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# The Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity

## Small Grants Program

## Applied Research Award

## Request for Applications (RFA)

RFA: SC-IDEAL-ARA-RFA-2020-01

Subject: Research to improve the design, implementation, and effectiveness of emergency and development food and nutrition security activities

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**Date RFA Issued:** August 17, 2020  
**End of Question Period:** August 31, 2020, 5 PM ET  
**Webinar Date:** September 1, 2020, 9 PM ET  
**Due Date for Applications:** **October 23rd, 2020, 5 PM ET**

**Award Ceiling:** US \$300,000 per Applied Research Award  
**Issued by:** Save the Children Federation, Inc. / IDEAL Activity



### Disclaimer:

This request for applications was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the Implementer-led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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## Acronyms

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| BHA   | USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance                         |
| DEC   | USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse                     |
| DFSA  | USAID/BHA Development Food Security Activity                     |
| FFP   | USAID's Office of Food for Peace (now BHA)                       |
| FSN   | Food Security and Nutrition                                      |
| HEI   | Higher Education Institution                                     |
| IDEAL | Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning Activity |
| IP    | USAID/BHA Implementing Partner                                   |
| M&E   | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| NICRA | Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement                          |
| NGOs  | Non-governmental organizations                                   |
| PIA   | Program Improvement Award  |
| R&I   | Refine and Implement   |
| RFA   | Request for Applications   |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development               |

## Introduction from the IDEAL Activity Director

August 14, 2020

Dear prospective applicants,

We are excited to release this new Request for Applications (RFA) under IDEAL's Small Grants Program. Through this Applied Research Award RFA, implementers of emergency and development food security and nutrition activities will have the opportunity to generate evidence of best practices that contribute to the improved design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of programming by USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) implementing partners.

The Applied Research Award is a response to feedback from implementers of BHA activities indicating the need for practical, program-oriented research to improve activity quality. Implementing partners have asked for more user-friendly research from academia, and clearer evidence on how they can apply research findings to their programs. This RFA is designed to encourage implementers to team with research institutions to help bridge this divide to address practical knowledge gaps around the theme of strategic integration (sequencing, layering and integration) as described in the [Food Assistance and Food Security Programmatic Learning Agenda](#).

We look forward to receiving your applications, and to working with you to ensure that the knowledge resulting from successful applications reaches the broader food security and nutrition community.

Sincerely,

*Karen Romano*

Karen Romano  
IDEAL Activity Director

## A. Authority and Introduction

IDEAL is soliciting applications to support the development of knowledge that contributes to strengthening the programming capacity of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) grantees, and the broader food and nutrition security community. The awards under this RFA consist of **Applied Research Awards** funded up to US \$300,000 for up to a 24-month period. IDEAL's consultations with research experts demonstrated that 24 months should be sufficient to achieve the goals of the Applied Research Award. All Applied Research Awards must be implemented as a partnership between and food and nutrition security program implementer and a recognized Research Institution or Higher Education Institute (see Section C).

This Applied Research Award RFA focuses on addressing knowledge gaps related **Integrated Activity Design and Implementation**, which is one of IDEAL's content focus areas as highlighted in Section B3 of this RFA. A maximum of five Applied Research Awards will be issued under this RFA.

Questions on this RFA will be collected through August 31, 2020 and responses will be posted on the IDEAL Small Grants Program webpage on the [FSN \(Food Security and Nutrition\) Network website](#) on September 2, 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The authority for these awards is found in the Food for Peace Act of 1954 (as amended) and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended). It is re-delegated to Save the Children Federation, Inc. under its Cooperative Agreement No. 72DFFP19LA00001 with USAID.

## B. Specific Programmatic Guidance

### B1. BACKGROUND

IDEAL is a five-year USAID BHA-funded activity that aims to address knowledge and capacity gaps expressed by the food and nutrition security implementing community. The goal of IDEAL is to strengthen food and nutrition security among BHA-target populations through promotion of systems-level approaches to improve the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of emergency and development food and nutrition security activities. The activity seeks to achieve this through four pathways: i) Capacity Strengthening; ii) Peer-to-Peer Learning; iii) Small Grants Program; and iv) Stakeholder Consultations.<sup>2</sup>

IDEAL's strategic objectives are as follows:

- a. Implementing Partners (IPs)/Communities of Practice establish sustainable systems for strengthening their own capacity in essential elements of quality programming;
- b. IPs/Communities of Practice consistently develop, share, and apply meaningful analysis for adaptive management of food and nutrition security programs; and
- c. IPs/Communities of Practice foster sustainable linkages among key stakeholders to improve collaboration, coordination, and efficient action around common goals.

