisions.
- FFP is revamping the APS evaluation criteria. Criteria will begin with a broad look at the extent to which activities do no harm and then narrow down to a range of options that can be used in an emergency.
- Five key points of evaluation criteria at the concept paper stage:
  6. **Justification** of the need for emergency food assistance
  7. **Appropriateness**: Is the modality appropriate given the market conditions?
  8. **Feasibility**: Does the proposed modality and delivery mechanisms have a reasonable chance of success considering the context, infrastructure, and programming risks?



9. **Food Security Objective:** Is the modality best-suited to meet programming objectives?
10. **Cost efficiency:** Is the modality cost-efficient relative to other modalities and in respect to available resources?

#### Questions from PVO community:

PVO Question 1: Any consideration of alignment between OFDA and USAID in relation to reviewing APS applications?

*FFP response: FFP has a close collaboration with OFDA and have done joint awards. Determination of awards is context specific. OFDA has attended some FFP evaluation meetings for applications if there is relevance. In those cases, both parties review whether OFDA's needs and FFP's needs overlap.*

PVO Question 2: Are there opportunities to put something in the APS [that allows a PVO] to work with OFDA on [projects]?

*FFP response: No. This is a structural issue that will remain for the time being. The OFDA field team has the capacity to make decisions on grants, while FFP grants decision-making occurs at HQ level. The redesign of the APS will not address this particular issue, but it may help to improve realignment at HQ level. FFP expects to put out emergency technical chapters that will include FFP / OFDA and be more sector-specific.*

PVO Question 3: Is there more nuanced specificity on where OFDA and FFP have priorities?

*FFP response: It is a common sense approach. If the emergency is mainly affecting food security outcomes, then FFP will fund the response, but if food security is only 10% or so of the problem, then OFDA will take the lead. In general, both agencies must have a discussion.*

## Appreciations by PVO community:

### What aspects of the APS process are most valued? Most efficient? Generally, what is working?

- The concept note format – it is simple, clear, and offers a consistent structure.
- Flexibility of AORs to engage with PVOs -- responsiveness during the application process.
- The inclusion of complementary services – these allow emergency programs to bridge the gap between humanitarian relief and basic recovery.
- The ability to design an unsolicited response.
- The integration of funding streams with OFDA which allow for multidimensional responses.
- The ability to use the APS to complement existing DFAP activities.
- Frequent trainings for partners.

## Breakout Session I

### Two general topics for all breakout groups

| <p><b>How does FFP make concept decisions and are there ways FFP can better communicate its priorities and decisions?</b></p> <p>(Addressing types of data used for justification, opaque FFP rejection letters, data sharing, FFP country priorities)</p>   | <p><b>How much flexibility can FFP allow partners in program design?</b></p> <p>(Addressing complementary activities, "flexible design", FFP vs. OFDA activities, and questions about increasing amount of non in-kind programming)</p>  |
|--|--|
| <b>Group 1</b>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What determines an APS amendment? Without an amendment how do we determine priority areas?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do partners use lessons learned during the design process?</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When is WFP a preferred partner? Can preferences be made public? When can PVOs contribute? Can PVOs contribute to a FFP and WFP partnership? How do consortia work in EFSP?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can specialized food products be on commodity list?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we maintain timeliness and at the same time collect enough data to help inform the processes?</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are they encouraged? How do non-compete waivers work?</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is evaluation committees' commitment to evaluation criteria?</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the actual measured criteria at concept paper stage?</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>Group 2</b>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does FFP have partnership priorities?</li> <li>• Does FFP have priority or non-priority countries? How does FFP specify this?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lot of room for flexibility in the current APS, but not many recommendations in regards to revisions.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recommendation:</i> Make information about whether funding is available for a specific country before a concept note is submitted.</li> <li>• Two suggestions to achieve this: Discussions with FFP beforehand or a global APS and also a regional APS that provides more funding details).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible as long as it ties to food security.</li> <li>• Flexible- but 20% cap is rule of thumb</li> <li>• Flexible but FFP has to have the resources (cash vs. in-kind)</li> <li>• OFDA is given first right of refusal for "stretch" activities.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend: Applicants have the ability to ask whether concept papers are being accepted for specific emergencies</li> </ul>   |  |

