



Australian Government
AusAID



Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme

Competitive Grant Guidelines
2013

Index

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1 Introduction

1.1 Australia's aid program

The fundamental purpose of Australia's aid program is to help people overcome poverty. The program is guided by Australia's aid policy, *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference – Delivering real results* ('An Effective Aid Program for Australia').¹

AusAID is the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's aid program. Further information on AusAID can be obtained from AusAID's internet site: www.ausaid.gov.au.

1.2 Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme

The *Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme* (AACRS) is a new AusAID program of support to Afghanistan's agricultural and rural development. The AACRS objective is:

Improved resilience and livelihoods for Afghan rural communities.

AusAID will select up to five (5) non-government organisations (NGOs) to work with Afghan civil society organisations (CSOs) to deliver agreed projects under the AACRS. The AACRS is open to Australian and international (including Afghan) NGOs to apply, and is not limited to organisations that have AusAID accreditation. AusAID reserves the right to fund less than five (5) NGOs, dependent on the strength of the assessed submissions.

Implementation of the AACRS will be over four (4) years, with up to AUD30 million allocated to projects (of which AUD500,000 will be set aside in an Innovations Fund). It is not assumed the budget will be divided evenly between each NGO, or that five (5) NGOs will necessarily be selected and/or funded.

The AACRS aligns with commitments made in *An Effective Aid Program for Australia* for the aid program to make greater use of NGOs that are effective in achieving results and efficient in delivering value for money. It will report against the aid program's strategic goal of investing in food security, sustainable economic growth and private sector development, and reflects the principles of AusAID's *Civil Society Engagement Framework*.²

The AACRS aligns with the *Memorandum of Understanding: Development Framework Agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Government of Australia 2012-17*³ which identifies agriculture as a sector where Australia has particular expertise, a comparative advantage, and can have the most impact.

Applicant NGOs will be expected to demonstrate how their proposed project aligns with the Afghan Government's National Priority Programs (NPPs), particularly those within the Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster (NPPs 1, 2, 3 and 4).⁴

¹ Available at: www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/Pages/5621_9774_1073_3040_2380.aspx

² Available at: www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Pages/civil-society-engagement-framework.aspx

³ Available at: www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Pages/aus-afghanistan-development-framework-agreement-2012-2017.aspx

⁴ Available at: <http://www.thekabulprocess.gov.af/index.php/clusters--npps/archive>

Community Resilience and Livelihoods

The AACRS objective, improved resilience and livelihoods for Afghan rural communities, is based on the understanding that people living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to crises, challenges and shocks. Negative shocks can have effects along gender lines, and women and girls in poor households often bear the largest burden.⁵ Resilience is the ability to resist, accommodate or recover from the effects of a shock.⁶ Improving community resilience is therefore about building stronger social and economic foundations in local communities so that they can respond more effectively to shocks. In line with AusAID's approach to agriculture and rural development in Afghanistan, **food security and economic livelihoods are central to the notion of community resilience envisaged under the AACRS.**

Improving rural livelihoods is about supporting and improving the various activities and resources that allow people to make a living. It is likely to include direct cooperation with the private sector, including semi-subsistence farmers, the self-employed in the non-farm informal economy, as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.⁷ A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.

The AACRS will therefore prioritise projects that support:

- agricultural productivity and food security, including nutritional outcomes
- economic activity, including access to micro-finance schemes and markets for poor men and women
- diversified livelihoods
- increased cash incomes
- local level disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness activities
- improved natural resource management
- vocational and enterprise skills development
- mitigation of the impact of natural hazards on food security and livelihoods
- women to graduate from poverty to sustainable livelihoods.

The most likely avenues for AACRS NGOs to achieve results will be by working in areas that they have already worked. This can include using the AACRS to extend the life of successful projects that are underway, or could be expanded (note that the AACRS will not fund retrospective projects).

The AACRS will also include capacity building of Afghan CSOs.⁸ This is not the objective of the AACRS (which is focused on improving reliance and livelihoods), but projects must include a capacity building component. This will have the advantage of enhancing the sustainability of AACRS projects, as CSOs develop skills in organising and implementing effective community resilience and/or rural livelihood programs, as well as enhancing the social development of local communities.⁹

⁵ World Bank (2007). *World Development Report 2008* p 90.

⁶ AusAID (2009). *Investing in a Safer Future: A Disaster Risk Reduction Policy for the Australian Aid Program* p 8.

⁷ AusAID (2011). *Sustainable Economic Development: Improving Food Security* p 9.

⁸ For the AACRS, Afghan CSOs may include Community Development Councils, traditional Shuras, farmers' organisations, local NGOs (including women's organisations) or other local entities which are non-profit distributing and/or community based.

⁹ Through the *Civil Society Engagement Framework*, AusAID has recognised the emergence of an informed and engaged civil society as an important outcome in its own right, enabling poor people to claim their rights, and helping to shape development policies and partnerships and oversee their implementation (AusAID 2012: 1).