The Research Award mechanism specifically supports IDEAL's first and second objectives.

Over the past decade, BHA made significant investments in strengthening implementer capacity in a number of technical areas critical to food and nutrition security (e.g. agriculture, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), commodity management, and nutrition technology). Under IDEAL, the emphasis is on underlying "content focus areas" that have received less attention in recent years, but remain

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fsnnetwork.org/small-grants-program>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fsnnetwork.org/ideal>

central to protecting and enhancing lives and livelihoods while transforming communities and institutions. The seven themes described in the IDEAL RFA<sup>3</sup> are areas of current practice for implementing partners working in food and nutrition security and offer clear opportunities for capacity strengthening and enhanced sharing across partners on best and promising practices.

This Applied Research Award RFA is designed to fund research that contribute to an evidence base for best practices in food and nutrition security programming. In alignment with IDEAL's mission, each grant will be awarded with the intent to facilitate strategic learning and adaptive management throughout the BHA implementing community.

The Applied Research Award is one of three award types under the IDEAL Small Grants Program to achieve its overall goal. The other two awards are the Program Improvement Award and the Micro Grant Award. More information on all awards is available on the [IDEAL Small Grants Program Website](#).

The Applied Research Award is designed to allow sufficient resources and time for implementers, in partnership with research institutions, to undertake robust research and learning at a scale that is typically not feasible with organizational overhead funds, or enabled by large grants or cooperative agreements.

## B2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this RFA is to solicit applications from food and nutrition security practitioners for applied research activities that will help build an evidence base for best practices in designing and implementing high impact, sustainable emergency and/or development food security activities. These research activities will address a gap in knowledge or evidence that is of importance to the larger food and nutrition security implementing partner community. Successful applications will generate significant knowledge related to an identified research theme in USAID's Food Assistance and Food Security Programmatic Learning Agenda.<sup>4</sup> The research activity results and products should be accessible and applicable to food and nutrition security implementers working with BHA-target populations in emergency and/or development programming.

**Note:** This RFA is not intended to solicit applications for the types of formative research conducted by Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) to understand context during the Refine and Implement (R&I) period.

## B3. FOCUS AND SUBJECT AREAS

IDEAL will focus this Applied Research Award RFA on advancing knowledge and addressing knowledge gaps around Strategic Integration (Sequencing, Layering, and Integration). Research activities must respond to the lines of inquiry outlined under Theme Four of the [Food Assistance and Food Security Programmatic Learning Agenda](#). While developed by the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) in 2019, this Learning Agenda remains a highly-relevant resource, identifying knowledge gaps and learning opportunities for the newly formed Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

The Learning Agenda seeks to identify and reach consensus around critical knowledge gaps and potentially high impact research and learning opportunities that could improve the quality of design and implementation of emergency and non-emergency food security programming. It outlines six different thematic areas of strategic learning importance for the food and nutrition security community, and key lines of inquiry under each. Specific research and learning questions can be formulated under themes and lines of inquiry, and pursued through a variety of approaches.

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<sup>3</sup> These CFAs were articulated by USAID in pp. 11-15 of the [2018 IDEAL RFA](#).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fsnnetwork.org/office-food-peace-learning-agenda>

This RFA invites research applications that examine food and nutrition security activities and directly address the following Strategic Integration sub-themes.<sup>4</sup>

- **The Optimal Package of Interventions:** In an environment with widespread chronic vulnerability, the appropriate balance between focused standalone interventions and comprehensive integrated programs can be difficult to find. There are clear knowledge gaps about the optimal package of interventions based on context: how interventions will interact with one another and whether they will achieve the desired synergy at the household and community level. This is especially critical in terms of negative unintended consequences, such as increased levels of gender inequity or adverse impacts on household diets.

This line of inquiry also includes questions around the optimal number of interventions. There are trade-offs and potential dilution of impacts through too broad an array of intervention areas. Questions around lack of time among participants in general, and more specifically, the absorptive capacity within a household for new messages and the adoption of new practices across many intervention areas. While needs assessment in intervention areas has a strong evidence-base, in many respects, the design of integrated packages in response does not.

