

Understanding the PRO-WASH & SCALE Applied Research Award

Question Responses

On November 1, 2023, the PRO-WASH & SCALE Award released a request for applications (RFA) for our applied research award. Sustainability of WASH, agriculture, natural resource management (NRM), water resources management (WRM), livelihoods, markets, cash-for-work (CFW), vouchers-for-work (VFW), and food-for-work (FFW) activities have been identified as a challenge by stakeholders across many resilience food security activities (RFSAs). This challenge is not unique to these activities as sustainability is a widely recognized challenge. A myriad of interconnected and dynamic factors such as financial, institutional, environmental, technical, and social factors are recognized to influence sustainability.

The purpose of this RFA is to address knowledge gaps related to the sustainability of select cross-sectoral interventions implemented by RFSAs that have since closed. The study will provide actionable recommendations for future implementing partners in the selected domains.

As part of the RFA process, PRO-WASH & SCALE solicited questions in writing via email about the funding opportunity from interested parties to be submitted no later than December 1, 2023, at 5:00 PM ET. This document responds to relevant questions submitted before the deadline.

1. Who is eligible to apply for this funding opportunity?

The list of eligible criteria to apply can be found in the RFA [here](#).

2. “This RFA is designed to require minimal resources for application; the successful applicant will work with our PRO-WASH & SCALE team post-award to refine evaluation questions, finalize research design, and draft a research management plan, amongst other activities.” Does this mean evaluation questions and research design are already drafted?

No, these will be created by the successful applicant with feedback from PRO-WASH & SCALE staff. Initial ideas should be proposed in the application, as well as the Research Approach and Methodology Plan, as noted in Section F of the RFA.

3. “To ensure applicability of findings to future IPs, the research must focus on a country in which there are current RFSAs or future RFSAs are anticipated.” Are there RFSAs currently in Ethiopia, or any plan to continue it? Does the research need to take both Amhara and Oromia regions as a sample, or is it possible to take any of them?

There are current RFSAs in Ethiopia (and there were previously Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) and Development Food Assistance Projects (DFAPs)), but we do not anticipate that the successful applicant will need to interact with the current activities. We prefer that an applicant propose to research part or all geographic areas of a RFSAs/DFSA/DFAP but does not need to propose to research multiple activities.

4. **“The exact number and nature of the technical areas of focus will be determined based on several factors including the interventions that were included in the now-closed RFSA, the availability of historical data and opportunity to collect additional data.” Is historical/baseline data documented and available?**

Available data can be found primarily on [USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) (DEC), as well as through other internet searches, and through the link provided on the [RFA webpage](#).

5. **“Advances are not available on this award” How is it possible to deploy data collectors unless the project gives a minimum amount of advance payment for the transport, and accommodation?**

The Fixed Amount Award model does not allow for advances to be given, but the successful applicant will work with PRO-WASH & SCALE to ensure that sufficient budget is available at critical moments to ensure the project’s success. The milestones proposed will be jointly agreed upon between PRO-WASH & SCALE and the successful applicant to ensure that sufficient cash flow is available to cover the costs associated with deploying data collectors, for example.

6. **Given the broadness of the interventions and the evaluation requirements - Sustainability of WASH, agriculture, NRM, WRM, livelihoods, markets, CFW, vouchers-for-work, and food-for-work activities – after deducting overhead and taxes as well as the context of the study regions in Ethiopia (which may demand higher budget than the usual scenario), how sufficient is the budget to provide enough coverage of the issues and the study sites as well as the study households?**

PRO-WASH & SCALE is requesting that applicants choose interventions that fit within these budget constraints, it is not required to study each technical area on each RFSA/DFSA/DFAP. Applicants should propose a research scope and methodology that fit within the allotted budget ceiling.

7. **What are the considerations given to access issues in Oromia and Amhara regions in Ethiopia in light of recent contextual development (conflict activity, especially in South Gondar, where TRAIN activities appear to have been implemented)?**

Working in conflict areas of Ethiopia is not a requirement, as other regions of Ethiopia are eligible, as are other closed RFSA’s in Madagascar and Zimbabwe. The applicant should also propose to conduct the research in areas where access is feasible and to have a plan in place should access issues occur. Per Section F of the RFA, the application should describe how the approach to data collection and analysis can be adapted to security conditions, disease outbreak related travel restrictions, and safety precautions for the study teams, partners, and study participants.

