



Date: 24 May 2013
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Subject: Addendum 1 to the Request for Submissions for the *Australia Afghanistan Community Resilience Scheme (AACRS)*

Applicants are advised of the following responses to questions asked at the AACRS Potential Applicant Briefing, held 14 May 2013.

Eligibility
<p>Question 1: Are Afghan NGOs eligible to apply for AACRS funding?</p> <p>Answer: Yes. The AACRS is open to Australian, Afghan and international NGOs, and is <u>not</u> limited to organisations that have AusAID accreditation through the AusAID–NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). Eligibility details are set out in the <i>AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines</i>.</p>
Code of Conduct
<p>Question 2: We are not an Australian NGO. Is it possible for us to become a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development’s (ACFID) Code of Conduct?</p> <p>Answer: No. NGOs must be Australian to be signatory to ACFID’s Code of Conduct. Details on ACFID’s Code of Conduct are available at: www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/about-the-code.</p> <p>However, organisations do not need to be signatory to ACFID’s Code of Conduct to be eligible to apply for AACRS Detailed Design and project funding. Part 2.1 of the <i>AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines</i> state that NGOs must be signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, or an international equivalent. Applicants must provide details on the international code to which they are signatory in their response to Annex F, Part 4.</p>
<p>Question 3: What is an example of an international equivalent to the ACFID Code of Conduct?</p> <p>Answer: If applicants are not signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, they will need to demonstrate they are signatory to an equivalent code. Examples of similar codes include: the British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) <i>Statement</i></p>

of Principles, and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation's *Code of Ethics and Operational Standards*. Applicants should note that ten (10) per cent of the AACRS Capacity and Technical Assessment is of an applicant's financial probity, including details of any formal accreditation and/or compliance to relevant codes of conduct. As such, applicants will be assessed against the robustness of the code to which they are signatory.

Question 4:

Are organisations which are signatory to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief's (ACBAR) Code of Conduct eligible for AACRS funding?

Answer:

Yes, organisations signatory to the ACBAR Code of Conduct are eligible for AACRS funding.

Geographic Focus

Question 5:

Does AusAID have preferred locations (for example, particular provinces and districts) for AACRS projects?

Answer:

No, the AACRS is a national-level program, with no provincial focus or preference.

Question 6:

Noting that some areas of Afghanistan are more challenging to access than others, would AusAID look more or less favourably on applicants that wish to work in these difficult to access spaces?

Answer:

No, the AACRS is a national-level program, with no provincial focus. All applicants will need to demonstrate their risk and security management capacity and planning as part of their Submission (as set out in the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*, Annex B, Part 1.1).

Consortia Applications

Question 7:

Is a consortium approach preferred, or should NGOs submit as individuals?

Answer:

Applicants are able to apply for AACRS funding either as individual organisations or as members of a consortium – AusAID does not have a preferred approach. Requirements for consortia bids are set out in Part 2.1 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*. For consortia applications, the responsibilities of different parties will need to be set out in the response to Annex A of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*.

Question 8:

If applying as part of a consortium, do all members need to be signatory to a code of conduct?

Answer:

No. Only the Lead Applicant of the consortium needs to be signatory to an appropriate code of conduct.

Submission Format**Question 9:**

Is there a specific format for the Submission, and if so where can we find it?

Answer:

Yes, Submissions must be in the specific format of the "Submission templates" provided in the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*.

Question 10:

Can applicants include additional material in their Submission, which sets out further details of their proposed project?

Answer:

No, applicants should not provide material additional to what is requested in the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*. If additional material is provided by the applicant, AusAID reserves the right to consider the applicant proposal non-conforming, or to clarify information with the applicant during conformity, or to remove information in conformity.

Question 11:

Annex F, Part 4 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requests information from applicants that are not AusAID accredited through the ANCP. Does this mean applicants with AusAID accreditation do not need to provide information under this Part?

Answer:

Applicants with AusAID accreditation should **not** provide information under Annex F, Part 4 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*. Applicants accredited through ANCP should provide details of their ANCP accreditation in their response to Annex A.

Question 12:

Annex E in the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* asks for details of two (2) relevant NGO projects. The Guidelines state that applicants must respond within a maximum of two (2) pages. Does this mean two pages per example (i.e. four pages in total) or one page for each example (i.e. two pages in total)?