- **Joint Action:** For integrated, layered, or sequenced activities to have impact, a complex system of process-oriented interactions is necessary not only as intentions at the design stage, but also implemented in a coordinated manner across technical and organizational boundaries throughout the program cycle. This may include joint targeting strategies that may involve using different targeting criteria or looking at different populations groups at different times and different geographic locations; facilitating movement of beneficiaries between sequenced interventions; cross-intervention communication; and managing inter-dependencies across interventions in terms of timing, quality and effectiveness.

There is a need to fully explore the degree to which these planned interactions are taking place within activities (across sectors), between activities, and across organizations through a look back at programs designed in an integrated manner. Part of this exploration is to better understand the management systems and approaches most effective at facilitating and monitoring the necessary coordination.

- **Responding to Both Acute and Chronic Need:** In many contexts, populations are subject to both acute and chronic shocks simultaneously, so focusing only on one or the other may be detrimental. Implementation research is needed to understand how development and emergency programs play off each other in positive and negative ways in countries with recurrent shocks. What are potential unintended negative outcomes that might arise?

While there is a body of experience with the layering of emergency response onto ongoing development programming when need arises, there has not been adequate exploration of the processes involved or the program adaptations needed. Issues calling for further dialogue and focused inquiry include identifying the best models for ensuring immediate access to staff with the required skills in emergency response, or the implications of targeting populations for short-term lifesaving assistance versus longer-term development results. Also requiring better exploration are the issues surrounding needed program adaptations in contexts of more acute need, e.g., the

appropriateness of specific FFA/CFA interventions in emergency settings, adjustment to targeting criteria, or the need to shift from one modality or one commodity to another.

Additional details can be found in the Learning Agenda. Applicants should keep in mind that the research is intended to be useful and relevant for implementers and stakeholders beyond any single activity or organization (full information on selection criteria is given in Section F).

Activities funded under the Applied Research Award can address their research questions through any number of research methods. However, the Applied Research Award is **not** suitable for:

- Empirical research and advancing the science
- Longitudinal research with multiple rounds of large-scale data collection activities
- Research focused on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities

#### B4. TYPE AND NUMBER OF AWARDS

Save the Children Federation, Inc. (Prime on the IDEAL Activity) plans to award up to five sub-awards under this Applied Research Award RFA. The final number of awards will depend on the quality of applications received, demand, and availability of funding. It is anticipated that Applied Research Awards solicited through this RFA will be issued on or about March 2021. IDEAL reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Save the Children Federation, Inc. or USAID, nor does it commit Save the Children Federation, Inc. or USAID to pay for the costs incurred in the submission of an application. Save the Children Federation, Inc. and USAID reserve the right to reject any or all submissions received and to negotiate separately with an applicant, if such action is considered to be in the best interest of Save the Children Federation, Inc. and the IDEAL donor, USAID.

#### B5. AWARD TIMELINE

The duration of an Applied Research Award under this RFA is a maximum of 24 months from the date of the award. This 24-month award timeline includes five phases, illustrated in Table 2: 1) Research design finalization and preparation, 2) Data collection and analysis, 3) Document completion and submission, 4) Review and finalization of research products and reports with IDEAL, and 5) Research dissemination.

While the award is envisioned for up to 24 months, please note that study preparation, data collection, and data analysis should not exceed 18 months.



**Table 1: Illustrative Award Timeline\*\***

| Month #  | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18         | 19 | 20 | 21       | 22         | 23 | 24 |  |
|--|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------|----|----|----------|------------|----|----|--|
| Finalize research design/plan/protocol and prepare for data collection | 1-3 months  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |            |    |    |          |            |    |    |  |
| Data collection and analysis   | 6-18 months |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |            |    |    |          |            |    |    |  |
| Prepare and submit draft research products to IDEAL                    |             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 2-3 months |    |    |          |            |    |    |  |
| IDEAL reviews research products; awardee finalizes research products   |             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |            |    |    | 2 months |            |    |    |  |
| Research dissemination   |             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |            |    |    |          | 2-3 months |    |    |  |

*\*\*IDEAL recognizes that all research will not fit this timeline, this is only an illustrative example of how 24 months could be broken down across all five phases*

### B6. RESEARCH PRODUCT

Award recipients must produce a research paper suitable for use by multiple groups within BHA and the broader food security and nutrition community. The intended audience includes actors working at global, regional, country, or activity level as well as donors, implementing partners, academic researchers, or technical specialists. It is not required that the results be submitted for publication in an international journal. However, this caliber of research is welcomed and encouraged and may be considered an intermediate product leading to academic publication.