Partnership Approach

AusAID experience suggests that a partnership approach to working with NGOs improves the efficiency and effectiveness of development outcomes.¹⁰ In line with this understanding, the AACRS will adopt a strong partnership model which includes:

- developing a common understanding of what the term ‘partnership’ means in the context of the AACRS
- clearly identifying the different goals, drivers and risks for all participating parties
- drafting a Partnership Agreement which will spell out expectations for relationship management and behaviour between the partners
- developing business processes for the AACRS which support a partnership approach, including a communications plan.

Scheme Implementation and Management

Through this Request for Submissions process, AusAID will assess Submissions and select up to five (5) NGOs to develop detailed designs, based on a consistent format, and building on their Submissions. After selection of the AACRS NGOs, the AACRS will have two phases:

- (i) a **Detailed Design Phase**, during which the selected NGOs will be supported to produce high quality detailed designs;
- (ii) a four-year **Implementation Phase**, during which projects will be implemented.

AusAID will support the development of detailed designs through:

- grant agreements of up to AUD50,000, to be used to develop detailed designs for their proposed project;
- assistance through the AACRS Technical Reference Group (discussed below); and
- support for attendance at the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop.¹¹

The detailed designs will be subject to AusAID’s standard quality and peer review processes, before full grant agreements will be considered. Designs selected for the Detailed Design Phase are not guaranteed to be supported to move into the implementation phase.

The AACRS will operate as an integrated program, rather than five (5) separate stand-alone projects. This will require both coordination of all the parties, and additional program level activities to be undertaken by all NGO partners, including:

- involvement in the Scheme Governance Committee;
- attendance at the Annual Reflections meeting; and
- contributing to program-wide monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

The Scheme Governance Committee (SGC) will be made up of representatives of AusAID, the Government of Afghanistan (through the Ministries of: Economy; Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; and, Rural Rehabilitation and Development) and the AACRS NGOs. The SGC will provide leadership and oversight of the AACRS. The SGC will meet a minimum of once a year.

¹⁰ AusAID (2011). *Pacific Leadership Program. Operating Guidelines*, Version 4, March.

¹¹ Early in the Detailed Design Phase, AACRS NGOs and their Afghan CSO partners will attend a Partnership and Design Workshop. Cost of participation by one representative from the head office and one local partner will be met by the AACRS. Further details are provided in the *AACRS Program Design Document*.

A Scheme Manager will be appointed to provide day to day management and coordination between the NGOs relating to overall program level activity, event and M&E requirements, and will be the primary point of contact for AACRS NGOs. The Scheme Manager, in collaboration with the Technical Reference Group, will establish Scheme wide processes and systems, preparing templates for standardised reporting by projects, a database of program details and results, and manage financial flows and acquittals for meetings and other management expenses. They will review and quality check all NGO project narratives and financial reports prior to submission to AusAID, prepare the AACRS Annual Report for submission to the SGC and consult regularly with the Technical Reference Group.

The Scheme Manager position will be contracted through AusAID's Development Assistance Facility for Afghanistan (DAFA). DAFA will manage the role and performance of the Scheme Manager (in conjunction with AusAID).

A Technical Reference Group containing design, M&E, gender, and rural development expertise, will also be appointed by AusAID through DAFA. The Group will support the development of detailed designs and provide expert advice over the life of the AACRS. The Technical Reference Group will be available to AACRS NGOs as required, and at AusAID's discretion.

A comprehensive M&E Framework makes provision for M&E at both the project and Scheme levels. The aim is to produce high quality M&E findings for the purposes of shared learning, accountability and to build an evidence base. There will be an annual timetable of events, including an Annual Reflections meeting, which will be an opportunity for information sharing and lessons learned to date, as well as reporting to ensure dialogue and documentation.

The AACRS involves a range of relatively high risks due to the operating environment and a range of moderate risks associated with the program approach. Risk management for the AACRS will require the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, an effective partnership approach and close collaboration at many levels, both in Australia and in Afghanistan.

Applicants should be aware that being successfully selected to undertake the initial Detailed Design Phase does not automatically mean full funding will be provided by AusAID in the second phase.

Further details on the AACRS are set out in the *AACRS Program Design Document* and attached annexes, available on the AusAID website.

2 Submission Requirements

AusAID seeks Submissions from effective and experienced NGOs to deliver projects through the AACRS.

If your NGO chooses to lodge a Submission (the “Submission”) it must be submitted under the terms of this document, including all parts, attachments and addenda (together referred to as the “Request for Submission”).

TABLE 1:	
ISSUE DATE	30 APRIL 2013
CLOSING TIME	2.00pm AEST, 14 June 2013
SUBMISSION METHOD	<p>Electronically in PDF format, and with a copy of the proposal in Microsoft Word, via the dedicated email address: aacrs@ausaid.gov.au</p> <p>OR</p> <p>in person via the “Tender Box, Ground Floor, AusAID, 255 London Circuit, Canberra, ACT 2601, AUSTRALIA”</p> <p>Submissions must all be in English and in accordance with requirements set out in these <i>AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines</i>.</p>
CONTACT POINT	<p>AACRS Competitive Grants Program Manager Economic Growth & Governance Section Afghanistan Branch, AusAID Email: aacrs@ausaid.gov.au</p>
NUMBER OF COPIES OF THE SUBMISSION	<p>If submitted electronically, only one copy is required in the PDF format, with a Microsoft Word version also submitted.</p> <p>If a hard copy submission, one (1) original (marked ‘original’) plus five (5) copies and a CD containing one PDF file of the documents submitted, and a Microsoft Word version. Hard copies must be enclosed in an envelope (not sent by facsimile) and endorsed: ‘Submission for the <i>Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme</i>’, Attention: AACRS Competitive Grants Program Manager.</p>

The NGO must submit the documents as listed in **Table 2** and this will form their Submission. Templates for these documents form the Annex to these *AACRS Grant Guidelines*.