8. **Should the envelope of the study cover one activity as in one for a selected country? Not clear if one activity is one RFSA.**

Yes, the applicant should propose to study one RFSA/DFSA/DFAP.

9. **We are interested in this call due to the mention of WASH sustainability, but it seems like all the projects focus on food assistance and nutrition only. So, we are a little unsure where WASH comes into it. Can you clarify if WASH can be the focus of a proposal.**

WASH is a component of USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance RFSA/DFSA/DFAPs and therefore can be considered the focus of an application. Project documentation (available on the DEC and elsewhere online) will clarify the interventions that were implemented under the various RFSA’s.

10. **Are current RFSA implementers (prime and subrecipients) in the three selected countries eligible for this award? If yes, are such organizations eligible as primes or as subs?**

Yes, but applicants cannot propose to evaluate a RFSA on which their organization worked as a Prime organization. Previous implementers can apply as primes or subs.

- 11. Under Eligibility (page 9), it says: “The following are not eligible to apply for grants under this RFA: Firms operating as commercial companies or other organizations (including non-profit and non-governmental organizations) that are wholly or partially owned by foreign governments or agencies.” Could Save the Children please clarify what 'agencies' means in this context? Is a 501(c)3 organization eligible for this grant?**

Agencies refers to government entities. A 501(c)3 organization is eligible for this grant.

- 12. Under Section B3 (page 4), “Selection of Country, Activity, and Interventions of Focus” mentions that “Applicants must focus their applied research on one RFSA that has been closed out for at least two years (but no more than five years) as of January 15, 2024.” As each country in Table 1 includes more than one program, could Save the Children please confirm that it is not the intention of this RFA to look at all activities in the country that applicant will select? Is the applicant able to select one of the activities within a listed country for its application?**

No, the applicant does not need to look at all activities in a country. The applicant should carefully consider the budget ceiling as they choose the activity for the application.

- 13. Concerning the regions listed in Table 1, could Save the Children please confirm whether there are any specific expectations regarding in which regions this study will be carried out in relation to the regions in which the activity was implemented?**

PRO-WASH & SCALE is not requiring in-country data collection occur in the regions where the activity was formerly implemented, but has a strong preference for applicants who are able to demonstrate some in-country data collection.

- 14. Could Save the Children please re-confirm the regions of activity implementation listed in Table 1? (e.g., one of the regions mentioned in the Madagascar subset, Andrefana Antsinana, does not exist in Madagascar.)**

Thank you! The correct regions are: Atsinanana, Vatovavy Fitovinany, and Atsimo Andrefana.

- 15. In Section C, under “Applicant Eligibility,” it is mentioned that: “Preference will be given to researchers with research institutions and higher education institutions (HEIs),” and that “Government entities, including ministries” and “Firms operating as commercial companies or other organizations (including non-profit and non-governmental organizations) that are wholly or partially owned by foreign governments or agencies” are not eligible. Could Save the Children please confirm the eligibility of HEIs attached to a government (such as a national university)? Are such HEIs able to apply, or to be included in a consortium as a sub-award recipient?**

Yes, such as HEIs attached to a government, can apply or be included in a consortium as a sub-award agreement with the exception of National Universities in Zimbabwe as our Donor Rules & Regulations do not permit this.

- 16. If an application is submitted by a consortium, could Save the Children please confirm whether there is a ceiling on the proportion of funds to be granted to consortium members, and particularly to sub-award recipients?**

No, there is no required budget ceiling for the Prime or Sub-awardees.

- 17. The announcement implies applicants should focus on only one RFSA. Yet, it also suggests that the unit of measurement will be different interventions, not countries. Can you clarify whether a comparative approach (i.e., countries) would be acceptable?**

The intended focus of this RFA is only one RFSA/DFSA/DFAP.

- 18. Please clarify the award timeline in regards to the inclusion of the co-creation phase. Is the co-creation phase part of the research design finalization or separate?**

The co-creation phase is part of the research design finalization.

- 19. Please specify who is the partner mentioned for the final research tools and study protocols. Outside of USAID, who is the other envisioned partner?**

The successful applicant is the envisioned partner.

- 20. Please confirm that the suggested online webinar is part of the final four months dedicated to the dissemination and distribution of the final report.**

Confirmed.

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