Answer:

The page requirement for Annex E of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* is one A4 page per example. That is, two (2) pages in total.

Funding Amounts

Question 13:

How much funding should my organisation apply for?

Answer:

It is up to applicants to decide how much funding they will apply for – there is no minimum or maximum grant amount that NGOs can apply for. Applicants should base their funding request on their capacity; technical skills; project plan; and value for money.

Applicants should note that the AACRS Budget allocates up to AUD30 million to support NGO projects through grants, and that the AACRS will fund up to five (5) NGO projects. It is not assumed that 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) NGOs, dependent on the strength of the assessed submissions, and to negotiate the final figure of support provided to each NGO, after the assessment and initial Detailed Design Phase has occurred. Applicants should also note that all Submissions will need to represent value for money for AusAID.

Budget

Question 14:

Annex D of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide a proposed budget for their overall project. Should applicants include details of the indirect costs attached to their proposed project in this?

Answer

Yes. Applicants should provide details of both the direct and indirect costs attached to their proposed projects as part of their response to Annex D of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*.

Question 15:

Annex D of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide a proposed budget for their overall project. Should applicants include details of cost sharing with other activities in the same geographical areas?

Answer:

Applicants should provide a stand-alone budget for their proposed project. This may include direct costs, and shared indirect costs, if attributable to the proposed project.

Note that Annex A of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide details of all other proposals or sources of funding (including Australian Government funding) that is related, or may impact, on the proposed project.

Question 16:

Annexes C and D of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* require applicants to provide proposed budgets in Australian dollars. Does AusAID require a specific source for details on exchange rates?

Answer

No. Applicants may use appropriate exchange rates provided by a banking institution operating in Australia including, where relevant, the banking institution through which your foreign income is received. Applicants can also use rates published by another reliable external source. The rate used and the source of rates should be kept with an applicant's records. Applicants are reminded that all budgets must be in Australian dollars and that all AACRS grant agreements will be in Australian dollars.

Question: 17

Annex D of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide a proposed budget for their overall project. Should applicants delineate how much is going to each local partner in the application?

Answer:

Applicants are not required to delineate their proposed budget between each local partner, but can do so if they wish. Such delineation may provide value for money information to the AACRS Technical Assessment Panel.

Question 18:

Should applicants make reference to the AACRS Innovations Fund in their Submissions?

Answer:

No, applicants should not make reference to the AACRS Innovations Fund in their Submission. The Innovations Fund will be expensed in Years 3 and 4 of the AACRS, and at the discretion of AusAID. Details on the AACRS Innovations Fund are set out in the *AACRS Design Document*.

Question 19:

What percentage of AACRS project budgets can be allocated to overheads, such as staffing?

Answer:

AusAID is not stipulating the percentage of proposed AACRS budgets to be allocated to overheads. Applicants should outline budgets suitable to their proposed project's context and activities. Applicants should note that:

- up to 20 per cent of individual applicant NGO budgets may be used for program Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and learning activities; and,
- support will NOT be provided for Submissions that seek funding for, or include, travel expenses that exceed 20 per cent of total project costs.

Applicants will need to ensure their response to Annex D within the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* clearly identifies how costs are attributable to the project, and represent value for money to AusAID. This will be considered by AusAID as ten (10) per cent of the overall Submission assessment, as outlined in Clause 3.1 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* (page 11).

Question 20:

If an ANCP accredited NGO is successful under AACRS, will it be contracted under its Head Agreement with AusAID?

Answer:

Yes. It is expected that any ANCP accredited NGOs selected to be part of the AACRS will be contracted under their Head Agreements with AusAID.

Capacity Building

Question 21:

Will AACRS NGOs be expected to produce results against the capacity building component of their project?

Answer:

Yes, all AACRS projects must include a capacity building component, and as such, AusAID will expect results against this component.

Question 22:

Noting the requirement that AACRS projects include a capacity building component, does AusAID have a preference as to the type of local CSO that AACRS NGOs should work with?

Answer:

No. 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. Applicants should note that the AACRS Capacity and Technical Assessment Criteria (set out in Table 3 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*) includes a criterion on the project's contribution to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and girls. Applicants may wish to address this criterion through working with appropriate local CSOs as part of their proposed project.

Letters of Support

Question 23:

Annex F of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide a letter of support from Afghan organisations to be involved in the project. Are these due as part of the Submission, or can they be provided later?