| <p><b>How does FFP make concept decisions and are there ways FFP can better communicate its priorities and decisions?</b></p> <p>(Addressing types of data used for justification, opaque FFP rejection letters, data sharing, FFP country priorities)</p>   | <p><b>How much flexibility can FFP allow partners in program design?</b></p> <p>(Addressing complementary activities, "flexible design", FFP vs. OFDA activities, and questions about increasing amount of non in-kind programming)</p>    |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can the AORs give more specific feedback to applicants after evaluation of applications?</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>Group3</b></p>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need a better understanding of FFP’s priorities. What are the current priorities of FFP?</li> <li>● Are FEWSNET maps and rankings related to FFP priority countries? What is the relationship between these two?</li> <li>● <i>Recommendation:</i> have more APS amendments that talk about specific priorities at a specific time for FFP.</li> <li>● Technical chapters on emergency programs will be helpful when they come out</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 20% budget guidance on complementary services. Maybe this could be a sliding scale—have a small % at the beginning and a higher % at the end, rather than strict 20%.</li> </ul>                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need better communication of minimum standards re: market assessment data (level of specificity).</li> <li>● <i>Recommendation:</i> a lighter version of the concept note with no market assessment</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need modality-specific questions to guide selection of modality. Need to understand how FFP evaluates selection of a modality over another.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender analysis portion of requirement: some specific points are not realistic in a 12-month emergency program.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need specific guidance on conflict environments vs. natural disasters. Does FFP prefer one modality over another in these situations?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Instead of asking for IEE – maybe have a section on environmental protection – section showing how project will have minimal impact on the environment</li> <li>● <i>(FFP will consider tailoring the wording of that section)</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FFP vs OFDA: many myths and assumptions that FFP won’t fund something if OFDA funding something in the same region. Need more clarification on whether we can work in the same region.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Recommendations to improve communication flows between FFP and partners.</i></li> <li>● Allow partners to informally talk to FFP about concepts before a concept note is prepared.</li> <li>● FFP could create a blog or a specific Q&amp;A every 3 months or so for partners to ask</li> </ul>  |  |

| <p><b>How does FFP make concept decisions and are there ways FFP can better communicate its priorities and decisions?</b></p> <p>(Addressing types of data used for justification, opaque FFP rejection letters, data sharing, FFP country priorities)</p>               | <p><b>How much flexibility can FFP allow partners in program design?</b></p> <p>(Addressing complementary activities, "flexible design", FFP vs. OFDA activities, and questions about increasing amount of non in-kind programming)</p>  |
|--|--|
| <p>questions on priorities and APS as those are evolving throughout the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a meeting twice a year to talk about questions with partners</li> <li>• Consistent, specific, feedback from AORs</li> </ul>              |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more information on rejection letters to explain why concept paper was not selected.</li> <li>• Rejection letter should provide feedback along the concept area guidelines</li> </ul>                                   |  |
| <b>Group 4</b>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can FFP provide global guidance on priorities (i.e., LAC vs. Africa)?</li> <li>• Priority setting: compete vs non-compete countries is not always clear.</li> <li>• Resourcing levels are also somewhat unclear</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recommendation:</i> Provide more structure and guidelines regarding joint OFDA/FFP awards. Who do we send it to?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes mission and field level staff have different priorities and ideas than HQ.</li> <li>• Field asks for holistic, but APS is vague on this, so don't know whether to include.</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recommendation:</i> FFP provides more detail on how long approval takes</li> <li>• PVOs need this information to optimize seasonal impact of programs.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blanket non-compete</li> <li>• specific country or region has their own APS</li> <li>• for non-compete countries, have an information session where FFP shares priorities for that country/ region</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more guidance on market analysis- What type of analysis? What tools?</li> <li>• How do PVOs analyze and interpret market assessments? What does FFP look at internally on market assessments? (<i>FFP states proposed modality decision tool will help solve this problem.</i>)</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can FFP track / evaluate concept papers globally? How many we are awarded, how many are rejected.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PVOS need more clarity on what data NGOS should include in concept paper (<i>FFP states tables in revised APS should resolve this.</i>)</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>Group 5</b>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need consistent timely feedback from AORs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency programs should be simple and stay simple. How can we make emergency</li> </ul>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>How does FFP make concept decisions and are there ways FFP can better communicate its priorities and decisions?</b></p> <p>(Addressing types of data used for justification, opaque FFP rejection letters, data sharing, FFP country priorities)</p> | <p><b>How much flexibility can FFP allow partners in program design?</b></p> <p>(Addressing complementary activities, "flexible design", FFP vs. OFDA activities, and questions about increasing amount of non in-kind programming)</p>  |
|  | <p>programs simple?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to simply collect key data quickly?</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the expectation about what partners must include in design notes related to flexibility? Realistic vs idealistic? What happens if partners have to switch modalities during the project?</li> </ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What info is needed for market analysis? What type of information is expected? Minimum standards on market information needed would be helpful.</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible modality approach is favored. But what is FFP's role in the scope of a given emergency / context? Might this change over time?</li> <li>• In an emergency, could be multi-sectoral needs (shelter, WASH). APS should clearly indicate what would be supported and how FFP sees multi-sectoral needs within a given emergency.</li> </ul> |