Before deliverables can be disseminated or considered final and grantees are issued final payment, all final deliverables must be approved by IDEAL for proper branding and marking (according to the IDEAL Award Branding and Marking Guidelines) and general usability.

### B7. RESEARCH DISSEMINATION PLAN

All awardees are expected to propose and execute a plan to disseminate their research results within the life of the award. IDEAL may be enlisted in a supporting role in this plan, such as giving access to relevant stakeholder audiences through a Knowledge Sharing Meeting (KSM), posting on the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network website and newsletter listserv, promoting a webinar, and/or other forms of support. However, it is the awardee’s responsibility to produce a user-friendly research product and research dissemination plan appropriate for the BHA implementing partner community and broader food and nutrition security community. The research dissemination plan should be completed during the award period.

The IDEAL Activity will facilitate further dissemination beyond the award period in collaboration with the implementer but Applied Research Award funds will not be utilized for this. IDEAL’s support may include but is not limited to the following: technical review and preparation for publication, outreach

to the food and nutrition security community, and promotion of resources during IDEAL in-person and online events.

All resources, including final reports and deliverables generated through IDEAL funding, will be shared on the FSN Network and USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) for use by USAID, IDEAL, and any organizations implementing food and nutrition security activities.

## **B8. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

1. Quarterly and Final Financial Reports
  - a. Awardees are required to submit quarterly financial reports and a final financial report in the format that will be provided by IDEAL in the award agreement.
2. Quarterly Progress Updates
  - a. Performance updates include a brief narrative description of accomplishments to date and plans for the next quarter. Justification must be provided for any adjustments made to the original research plan. Other pertinent information should be included, such as a brief analysis and explanation of allowable deviation from original budget. Awardees will be provided a template for progress updates.
3. Final Documents
  - a. Research Paper and Tools: Upon completion of the research activity, a research paper must be submitted along with all research tools and products developed under the funded research period. Details on the research product can be found in B6.
  - b. Research Brief: Upon completion of the research activity, a one to two page brief highlighting the researcher's results and programming implications for the food security community must be submitted.
  - c. Final Report: Upon completion of the award activities and before final payment can be made, the awardee is required to submit a Final Report. The Final Report is a narrative report with a 10-page limit for which awardees will be provided a template. This report is intended to describe activities, lessons learned, and conclusions. Pursuant to standard provision "Submission of Datasets to the Development Data Library," the awardee must also submit all datasets and intellectual work generated in the course of the research.<sup>5</sup> The awardee is responsible for removing any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from the data before submission.

## **B9. PAYMENT**

Payment shall be issued for properly invoiced amounts within 30 days of approval of quarterly financial reports and progress updates by IDEAL. Payment currency shall be United States dollars (USD).

## **B10. FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

Final funding levels for each award will depend on content, relevance, quality, and needs, with a ceiling of US \$300,000 per award (subject to availability of funds). Acceptance of an application under this RFA does not constitute an award nor does it guarantee that the application (if awarded) will be funded at the full dollar amount requested.

## **B11. AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE**

The Authorized Geographic Code for commodities and services other than restricted commodities and transportation, engineering, and construction services is Geographic Code 935 (any area or

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<sup>5</sup> See attachments 6 and 7, respectively.

country but excluding prohibited sources). The Recipient shall, in all cases, give first preference to Geographic Code 937 (United States, the cooperating/recipient country [even if it is an advanced developing country], and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, and excluding prohibited sources). Whenever Geographic Code 935 is used, the Recipient must document its files to demonstrate that:

- (1) The project requires non-restricted commodities or services (other than transportation, construction, and engineering services) of a type that are not produced in and available for purchase in Geographic Code 937; or
- (2) It is necessary to permit procurement from Geographic Code 935 to meet the emergency needs of the affected populations; or
- (3) It is more efficient and/or necessary to achieve the project's objectives.

## C. Applicant Eligibility

This RFA **requires** partnership between a food and nutrition security program implementer (e.g., a non-governmental organization, civil society, or private sector company) and an established research team from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) or research institution.