TABLE 2:	
ANNEX	TITLE
Annex A	Cover Page to Submission
Annex B	Proposal Summary & Capacity Statement
Annex C	Detailed Design Phase
Annex D	Proposed AACRS Project Budget
Annex E	Past Experience
Annex F	Attachments
Annex G	Applicant Declaration

2.1 Organisation Eligibility

The AACRS is open to Australian and international (including Afghan) NGOs, and is not limited to organisations that have AusAID accreditation through the AusAID–NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

To be eligible to apply for AACRS detailed design and project funding, NGOs must:

- a) be registered to work in Afghanistan;
- b) have effectively implemented development projects in Afghanistan in the past five (5) years, and for more than five (5) years in total; and,
- c) be signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, or an international equivalent.

If an NGO is not already accredited by AusAID, the organisation must provide documents as part of its submission to help AusAID assess its management capacity, systems and operations (required documents are set out in **Annex F, Section 4**). AusAID will undertake due diligence assessments of non-AusAID accredited NGOs that are selected through this Request for Submissions before finalising grant agreements.

Applicant NGOs must declare all other proposals or sources of funding (including Australian Government funding) that is related, or may impact, on the proposed project (see **Annex A**).

Applicant NGOs must be able to commence program design at a date agreed with AusAID after the signing of the Grant Agreement.

Consortia Bids

AusAID also invites Submissions involving consortia of NGOs. Consortia Submissions must be accompanied by a separate letter from each NGO partner providing information about itself, noting the relationship between the lead applicant NGO and partner organisations and intent to collaborate on the proposed project (see **Annexes A and F**).

The lead applicant NGO will be accountable for all funds. The Funding Agreement shall be signed with the lead applicant NGO, and the lead applicant NGO is responsible to AusAID for the performance of the consortia under the Agreement to achieve the objectives as required.

Applicant NGOs are eligible to provide only one Submission for consideration. In the case of consortia, an NGO can be involved in several consortia and applications but can only be the lead applicant NGO in one consortium.

NGOs named in multiple Submissions (as a member of more than one consortia, for only one of which it may be the lead applicant NGO) acknowledge that they are making commitments to each Submission to undertake all of the activities detailed in a given Submission – irrespective of any decision on any other Submission. AusAID reserves the right to reassess any Submission if, following notification of the Delegate's decision, the membership of a successful consortium Submission changes, including withdrawing consortium member(s).

2.2 Project Eligibility

Proposed projects must be consistent with the Australian aid program's strategic goals and development objectives, as outlined in *An Effective Aid Program for Australia*.

The AACRS Budget allocates up to AUD30 million to support NGO projects through grants. The AACRS will fund up to five (5) NGOs. It is not assumed the budget will be divided evenly between each NGO, or that five (5) NGOs will necessarily be funded – AusAID reserves the right to choose to fund less than five (5), dependent on the strength of the assessed submissions. There is also no minimum or maximum grant amount that NGOs can apply for. Up to 20 per cent of individual applicant NGO budgets may be used for program monitoring and evaluation and learning activities.

Ineligible activities and ineligible costs

Support will NOT be provided for Submissions that seek funding for or include:

- activities that may be considered reasonably to be contrary to the interests of the Commonwealth of Australia;
- evangelism or missionary outreach;
- support for independence movements;
- projects that do not clearly demonstrate a commitment to the participation of local partners in programming and implementation;
- retrospective projects, i.e., projects that are already completed;
- are primarily research focused;
- travel expenses that exceed 20 per cent of total project costs;
- activities that cannot clearly demonstrate an ability to generate “on-the-ground”, sustainable benefits for targeted communities;
- construction of NGO infrastructure to be owned and used by the NGO for future work (e.g. office space, sheds etc). These activities can be included in budgets however it must be clear that the funding for construction will come from the NGO themselves, and actual project costs are funded by AusAID; and
- are focused primarily on the provision of equipment, freight or buildings unless:
 - the equipment, freight or buildings to be supplied are clearly part of a broader development program;
 - the recipients have the capacity to maintain the equipment or buildings concerned and to meet recurrent costs;
 - the NGO has established that effective quality control measures have been used in the selection of goods for freighting overseas; and
 - adequate planning has gone into the goods' use and distribution so as to establish their part in the overall value of the project.

2.3 Applicant Briefing

AusAID will hold a briefing for potential AACRS applicants at **15:30-17:00** (AEST) on **14 May 2013** in the AusAID building, located at:

255 London Circuit
Canberra ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA

The briefing will be an opportunity for interested organisations to ask questions on the AACRS design, submission process and implementation. Interested organisations may send a maximum of two (2) representatives to attend the briefing. Organisations can also attend the Australian Embassy in Kabul to be teleconferenced into the briefing (please contact aacrs@ausaid.gov.au to arrange).