## Breakout Session 2

Three groups focusing on three distinct topics.

| How do we reduce turnaround times on both ends (PVO and FFP)?   | What are FFP's expectations on cost proposals and evaluating value for money? (Addressing cost per beneficiary, 50% rule, etc.)   | What kind of standard indicators are appropriate for cash-based programming in emergency context?  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Increase informal regular communication between AOR and submitting applicant, so PVOs are apprised of note "status" and know it's still in process.</p>  | <p>APS should define what is meant by efficiency. Make sure it's clear how FFP looks at cost of outputs.</p> <p>Need to recognize that sometimes in lieu of emergency, cost data are not available.</p>   | <p>Indicators should pertain to food security outcomes not cash programming. Modalities are less important than what we are trying to achieve.</p>   |
| <p>Submitting org. needs to ensure that all regulations in APS are provided in application.</p> <p>Various checklists could help processes be more timely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FFP checklist showing grants reviewed by OAA have everything concluded.</li> <li>• Checklist for submitting organization showing all APS regulations have been addressed.</li> </ul> | <p><i>From FFP re: weighting of concept paper.</i> Need to emphasize that FFP is not scoring individual elements of the concept paper, but rather, evaluating concepts/ projects as a whole - this is a response option coming at X cost to have X effects.</p> <p>FFP does not compare one application against another application. An application is only evaluated against APS criteria.</p> | <p>Indicators will vary for different types of modalities.</p> <p>Purpose of indicators is to be able to help us make programming decisions (e.g., won't be enough time in 3 months to gather an entire baseline, will miss planting season, may be impacted by national elections, etc.)</p> <p>Bottom line--data should tell us something.</p> |
| <p>Consider coming to agreement on average</p>  |   | <p>Emergency staff time is constrained. Country offices sometimes</p>  |

| <b>How do we reduce turnaround times on both ends (PVO and FFP)?</b>   | <b>What are FFP's expectations on cost proposals and evaluating value for money? (Addressing cost per beneficiary, 50% rule, etc.)</b> | <b>What kind of standard indicators are appropriate for cash-based programming in emergency context?</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>processing time.</p> <p>Background context from Juli Majernik.<br/> <i>FY10: 83 APS submissions. Awards worth 244 million. FY15 137 submissions. 77 awards 41 modifications, worth 986 million.</i></p> <p><i>FFP contractor staff increased by 1 person from FY10 to FY15.</i></p> |  | <p>hesitate to hire a full time M&amp;E person for a 6 month award.</p> <p>With tablets and ability to rapidly upload data to cloud M&amp;E responsibilities can be shared by multiple people. Could be analyzed by HQ.</p> |

## Questions and Answers/ Way Forward

FFP responses to questions are italicized.

Question 1: Is FFP accepting applications for horn of Africa?

- *Contact the field level missions in the area.*
- *Yes, there are applications in individual countries in response to droughts*

Question 2: Should we continue with current APS application/standards?

- *Yes, continue using the current APS. It will take FFP a few weeks to go over comments, discuss with technical teams certain components, and fine tune the revised APS. The original date for the release of the revised new draft was April 10, 2016, but now with the consultation, it may be pushed 2-3 weeks later. That release will be open to public comment for 45 days.*
- *Ideally, FY 17 will start off with the revised APS.*

Question 3: What is the relation of the revised APS to FFP's revision of its long-term strategy?

- *FFP is finalizing the long-term strategy now.*
- *The draft APS is significantly different than any of the other APS documents in the last 5 years.*
- *The revised APS will reflect lots of the changes FFP is striving for in the strategy but there is not an immediate interface between the two.*

Question asked earlier within small group: Does FFP prioritize local organizations in emergency programs?

- *FFP hopes that even emergency programs strengthen capacity of local organizations.*

Susan Bradley and John Lamm ended by reiterating that the comments from the consultation will be taken back to FFP for consideration, and want to make sure the communication line is open throughout the process. They further state that FFP wants to make the process smoother and more collaborative between the PVOs and FFP.