One organization must be selected to lead the application process, award management, and reporting. This **Lead Applicant** will be required to sign a sub-award agreement with Save the Children Federation, Inc. and, in turn, will establish a partnership with other collaborating organization(s), and will be responsible for ensuring that these **collaborating organizations** comply with all rules and regulations stated in that agreement. The Lead Applicant will be the only organization to communicate directly with Save the Children regarding the application process and during the life of the award, unless otherwise deemed necessary for activity implementation purposes. Thus, the Lead Applicant will be responsible for managing any financial transactions between the Lead Applicant and collaborating organization(s), and for collating programmatic reporting from all partners during the life of the award. The programmatic roles and responsibilities of each of the proposed partners must be clearly described in the Applied Research Award application.

Lead applicants may be US and non-US non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for-profit organizations, research institution, or Higher Education Institutions (HEI) that can contribute to IDEAL's strategic objective of promoting systems-level approaches to improving the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of emergency and development food and nutrition security activities. While the Lead Applicant and collaborating organization(s) do not need to have experience with USAID or BHA funding to apply, the Lead Applicant must demonstrate recent capacity managing awards of comparable size or above (US \$300,000+) and furnish relevant past performance examples with references. The Lead Applicant will be responsible to comply with all applicable USAID rules and regulations for managing US government funding.

Researchers must be based at a research institution or HEI to be eligible. HEIs are traditionally defined as a tertiary education institution that provides educational opportunities that build on secondary education, and provides learning activities in specialized fields. It aims at learning at a high level of complexity and specialization. This can include both public or private universities, colleges, and training institutes. For the purposes of this RFA, research institutions are defined as an establishment founded for conducting or supporting basic or applied research. Preference will be given to researchers with research institutions and HEIs in developing countries as defined by USAID's [List of Developing Countries](#).

Lead Applicants or collaborating organization(s) must be legally recognized organizational entities under applicable law of the implementing country. At the time of submission and through the life of the award, Lead Applicants must comply with all applicable Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements at <http://www.sam.gov/SAM/>. The Lead Applicant should ensure all collaborating organizations also comply with application DUNS and SAM Requirements.

Food security and nutrition program implementers are permitted to submit only one research application in response to this RFA.

The following are not eligible to apply for grants under this RFA:

- Members of the IDEAL consortium: Save the Children, the Kaizen Company, Mercy Corps, and TANGO International;
- Individuals and/or sole proprietorships;
- Government entities, including ministries;
- Multilateral organizations; or
- 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.

Research applications must be implemented in countries where the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance works or has funded activities in the past five years. Research applications that will be fully or partially implemented in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip will not be considered.

In their cost applications, organizations should indicate whether they have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with any US Government Agency. Organizations or institutions that do not have a NICRA are eligible for grants under this RFA either by using a de-minimis indirect cost rate (if requirements of 2 CFR 200.414(f) are met) or by direct charging all costs using a documented cost allocation methodology. All proposed costs must be reasonable, allocable, and allowable in accordance with applicable cost principles.

Applications by for-profit organizations cannot include profit in the proposed budget. Profit is prohibited per 2 CFR 700.13.

## D. Authorization for Research Activities

Where applicable, applicants must comply with institutional review board (IRB) requirements of their own institutions and any national-level IRBs in the country(s) where the research will be conducted. These reviews should be factored into the research plan with the aim of being completed within the first four months of the start of the award.

Applicants must fully adapt applied research activities to be completed in a COVID-19 pandemic environment. Applicants must demonstrate in the Research Approach and Methodology section of the application how they will account for COVID-19 restrictions and mitigate any risks of virus transmission among the implementing staff and the community. Award recipients will be expected to follow all COVID-19 regulations in their target country(s) of research.

## E. Selection Process and Timeline

### E1. SELECTION PROCESS: OVERVIEW

The full application package includes a narrative research application (Attachment 1), research activity schedule (Attachment 2), detailed budget (Attachment 3), budget narrative (Attachment 4), and past performance information (Attachment 5). Applications will be evaluated using the technical and financial criteria set forth in Section F. Applications will be ranked based on the combined scores on their technical and financial components.

After evaluation and ranking of the applications, either award(s) will be recommended to BHA or, if deemed necessary or desirable by IDEAL, written discussions/negotiations will be conducted with top-scoring applicants to address reviewer questions and/or negotiate modifications to the technical or financial application.