All questions, answers, and presentations from the briefing will be published on the AusAID website, so that any organisation unable to attend has equal access to information.

NGOs planning to attend the Applicant Briefing must RSVP to aacrs@ausaid.gov.au by 10 May 2013.

3 Assessment

3.1 Assessment Criteria and Process

Through this Request for Submissions process, AusAID will select up to five (5) NGOs to receive funding to develop detailed project designs. The detailed designs will be subject to AusAID's standard quality and peer review processes before full grants will be considered.

Assessment will include capacity, technical and value for money assessments – where 90 per cent of the cost will be based on the scoring against the selection criteria in **Table 3**; and ten (10) per cent against the provided budget and costings, as well as aspects of the proposal that speak to value for money considerations.

Submissions received by the deadline will first be checked to be conforming bids by AusAID to ensure the organisation and proposed project meet the eligibility criteria required and detailed in **Section 2**. At AusAID's sole discretion, those Submissions deemed nonconforming will be excluded, and applicants will be advised by AusAID at this stage.

Conforming Submissions will then be assessed by a Technical Assessment Panel comprising: a Chairperson (an AusAID Officer); at least one other AusAID nominee; and two (2) other independent contractors or stakeholders that AusAID deems appropriate. AusAID may also choose to appoint an external probity advisor as part of the assessment process. The Technical Assessment Panel will assess Submissions against the Capacity & Technical Assessment Criteria given in **Table 3**, and give each Submission a score out of 100.

TABLE 3: CAPACITY & TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	100%
1. NGO CAPACITY AND EXPERIENCE	50%
1.1. Demonstrated risk and security management capacity	10%
1.2. Relevant experience of proposed personnel and Project Coordinator	10%
1.3. Experience working in Afghanistan, including delivery in rural Afghanistan, and a commitment to Afghanistan over the long term	10%
1.4. Partnership arrangements in Afghanistan, including demonstrated experience engaging with both civil society and government authorities	10%
1.5. Financial probity, including details of any formal accreditation and/or compliance to relevant Codes of Conduct	10%
2. FEASIBILITY AND RELEVANCE OF PROJECT CONCEPT	50%
2.1 The project's contribution to the AACRS overall objective: <i>Improved resilience and livelihoods for Afghan rural communities</i>	20%
2.2 The project's ability to develop the capacity of local civil society	10%
2.3 The project's alignment with Afghan Government priorities, particularly National Priority Programs within the Agriculture and Rural Development cluster	10%
2.4 The project's contribution to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and girls	5%
2.5 Integration of the NGO's own experience in Afghanistan and inclusion of lessons learned	5%

Value for Money Assessment

After the scoring against the Capacity and Technical Assessment criteria, the Technical Assessment Panel will assess the value for money of each Submission. The Panel will ensure the funds requested and detailed in the project budget as part of the Submission are in accordance with the requirements of these *AACRS Grant Guidelines*, and are reasonable and proportionate to the intended work to be undertaken. Cost will not be the only determining factor in assessing value for money of proposals. This assessment will also consider:

- a) fitness for purpose – that a grant would add value by achieving something worthwhile that would not occur without grant assistance; and,
- b) financial considerations, including all relevant direct and indirect benefits and costs over the proposal cycle identified.

AusAID recognises that the performance of an NGO is best measured through an assessment of overall organisational effectiveness, rather than through a cost-based quantitative assessment at a programmatic level of inputs and outputs. Applicants should note that value for money determinations are made on a whole-of-life basis and that AusAID is not bound or required to accept the lowest priced Submission, and **AusAID reserves the right to negotiate aspects of the proposed costings with NGOs during the design phase.**

The value for money assessment will form ten per cent of each Submission's overall score.

Next Steps

As part of the assessment process, AusAID may invite short listed applicant NGOs to be interviewed, with any interviews being held by telephone. Applicant NGOs will be notified no later than one week before the interviews take place. Applicant NGOs should note that failure by an applicant NGO to be available for the interview by teleconference may disadvantage the applicant NGO. An applicant NGO representative will be required to answer any generic and specific questions asked by the Technical Assessment Panel.

The Technical Assessment Panel will provide the AusAID delegate with a Selection Report that summarises the Panel's assessment of each Submission against the Assessment Criteria and the Value for Money assessment. The Selection Report will include the Panel's recommendations for Submissions to be funded in ranked order for the delegate's consideration and approval. At this stage, AusAID may choose to engage with the Afghan Government on a no objections basis to ensure applicant NGOs are registered to work in Afghanistan.

The Technical Assessment Panel is conducted on a confidential basis, and Panel members must not discuss matters relating to the assessment of any Submission with any external party. Applicant NGOs must not seek contact with any members of the Technical Assessment Panel, and any such contact will be considered a breach of confidentiality and may result in AusAID rejecting the Submission of the applicant NGO concerned. Note that Technical Assessment Panel members will be required to declare any conflicts of interest.