Answer:

The letters of support are due as part of the Submission, and cannot be provided

at a later date.

Question 24:

Annex F of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide a letter of support or association from each Afghan partner organisation to be involved in the project in English. Does AusAID have any translation requirements?

Answer:

Yes. Applicants should provide the letter of support or association in both the original language and in English. The applicant should state that the translation accurately reflects the original.

Question 25:

Annex F of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide a letter of support or association from each Afghan partner organisation to be involved in the project. Can the partner organisation be a government partner?

Answer:

No. The letters of support should only be from Afghan CSOs (as defined in the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*). However, applicants should include information on their experience engaging with Afghan government authorities in their response to Annex B, Part 1.4 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*.

Assessment

Question 26:

Annex E of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to provide details of two (2) relevant NGO programs or projects that demonstrate their ability to fulfil the AACRS objective. Do NGOs have to provide examples from Afghanistan?

Answer:

No, but it is recommended.

Question 27:

Annex E within the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* asks for details of two (2) project referees? Can AusAID staff be a referee?

Answer:

No, AusAID staff **cannot** be listed as referees. AusAID reserves the right to check with nominated referees, and with other persons as AusAID chooses, to check the accuracy of information provided and the quality of work performed. Previous performance information may be considered, if the applicant has had the opportunity to respond to it. Such information may be the result of inquiries made by AusAID, and will be raised with the NGO at interview if needed.

Technical Assessment Panel
<p>Question 28: Will the two (2) non-AusAID members of the Technical Assessment Panel be independent?</p> <p>Answer: Yes. The Technical Assessment Panel will be made up of two (2) AusAID staff and two independent external assessors.</p>
<p>Question 29: Will the Technical Assessment Panel include an Afghan?</p> <p>Answer: Yes. Note that the membership of the Technical Assessment Panel is confidential.</p>
Detailed Design Phase
<p>Question 30: The <i>AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines</i> state that, ‘AusAID will support the development of Detailed Designs through grant agreements of up to AUD50,000’. What is meant by this?</p> <p>Answer: Up to five (5) NGOs will be selected through the AACRS Request for Submissions. These NGOs will be invited to enter into initial grant agreements of up to AUD50,000 which will fund a three (3) month ‘Detailed Design Phase’ for their proposed AACRS projects. AusAID will also provide assistance for the development of Detailed Designs through the AACRS Technical Reference Group and support for attendance at the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop (to an amount defined by AusAID).</p> <p>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 full grant agreements that will cover the life of the AACRS.</p>
<p>Question 31: How does an applicant’s response to Annex C of the <i>AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines</i> (which sets out their approach to the Detailed Design Phase) feed into the overall assessment of their Submission? Annex C does not appear to have a weighting within the Capacity and Technical Assessment Criteria (set out in Table 3 of the <i>AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines</i>).</p> <p>Answer: All requested Annexes will be considered in the assessment of Submissions. The Annexes provide additional information to support assessment against assessment criteria (for example, Annex E provides information to assist</p>

assessment against Assessment Criterion One – NGO Capacity and Experience).

An applicant's responses to Annex C, which should set out how an organisation will undertake the Detailed Design Phase, is not assessed against a specific assessment criterion. However, the response to Annex C will feed into the overall assessment of the Submission as it provides AusAID with an understanding of an organisation's capacity to deliver the proposed project and the feasibility of the proposed project. Applicants must include a response to all Submission Requirements, including all Annexes, or they will be deemed nonconforming, and excluded from any further consideration or assessment.

Question 32:

Where will the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop (part of the Detailed Design Phase) be held?

Answer:

It is not yet confirmed where the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop will take place, it may occur in Australia or Afghanistan, or a third country (dependent on value for money and visa requirements). AusAID will notify organisations selected through the AACRS Request for Submissions when confirmed.

Question 33:

Will AusAID cover the costs of selected AACRS NGOs attending the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop, or are the costs part of the AUD50,000 Detailed Design grant?

Answer:

AusAID will cover the costs of one representative from each NGO head office, and one local partner to attend the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop (to an amount defined by AusAID). These costs will not form part of the AUD50,000 Detailed Design grant, but will be provided separately by AusAID.