All applicants recommended to BHA will be required to complete a standard pre-award assessment to confirm programmatic and administrative/financial capacity to meet all applicable USAID rules and regulations for cost reimbursable grants before the award is issued. This assessment requests information regarding relevant financial policies and systems, recent financial audits, programmatic experience with the project's target population, and the organization's capacity to follow USAID-stipulated award conditions. Any identified compliance risks will be incorporated into the capacity and action plan in the sub-award agreement.

IDEAL reserves the right to determine the resulting level of funding for the award(s).

## E2. TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

The IDEAL Activity will establish a Technical Review Committee for this RFA. Collectively, these technical experts will have academic, professional, and implementation experience relevant to the specific research application. At least one technical expert will have a strong background in research methodology. The technical review committee will make final selection of successful applicants. USAID will provide final approval. Technical review committee members will be required to disclose any potential or actual conflict of interest with regard to the assessment of any specific application.

Applicants are encouraged to use plain language in their submissions as not all readers will have deep technical knowledge of the research topic.

## E3. TIMELINE FOR ISSUING RFA AND SELECTING APPLICATIONS

- This IDEAL Applied Research Award RFA is open from the date of issue.
- **Submissions are due by October 23, 2020, 5 PM ET.**
- The full selection process, including review of applications, final negotiations with top-ranked applicants, and final selection, is expected to take five to six months.
- The research must be conducted, finalized and disseminated by the applicant within the 24-month award timeline. This ensures IDEAL can further disseminate learnings after the award period.

## E4. AMENDMENTS TO RFA

This Applied Research Award RFA may be amended at any time and will be posted on the [FSN Network website](#). IDEAL, Save the Children Federation, Inc. and/or USAID reserve the right to cancel this RFA at any time.

## E5. QUESTIONS

The point of contact for this RFA is Mr. Austen Musso, IDEAL Small Grants Program Manager, [IDEAL\\_Research@savechildren.org](mailto:IDEAL_Research@savechildren.org). Questions on this RFA may be submitted to Mr. Musso in writing no later than August 31, 2020, 5 PM ET with *IDEAL Applied Research Award RFA* and the name of the Lead Applicant as the subject line. Answers to the questions will be posted by September 2, 2020, 5 PM ET on the IDEAL [Small Grants Program webpage](#) on the FSN Network. Common questions will be

addressed during the RFA Webinar on September 1 2020, 9 AM ET. This webinar will be recorded and shared on the FSN Network by September 3, 2020.

## F. Research Application Evaluation Criteria

### F1. SCORED EVALUATION CRITERIA

The maximum points possible between the technical and financial criteria is 100 points.

| Criterion  | Description   |
|--|---|
| <b>Problem Statement and Literature Review</b><br><br>10 Points  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section describes the evidence gap (the problem) that has been identified in the food and nutrition security community</li> <li>Literature review demonstrates the need for the proposed research and how it will contribute to the existing body of food and nutrition security literature on this topic</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Research Objectives</b><br><br>5 Points                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research objectives and questions are clearly stated</li> <li>Expected outputs, outcomes, and impact of the research are clearly stated</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Applicants' Background</b><br><br>5 Points                    | <p><i>This criterion applies to the combined experience of the Lead Applicant, collaborating organization(s), and any other partners/collaborators.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience working in food and nutrition security in development and/or emergency contexts</li> <li>Relevant experience within the past three years and capacity relevant to the specific research proposed</li> <li>Demonstrated capacity of Lead Applicant to lead, manage, and execute research or related activities of similar magnitude and scope</li> </ul> <p>Applicants are welcome to provide capability statements, organizational profiles, and the like as annexes (up to a five-page maximum). However, this section in the main application should highlight the points above at minimum.</p> |
| <b>Contribution to IDEAL and BHA Objectives</b><br><br>20 Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For reference, see IDEAL's strategic objective and program goals in Sections B1, B2, and B3. The proposed research will address at least one line of inquiry in the Food Assistance and Food Security Programmatic Learning Agenda, under the Strategic Integration theme (details in B3)</li> <li>The potential for the proposed research to have large-scale impact in the larger food and nutrition security implementing community is high (e.g., reaches multiple implementers in multiple countries). The research is expected to be useful to validate existing program approaches, justify new approaches, and/or justify changes to existing approaches</li> </ul>  |