In making its assessment of a Submission, the Panel may have regard to other factors relevant to the suitability, capacity and qualifications of an applicant NGO including but not limited to:

- a) the applicant NGO's ability to comply with the conditions of this Request for Submissions;
- b) checking with nominated referees and with other persons or organisations as AusAID chooses, the accuracy of information and quality of previous work performed including the resourcing of previous work; and
- c) information obtained from any legitimate, verifiable source, which is relevant to the capacity of the applicant NGO, and has undertaken the principles of natural justice. Such information may be the result of inquiries made by AusAID, and will be raised with the NGO at interview if needed.

Previous performance information may only be provided to Panel members where it is considered relevant and where all other principles of natural justice have been followed. Panel members may not introduce irrelevant issues or hearsay into the assessment or base their assessment on information that is hearsay and cannot be substantiated.

Panel members may adjust technical scores as a consequence of any interview and consideration of past performance. This will be done at the Panel's sole discretion.

3.2 Indicative timeframe for NGO selection and Detailed Design Phase processes

The selection and inception process and indicative timeframe is summarised in **Table 4** below:

Table 4:	
Event	Date
Call for Submissions	30 April 2013
Applicant briefing	14 May 2013
Final date for Submission enquiries	1 June 2013
Final response on enquiries via addenda to these <i>AACRS Grant Guidelines</i>	7 June 2013
Submission deadline	14 June 2013
AusAID conformance check	June 2013
Technical Assessment Panel assessment of proposals	July 2013
Signing of Phase 1 detailed design grant agreements	August 2013
Detailed design process	August – November 2013
Signing of Phase 2 implementation grant agreement	December 2013

4 Submission Conditions

4.1 Lodgement of documents

Each Submission must:

- a) be lodged in accordance with **Section 2 Table 1**;
- b) not have the AusAID logo or any other representation or mark which may indicate that the applicant NGO is in any way related to or connected with AusAID;
- c) be no longer than the specified page limits indicated;
- d) be provided in accordance with the conditions of this Request for Submissions;
- e) be accurate and not misleading in any respect; and
- f) be provided before the Closing Time specified in **Section 2 Table 1**.

4.2 Late Submissions

The applicant NGO is responsible for the delivery of their Submission. In order to show fairness to applying NGOs, AusAID will not accept Submissions after the advertised closing date and time.

AusAID may extend the Closing Time at its sole and absolute discretion, and will issue a notice on the website notifying any decision to extend.

4.3 Non-conforming Submissions

Applicant NGOs must include all information specified in these Guidelines in their Submission.

Applicant NGOs accept that their failure to provide all information, in the format specified, may result in their Submission being considered as a nonconforming Submission and liable to rejection. AusAID reserves the right to seek clarification of non-conforming Submissions.

AusAID retains the sole discretion to assess or reject non-conforming Submissions. AusAID will not consider or entertain any queries about a decision to assess or reject a non-conforming Submission.

4.4 Submission Enquiries

If an applicant NGO wishes to make any enquiry concerning the AACRS, including seeking clarification about this Request for Submissions, they must notify the Contact Point referred to in **Section 2 Table 1** as soon as possible and not later than 14 days before the Closing Time.

AusAID will respond to any applicant NGO's request for clarification no later than seven (7) days prior to the Closing Time. AusAID reserves the right to issue or publish answers to any applicant NGO's enquiries on its website without identifying the applicant NGO which submitted the question.

AusAID is not bound to act on any request to amend these Guidelines from any party, however AusAID retains the sole discretion to amend, change or vary any element of these Guidelines as AusAID deems necessary. These Guidelines supersede any other information or advice provided by AusAID in relation to the AACRS. If AusAID amends these Guidelines, it will publish the amended Guidelines on its website with a brief explanation of the amendments.

Applicant NGOs are encouraged to regularly check the AusAID website for updates and answers to questions.

4.5 AusAID's rights

AusAID reserves the right to:

- a) terminate, extend or vary this process;
- b) evaluate Submissions as AusAID sees appropriate;
- c) request clarification in relation to a Submission;
- d) accept or reject any Submission;
- e) terminate negotiations with any suitable applicant NGO and commence negotiations with any other applicant NGO; and
- f) negotiate with the number of applicant NGOs it considers appropriate.

4.6 Applicant NGO's acknowledgement

A Submission is submitted on the following basis:

- a) no legal obligation or agreement whatsoever is intended to be or is created between AusAID and any applicant NGO by virtue of this Request for Submissions (this includes, but is not limited to statements contained in these Guidelines or any other documents), until agreement negotiations are completed and a formal written agreement acceptable to AusAID is entered into and executed by an authorised officer of AusAID and by the successful applicant NGO, if any;
- b) the applicant NGO acknowledges and agrees that AusAID, its officers, employees, agents and advisers are not, and will not be responsible, or liable for the accuracy or completeness of any information contained in these Guidelines, or any other guidelines issued subsequent to the evaluation of Submissions;
- c) the applicant NGO is responsible for all costs of and incidental to the preparation and delivery of their Submission(s), or any subsequent stage of the Submission process, including answering any queries and providing any further information sought by AusAID;
- d) the applicant NGO warrants that the Submission is accurate in every respect. In particular the applicant NGO warrants that the information and certification included in the Submission is accurate, that any personnel have been approached and confirmed their availability and that AusAID has the authority to make any inquiries deemed necessary to confirm information included in the Submission; and

- e) an applicant NGO selected at the conclusion of the selection process is not guaranteed any funding from AusAID.