Question 34:

Can AACRS NGOs use a portion of the AUD50,000 Detailed Design grant to send additional participants to the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop?

Answer:

No. Attendance at the AACRS Partnership and Design Workshop will be limited to one representative from the head office and one local partner, costs of which are outside of the initial grant costs, and will be provided separately by AusAID.

Project Coordinator

Question 35:

Where does AusAID expect the NGO Project Coordinators to be based?

Answer:

AACRS NGO Project Coordinators should be based in Afghanistan.

Question 36:

Annex F of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requests the curriculum vitae (CV) of the main contact person in the lead NGO who will be the Project Coordinator. Can applicants provide two (2) CVs, one for the Project Coordinator in Afghanistan, and one for the Project Coordinator in the Head Office?

Answer:

No. Applicants should provide only one (1) CV. Note that Annex B, Part 1.2 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* requires applicants to outline the qualifications and experience of the Project Coordinator and organisation personnel who will fill key roles in managing and supporting the AACRS project. Further, the relevant experience of proposed personnel and Project Coordinator will be assessed against the Capacity and Technical Assessment Criteria (set out in Table 3 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*).

Local Partners**Question 37:**

Are applicants able to work with more than one (1) local civil society partner?

Answer:

Yes, applicants are able to work with more than one (1) local civil society partner.

Monitoring**Question 38:**

During AACRS implementation, if AusAID staff visit project sites, will they have armed guard escorts?

Answer:

Yes, all moves by AusAID staff, including to AACRS project sites, will likely use armed protection resources. AusAID will ensure that any visits to AACRS project sites undertaken by AusAID staff adopt a do no harm approach, meaning such interventions should “do no harm” to staff implementing the project or project beneficiaries now or in the future.

As stated in the *AACRS Design Document* and in line with AusAID’s standard grant agreement requirements, NGOs must permit AusAID to monitor and/or evaluate AACRS projects. In cases where a “do no harm” approach results in an inability for AusAID staff to visit project sites themselves, AusAID will use a third-party option for monitoring, evaluation or verification.

Applicants will need to make clear in their Submissions (particularly in their response to Annex B, Part 1.1 of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*) how they propose to manage risk and security in the implementation of their projects. This can include information on how they have previously supported the remote monitoring of their projects, such as through the use of innovative verification mechanisms (for example, third party monitoring, GPS, and photographic verification).

AusAID will work with AACRS NGOs during the Detailed Design Phase to further refine M&E for the AACRS, including through the development of third party monitoring mechanisms.

Question 39:

Should applicants note concerns about armed guards visiting project sites during their Submissions?

Answer:

Applicants are required to demonstrate their risk and security management capacity and planning as part of their Submissions (*AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* Annex B, Part 1.1). Applicants may note their security concerns in their response.

Applicants are reminded that, as stated in the *AACRS Design Document* and in line with AusAID's standard grant agreement requirements, NGOs must permit AusAID to monitor and/or evaluate AACRS projects (noting that AusAID may employ a third party to do this). AusAID will give NGOs at least two weeks' notice of its intentions prior to commencing such a review. In that event, the NGO must cooperate fully with any request for assistance pursuant to any such study, including allowing AusAID, or a third party, to visit project sites. AusAID will, however, ensure that any visits to project sites adopt a 'do no harm' approach, meaning such interventions should "do no harm" to staff implementing the project or project beneficiaries now or in the future.

Further Information

Question 40:

What happens if a Submission is made, and then information changes before the assessment process is complete?

Answer:

AusAID will assess Submissions based on what is provided to AusAID by the AACRS Closing Date (14 June). Submission details cannot be changed until the assessment process is complete. AusAID reserves the right not to fund an organisation if the details of their proposed project change. Through their response to Annex G of the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*, applicants must warrant that the information included in their Submission is accurate, and that any partners and personnel have confirmed their availability.

Question 41:

Can we meet with AusAID to discuss the AACRS?

Answer:

No. For probity and fairness reasons, while the Request for Submissions is open and responses are being assessed, AusAID cannot meet with applicants to discuss the AACRS Request for Submissions process. All questions and any correspondence must be emailed to the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines* contact point: aacrs@ausaid.gov.au. All relevant questions will be provided as

answers in future Addenda to the *AACRS Competitive Grant Guidelines*, to ensure equal access to information for all interested parties. The party asking the question will not be identified in the addenda responses.