| Criterion   | Description  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Research Approach, Methodology and Research Plan</b></p> <p>25 Points</p> | <p><i>Please complete Research Activity Schedule (Attachment 2) to illustrate activities on a monthly basis during the life of the award. This attachment should align with and complement the research narrative application.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Research approach and methodology are clearly and adequately described. This should include, at minimum:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Rationale for the selected methodology</li> <li>(2) Assessment of evaluability</li> <li>(3) Limitations of the selected methodology</li> <li>(4) Nature of data and information collection methods</li> <li>(5) Data sources</li> <li>(6) Sampling methodology</li> <li>(7) Data analysis methods</li> <li>(8) Applicability of Institutional Review requirements of applicants' institution(s)/governmental and how these will be addressed</li> </ol> </li> <li>● The research approach, methodology, and research plan are well reasoned, well organized, and based on sound rationale</li> <li>● Feasibility of work plan (esp. with regard to time required for each step)</li> <li>● Roles of Lead Applicant, collaborating organization(s), and any other partners are clearly defined</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Research Products and Dissemination Plan</b></p> <p>10 Points</p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clearly describes the nature and format of the research product(s) to be used to disseminate the research findings</li> <li>● Demonstrates that proposed research findings have a high likelihood of being translated into food and nutrition security practice, policy, or products</li> <li>● The application describes how the research results and research product will be utilized by the BHA community, communities of practice, and other key food and nutrition security stakeholders, and how it will be further rolled out within the Lead Applicant and collaborating organizations</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Quality Assurance</b></p> <p>15 Points</p>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Application includes one or more Primary Investigator, their backgrounds, and fully explains their roles in ensuring technical quality of the research. At a minimum, the applicant is required to include two-page CV(s) for all listed Primary Investigators as an annex</li> <li>● Application describes sufficient processes to ensure quality research implementation, data collection, and analysis</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Budget and Budget Narrative</b></p>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Budget is sufficient for the work proposed and research goals</li> </ul>  |

| Criterion  | Description   |
|--|---|
| 5 Points   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget takes into account major cost items for the proposed activity and demonstrates there are adequate resources for the IP and Research Partner to carry out the proposed activity</li> </ul> |
| <b>Developing Country Preference</b><br><br>5 Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application includes partnership with research institutions or HEI headquartered in developing countries as defined by USAID’s <a href="#">List of Developing Countries</a></li> </ul>               |

## F2. NON-SCORED REQUIREMENTS

Research applications must comply with the following non-scored requirements:

- Applicants for the Applied Research Award must submit technical and financial applications before **October 23, 2020, 5 PM ET**
- Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements described in Section C
- As detailed in Section B5, the period for data collection and analysis must not exceed 18 months while all award activities must be completed within 24 months
- The proposed budget must not exceed US \$300,000 and demonstrate understanding of project activity accounting and USAID costs principles
- The research topic must correspond to the Food Assistance and Food Security Programmatic Learning Agenda theme: Strategic Integration
- The Research Application Narrative must follow all the formatting requirements found in Attachment 1: Narrative Research Application Template
- Applications must be in English

Applications that do not comply with the above requirements will not be considered for funding.

## F3. APPENDICES

| Appendices                                       | Description  |
|--|--|
| Citations/References                             |  |
| Principle Investigator(s) CV                     |  |
| Letter of Support (1 Page per collaborator)      | Non-binding documentation of collaborators’ intent, willingness, and ability to commit to conducting research together if the proposed team receives the award |
| Capability Statements or Organizational Profiles | These are optional to compliment the Applicant Background Section in the narrative.  |

## F4. BUDGET PREPARATION

The activity budget must be submitted using the Detailed Budget Template in Excel (Attachment 3) and Budget Narrative Template (Attachment 4). Please follow directions in the workbook when entering numbers.



The budget should include the total cost of implementation for the activity proposed as well as any planned cost share (if any). No cost share is required.

Save the Children Federation, Inc. will not allow funding for the following categories of items:

1. Procurement of Commodities Listed below
  - a. Agricultural Commodities
  - b. Motor Vehicles
  - c. Pharmaceuticals
  - d. Pesticides
  - e. Used Equipment
  - f. U.S. Government-owner excess property, or
  - g. Fertilizer
2. Construction (e.g. alteration or repair, including dredging and excavation of buildings, structures, or other real property and includes, without limitation, improvements, renovation, alteration, and refurbishment.) The term includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures.
3. Capital Assets (e.g., land, buildings, equipment, and intellectual property).
  - a. Exceptions: Equipment with cumulative value less than US \$10,000 and purchases of computer software will be allowed in budgets if they are essential to activity implementation

Save the Children Federation, Inc. may request additional detailed budget information following notification to an applicant that it is under consideration for an award. If necessary, Save the Children Federation Inc. may arrange meetings to evaluate specific elements of costs, and examine data to determine the necessity, reasonableness, and allocability of the costs reflected in the budget and their allowability per the applicable USG cost principles.