4.7 Complaints handling

Any complaints that may arise regarding the Submission and selection process should be directed and addressed to the Director, Economic Growth & Governance Section, Afghanistan Branch, AusAID, GPO Box 887 Canberra ACT 2601, Australia.

4.8 Intellectual property

All Submissions become the property of AusAID once submitted. However, any intellectual property rights as may exist in the information contained in each Submission will remain the property of the applicant NGO.

The applicant NGO authorises AusAID to copy, adapt, amend, disclose, including to AusAID's contractors and advisers, or do anything else necessary, at AusAID's sole discretion, to all materials, including that which contains intellectual property rights of the applicant NGO or other parties contained in the Submission, for the purpose of:

- a) its evaluation of Submissions; and
- b) all other matters relating thereto, including governmental and Parliamentary reporting requirements for information for Parliamentary Committees or Enquiries.

Copyright in the Guidelines is reserved to AusAID.

4.9 Debriefing of applicant NGOs

Applicant NGOs are entitled to request a written debriefing on the results of the assessment of their Submissions once agreements have been signed with successful NGOs to proceed to the detailed design phase. This debriefing will provide information on scores achieved against individual criterion and comments from the Technical Assessment Panel. Generic feedback on the qualities of the successful applicant(s) will also be provided.

AusAID will not enter into discussion or communications on the content of the debrief once it has been completed.

4.10 Applicable law

The laws of the Australian Capital Territory apply to the Guidelines. Applicant NGOs must also comply with all Australian (including extra-territorial) and Afghan laws, regulation and policies in the preparation and submission of their Submission(s) and in the performance of the Funding Order/Grant Agreement. This includes Australia's *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

4.11 AusAID policies

Interested organisations should familiarise themselves with AusAID policies (all available on the AusAID website, www.ausaid.gov.au) including:

- a) *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference – Delivering real results*
- b) *Promoting opportunities for all – Gender equality and women's empowerment*
- c) *Child Protection Policy 2013*

- d) *Investing in a Safer Future: A Disaster Risk Reduction Policy for the Australian Aid Program*
- e) *Civil Society Engagement Framework*
- f) *Sustainable Economic Development: Improving Food Security*
- g) *Framework for working in fragile and conflict-affected states*
- h) *Promoting economic opportunities for all – A how to guide for AusAID staff on programming for women's economic empowerment and livelihood security*
- i) Any other policies published from time to time on the AusAID website.

4.12 Further requirements

Accredited NGO applicants are required to comply with all provisions of the Accreditation Manual found on the AusAID website, as may be amended from time to time and the AusAID / applicant NGO Umbrella Agreement (if in place). In the event of a breach of these requirements, AusAID may reject the Accredited applicant NGO's Submission and / or consider further action as deemed appropriate at AusAID's sole discretion.

5 Detailed Design Phase for Successful Applicants

5.1 Detailed Design Proposal

NGOs selected through the Request for Submissions will be invited to enter into grant agreements with AusAID to fund a three month 'Detailed Design Phase' for their projects. AusAID will provide selected NGOs with up to AUD50,000 to prepare a full project design, which builds on their Submission and integrates their project logic with the AACRS Theory of Change (set out in the *AACRS Program Design Document*). The detailed design process will be collaborative and informative with the aim of producing high quality, evidence-based designs.

As part of their Submission, applicant NGOs must provide a one page plan and one page budget outlining how they intend to undertake the Detailed Design Phase. The one page plan must set out a three month work plan for the detailed design's development, and (at minimum) explain the intended:

- a) consultation process, including how partners (including relevant Afghan authorities) will be part of the development of the detailed design¹²;
- b) any travel to be undertaken as part of the detailed design development;
- c) whether organisations intend to seek specialist advice;
- d) how the documents listed in **Section 5.2** will be developed.

A one page budget must also be provided detailing the costs of the Detailed Design Phase. This budget should include, at minimum, staffing and administrative costs (for example, travel costs and communication costs) and be in Australian dollars.

AusAID will provide up to AUD50,000 in grant funding for the Detailed Design Phase, the Technical Reference Group will also be available for advice, and applicant NGOs are able to contribute in-kind resourcing (applicants should provide specific details on what these in-kind resources are and why they are needed).

5.2 Detailed Design Phase

Early in the Detailed Design Phase, the NGOs and their local CSO partners will attend a Partnership and Design Workshop. Workshop facilitators will have design and M&E expertise, and will be drawn from the AACRS Technical Reference Group. Cost of participation by one representative from the head office and one local partner will be met by the AACRS.

At the completion of the Detailed Design Phase, each NGO will provide AusAID with a detailed design document which includes, at minimum:

- a) a Theory of Change, which integrates the project logic with the AACRS Theory of Change (set out in the *AACRS Design Document*)

¹² Note that AusAID can facilitate engagement with relevant Ministries.