## F5. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Among applications that are highly and closely ranked based on the scoring criteria in Sections F2 and F4, preference will be given to applicants that partner with research entities based and working in the countries where BHA is implementing activities currently or has implemented an activity in the past five calendar years.

## F6. HOW TO SUBMIT THE APPLICATION

Research applications shall be submitted electronically and shall include the Narrative Research Application Template (Attachment 1), Research Activity Schedule (Attachment 2), Budget Template (Attachment 3), Budget Narrative Template (Attachment 4), and Past Performance Information Request (Attachment 5).

Please send applications to [IDEAL\\_Research@savechildren.org](mailto:IDEAL_Research@savechildren.org).

By submitting an application for an Applied Research Award, the Lead Applicant's primary point of contact will be automatically enrolled in the FSN Network bi-weekly newsletter. Standard organizational information (e.g. email addresses, points of contact, operating country, technical expertise, etc.) for the Lead Applicant and contributing organizations will be stored in IDEAL's internal partner database and may be contacted about targeted funding and event opportunities, which are not publicized in the bi-weekly newsletter. No confidential or sensitive organizational information will be stored in this system. If an organization does not wish to opt-in to the FSN Network bi-weekly newsletter or have organizational information stored in IDEAL's partner database, please notify IDEAL when submitting an application. Organizations can also opt-out of receiving the newsletter or having contact information in IDEAL's systems when applying or at any time during the life of the IDEAL Activity by emailing [IDEAL\\_Research@savechildren.org](mailto:IDEAL_Research@savechildren.org).

## G. IDEAL Award Branding and Marking Guidelines

As a condition of receipt of the IDEAL Applied Research Award, adherence to the IDEAL Award Branding and Marking Guidelines is required. The guidelines will be sent to applicants whose applications are selected for further review or at the time of the award.

## H. Intellectual Property

Any materials developed under this award relating to intangible property, such as intellectual property or patents, are subject to applicable rules under 2 CFR 200.315, “Intangible Property.”<sup>6</sup> If applicants have intangible property developed previously under non-federal awards and are planning to use the intangible property in this award, clearly identify the intangible property and its anticipated use in the project. Applicants must also specify if the applications include any proprietary information and mark it as proprietary, if applicable.

## I. Other Applicable USAID Regulations

As Save the Children Federation, Inc. is providing a sub-award under United States law, the Lead Applicant is, therefore, subject to the laws and regulations of the United States pertaining to sub-awards, including but not limited to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the “Super Circular”), as set forth in 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 700, the specific terms and conditions set forth in the Prime Award, and USAID’s Standard Provisions for US NGOs or USAID’s Standard Provisions for non-US NGOs. Where appropriate “USAID” shall mean Save the Children Federation, Inc. and “recipient” shall mean “Lead Applicant.”

Please refer to Attachment 6 for applicable USAID Standard Provisions for US NGOs and Attachment 7 for applicable USAID Standard Provisions for non-US organizations.

Please refer to Attachment 8 for applicable regulations set forth in 2 CFR 200, Attachment 9 for regulations related specifically to USAID awards, and Attachment 10 for USAID procurement regulations found in 22 CFR 228.

## J. Attachments

- Attachment 1: Narrative Research Application Template
- Attachment 2: Research Activity Schedule
- Attachment 3: Budget Template
- Attachment 4: Budget Narrative Template
- Attachment 5: Past Performance Information Request
- Attachment 6: USAID Standard Provisions for US NGOs
- Attachment 7: USAID Standard Provisions for Non-US NGOs
- Attachment 8: 2 CFR 200 Uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements for Federal awards
- Attachment 9: 2 CFR 700 USAID
- Attachment 10: 22 CFR 228 Chapter II

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<sup>6</sup> In 2 CFR 200.315, “The applicant may copyright any work subject to a copyright that was developed under a Federal award. The federal government has the right to: (1) obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data under a Federal award; and (2) Authorize other to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data for Federal purposes.” For more details, see 2 CFR 200.315 and e-CFR 401 “Patents, Trademarks, and Copyrights.”