- b) a detailed risk register using AusAID's risk templates
- c) a project-specific Threat and Risk Assessment, and a detailed Security Plan – these must be in accordance with the international risk management standard ISO31000 – 2009 Risk Management Principles and Guidelines
- d) an Exit Strategy and Sustainability Plan
- e) a Capacity Building Framework
- f) specific plans for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and gender inclusion
- g) a first year operational plan
- h) a detailed budget.

The detailed designs will be subject to AusAID's quality and peer review processes proportionate to their size. NGOs whose detailed design documents are approved by AusAID will be invited to enter into a full grant agreement that will cover the life of the AACRS. The first tranche of funding under the full agreement will then be provided to cover the first financial year's implementation costs.¹³ The detailed design documents will form the scope of services for the full AACRS agreement (to be signed between each NGO and AusAID).

¹³ Successful accredited Australian NGOs will be engaged through a Funding Order under the NGO Head Agreement and successful non-accredited and international NGOs will be engaged under a Funding Agreement.

Annex: Submission Templates

The following Annexes (A-G) provide the templates to be completed by NGO applicants.

Annex A: Cover Page to Submission

(two pages only)

APPLICANT NGO DETAILS	
Date of submission	
Name of NGO	
Concise profile of NGO	
Postal Address	
Principal Contact Officer	
Telephone number	
Mobile Number (optional)	
Fax number	
Email contact	
Member of ACFID	Yes / No
Accredited by AusAID through ANCP	Yes / No
Date of most recent accreditation:	
Accreditation and/or compliance with other relevant codes of conduct	
Name(s) of other NGOs in Consortium (if applicable)	

AACRS PROJECT CONCEPT PAPER SUMMARY	
Concept Title	
Funds requested from AusAID	Total Costs
	Of which, Design Costs (AUD50,000 maximum)
Please provide details of all other proposals or sources of funding (including Australian Government funding) that is related, or may impact, on the proposed project	
Geographic Location(s) within Afghanistan	
Sectoral Focus	
If the Submission is based on a consortium of organisations, describe the way in which each organisation will provide value and quality to the work	

Annex B: Proposal Summary & Capacity Statement

For each proposal the applicant NGO must include a Statement that responds to the following points. The Statement should be of no more than **FOUR (4) pages**.

Note that the proposal is intended to be indicative only and, pending selection, further negotiations and development of the proposal's ideas are expected to take place during the Detailed Design Phase. Applicants may refer to their response to **Annex E** in their responses.

1 CAPACITY & EXPERIENCE OF APPLICANT NGO

1.1 Demonstrated Risk and Security Management Capacity

Outline risk and security management planning for the project, and previous management of risk and security in Afghanistan.

1.2 Key personnel, including the Project Coordinator.

Outline the qualifications and experience of the Project Coordinator and organisation personnel who will fill key roles in managing and supporting the AACRS project. This should clearly demonstrate that personnel have experience working in Afghanistan.

1.3 Experience working in Afghanistan

Outline the NGO's experience working in Afghanistan, including delivery of aid programs in rural Afghanistan, and intent to remain in Afghanistan through and beyond transition.

1.4 Partnership arrangements in Afghanistan

Outline the organisation's experience engaging with both Afghan civil society (including capacity building) and government authorities.

2 PROJECT CONCEPT

2.1 Overall proposal

Summary of overall proposal. How does the project contribute to the AACRS overall objective: 'Improved resilience and livelihoods for Afghan rural communities'?

2.2 Working with local partners

How will the project develop the capacity of local civil society? What local partners will the project include?

2.3 Alignment with Afghan Government Priorities

How does the project align with the Afghan Government's National Priority Programs, particularly those within the Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster (1, 2, 3 and 4)?

2.4 Target Population

Who is the target population of the project? How does the project address the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and girls?

2.5 Lessons Learned

How does the project build on the applicant NGO's own experience in Afghanistan and benefit from lessons learned?

Annex C: Detailed Design Phase

Applicant NGOs must provide a **one page plan** and **one page budget** outlining their plans for the Detailed Design Phase. The proposal and budget should be based on the information provided in **Section 5**.

Annex D: Proposed AACRS Project Budget

Applicants are required to provide an approximate budget in Australian dollars for their full project proposal (noting this will be refined through the Detailed Design Phase). A budget template is provided at **Table 5** for guidance, but applicants can choose to use their own format. Applicants are reminded that:

- a) **the Budget assumes AUD30 million total will be allocated to projects.** The AACRS will fund **up to five (5) NGOs**, however it is not assumed the budget will be divided evenly between each NGO, or that five (5) NGOs will necessarily be funded. There is no minimum or maximum grant amount that NGOs can apply for;
- b) up to 20 per cent of individual applicant NGO budgets may be used for program monitoring and evaluation and learning activities;
- c) this is only an indicative budget, and final budgets will require more detail.

Table 5: Suggested Budget Template					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Direct Project Inputs					
Project management & coordination					
Staffing (by position costs)					
Materials					
Training material costs					
Other (<i>specify</i>)					
Administrative costs					
Office accommodation costs					
Travel costs					
Communication costs					
Report preparation					
Asset maintenance costs					
Other (<i>specify</i>)					
Monitoring and evaluation costs					
Performance monitoring costs					
Learning activities (<i>specify</i>)					
Total					

Annex E: Past Experience (max 2 pages in total)

Details of two (2) relevant NGO programs or projects that demonstrates the NGO's ability to fulfil the AACRS objective must be presented in the format outlined below.

Project Name:			
Project Value:			
Project Location(s):			
Project Duration			
Client / Donor (s):			
Year Completed:			
Brief description of the project and the NGO's role			
Brief description of project outcomes and lessons learned:			
How is this project relevant to your statements addressing the Technical & Capacity Assessment Criteria?			
Nominated Project Referees:			
1. Name:		2. Name:	
Address:		Address:	
Email:		Email:	
Phone:		Phone:	

Annex F: Attachments

Applicants should attach the following (where applicable):

1 LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Letter of support or association from each Afghan partner organisation to be involved in the project (in English).

2 LETTERS OF SUPPORT (CONSORTIUM ONLY)

Where relevant, a Consortium Agreement (signed by the Heads of each Consortium Organisation) should be provided. Details of the Consortium members' corporate commitment and involvement in the Submission should also be described in the form of a single page Letter of Association included as an attachment to the Submission.

3 CURRICULUM VITAE OF PROJECT COORDINATOR (max 2 pages)

The curriculum vitae (CV) of the main contact person in the lead NGO who will be the Project Coordinator, including name and contact details of two referees, who are not employed by the NGO partners of AusAID.

4 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

This is to be completed by the NGO which will sign the agreement with AusAID.

NGOs which do not have AusAID accreditation are required to provide the following information:

- a) the name of the lead NGO which, if successful, will enter into the agreement with AusAID;
- b) a copy of the organisation's constitution or articles of association;
- c) evidence that the organisation is signatory to an equivalent to the ACFID Code of Conduct;
- d) a copy of the organisation's annual report, or a similar document;
- e) the three most recent annual audited financial statements for the NGO (these must be prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Standards applicable to the NGO's country of residence), an auditor's statement of financial viability or short form financial statements are not acceptable; and,
- f) the contact name, email address and telephone number of the NGO's financial accountant.

Annex G: Applicant Declaration

I, *[name, NGO and address of person(s) making the declaration]*, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

DEFINITIONS

In this declaration:

“**AusAID**” means the Australian Agency for International Development and represents the Commonwealth of Australia;

“**Applicant NGO**” means the NGO or Consortium of NGOs making the Submission.

BASIS OF DECLARATION

I hold the position of *[title of person making this declaration]* of the applicant NGO and am duly authorised by the applicant NGO to make this declaration.

I make this declaration on behalf of the applicant NGO and on behalf of myself.

I declare as follows:

THE SUBMISSION

The Submission is accurate in every respect. In particular, I warrant that the information and certification included in each Submission is accurate, and that AusAID has the authority to make any inquiries regarding information or certification contained within this Submission.

I acknowledge that if the applicant NGO is found to have made false or misleading material claims or statements in the Submission or in this applicant Declaration, AusAID may reject at any time any Submission lodged by or on behalf of the applicant NGO.

I acknowledge and agree to comply with the policies and standards identified in **Section 4.11**.

I acknowledge and agree to the matters specified in **Section 4**, specifically **4.5** (AusAID's Rights) and **4.6** (applicant NGO's Acknowledgement).

I acknowledge AusAID reserves the right to check the accuracy of information and quality of previous work performed including the resourcing of previous work with nominated referees and with other persons or organisations as AusAID chooses.

DECLARATION & SIGNATURE

The following undertaking must be made by an appropriately authorised officer of the applicant NGO or the lead Agency of a Consortium.

.....
(authorised officer's name)

.....
(position in NGO)

Signature Date.....
[Signature of person making declaration]

Witness name (Print)

Witness signature

Glossary

Accreditation	Accreditation refers to AusAID's NGO accreditation process. Accreditation enables NGOs to participate in the AusAID–NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). Accreditation acts as a front-end risk management process and ensures the accountable use of funding with minimal activity overview by AusAID. The AusAID NGO Accreditation Manual (Feb 2012) provides full details www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/documents/ngo-accreditation-manual.doc
Capacity Development	Capacity development in the context of AACRS is broadly defined as a process of contributing to individual, organisational and community capacity to achieve self-determined and shared development objectives in the longer term. Capacity development should involve an emphasis on mutual learning and reflection, joint planning and monitoring and a range of contributions to systems, processes and skills, in response to each partner/context's priorities.
Civil Society Organisations	For the AACRS, civil society organisations (CSOs) may include formal NGO coordinating bodies, Community Development Councils, traditional Shuras, farmers' organisations, local NGOs (including women's organisations) or other local entities which are non-profit distributing and/or community based.
Code of Conduct	ACFID members must abide by the ACFID Code of Conduct. This is also a prerequisite for NGOs seeking AusAID accreditation. The Code is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing transparency and accountability. www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/acfid-code-of-conduct/
Detailed Design Phase	The period during the AACRS in which selected NGOs will be supported to produce high quality detailed designs (at up to AUD50,000 per design).
Livelihoods	The means of making a living, or the various activities and resources that allow people to live. It comprises the capabilities, assets (including material and social) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks (e.g. drought, flood, war, etc.), maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.
Resilience	The ability of a system, community or society to resist, accommodate or recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.