

## ADDENDUM 4

**Date:** 29 November 2017

**Subject:** Addendum to the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research

**Pages:** Four

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### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Applicants are advised of the following Questions and Answers about the Stronger Systems for Health Security competitive call for research.

**Q1.** The following question was received on Friday 10 November 2017: We have very strong intention to apply to the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research opportunity. We are wondering if there are still any possibilities to send the Minimum Data requirement, despite the missed deadlines.

**A1.** If you have missed the Minimum Data deadline of 5pm AEDT Wednesday 8 November 2017 then you will not be able to submit a proposal.

**Q2.** We have a query from one of our Departments. One of the Chief Investigators (Cis) on a proposal is a member of the Technical Reference Group. Are they eligible to apply, or is it a conflict of interest?

**A2.** Membership of the Health Security Initiative's Technical Reference Group (TRG), and participation as an Investigator in a research proposal under the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research, are not considered by DFAT to be conflicting commitments that would make TRG members ineligible to apply.

As per the Terms of Reference for the TRG

(<http://indopacifichealthsecurity.dfat.gov.au/Pages/About/technical-reference-group.aspx>), Conflict of Interest in relation to the TRG is being managed by DFAT in the following way.

DFAT recognises that TRG members may have real or perceived conflicts of interest. A Conflict of Interest is any interest or relationship which may impact on a members' impartiality. In the interests of transparency, DFAT has requested that TRG members disclose any financial and professional relationships with other people or organisations that could represent actual conflicts prior to the first meeting.

In advance of all meetings TRG members will be informed of any individual investments that the TRG may be asked to advise on. TRG members will be expected to declare any further real or potential conflicts which may impinge on their impartiality related to those investments. If DFAT judges the conflict to be significant enough, the individual will be asked to exclude themselves from those discussions.

In relation to the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research, DFAT has not discussed the details of the call with TRG members. TRG members will not be involved in assessment and decision making in relation to the individual research grants, nor will they be provided with information about the Investigators or content from any proposals.

TRG members are not excluded from applying or participating in research grants funded under the Stronger Systems for Health Security scheme however they are required to disclose, in their proposals, existing and continuing commitments to other projects or activities (refer Grant Guidelines p. 7) and to inform DFAT of any Conflicts of Interest, perceived or otherwise, when they arise.

**Q3.** What does limitation of two bids mean?

**A3.** Please refer to Section 42 of the Guidelines.

**Q4.** How consortia arrangements work?

**A4.** Applicants should review the Guidelines and information on the website to assist them to craft their applications. **Q5.** Questions related to specific suggestions for project proposals (eg – subject matter, how to address capacity building) were asked.

**A5.** We cannot provide further guidance because the onus is on the applicant to develop the most compelling project proposal. It would be inappropriate for us to comment on whether specific ideas are appealing.

**Q6.** For this scheme do you allow for indirect costs to be charged up to 10%?

**A6.** For the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research, DFAT will not fund the indirect costs of research. Please refer to the Scheme Specific Advice and Instructions for Applicants (2.3 B-PB: Proposed Budget – Direct Research Costs (DRC) and Equipment) on pp. 6-7. “DFAT will fund the direct costs of research based on advice from peer review.” The Grant Guidelines document also provides information about eligible costs under 4.4 Proposal eligibility and eligible expenses.

**Q7.** Within the Competitive Aid Grant Guidelines on page 4, paragraph 21- it is stated that the “scheme will not support research that is focused on the development of infrastructure”. Would you be able to provide clarification on this statement? More specifically, does this mean the scheme will not support the critical evaluation/assessment of the quality of **existing infrastructure** available at health care facilities? We do not intend to build any infrastructure within the scope of our proposed research, but do intend to evaluate the quality of existing infrastructure.

**A7.** Dependent on the proposal satisfying the objectives of the scheme and being competitive against the assessment criteria, it is possible that evaluation of the quality of existing infrastructure available at health care facilities would be within the scope of the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research.

For further clarification, please refer to 2.3 B-PB: Proposed Budget – Direct Research Costs (DRC) and Equipment on pp. 6-7 of the Scheme Specific Advice and Instructions for Applicants: “Funding cannot be used for infrastructure”.

The Grant Guidelines, on pp.7-8 set out eligible expense categories for inclusion in the budget. Fieldwork costs and equipment costs may be of particular relevance to the questions you’ve asked in relation to your proposal:

Fieldwork costs – This includes costs for field research and fieldwork expenses. Field research means external collection of information integral to the programme; and fieldwork expenses are costs related to carrying out field or survey research. Costs associated with establishing the programme should also be included.

Equipment – DFAT will only fund equipment or software that is specific to the programme. DFAT will not fund general equipment or software that would be normally provided by institutions like standard computers or Microsoft suite. Computing equipment or software should be specialised and required for the completion of the project.

**Q8.** Within the Competitive Aid Grant Guidelines on page 4, section 3.21- it is stated that the “scheme will not support clinical or biomedical research, including randomised controlled trials or cohort studies for clinical or biomedical research”. Would you be able to provide clarification on this statement? More specifically, in our proposal we are exploring the impact of water, sanitation and hygiene service levels in health care facilities on certain health outcomes. In order to do this we may need to test environmental cleanliness in health care facilities by swabbing surfaces and equipment, as well as testing water quality (E.Coli testing). Do either of these activities constitute “biomedical research”?

**A8.** Providing the proposal addresses the objectives and is competitive against the selection criteria, testing environmental cleanliness in health care facilities by swabbing surfaces and equipment, as well as testing water quality (E.Coli testing) would not necessarily constitute biomedical research and would therefore not necessarily be excluded.

**Q9.** The scheme specific advice states, for Part B, that “all text in this component must be under the heading of the assessment criterion that is being addressed”. Do you allow an overview section prior to assessing the 4 criteria to succinctly articulate the overall project? Requiring all text to be under one of those 4 assessment criteria headings makes it challenging to present a logical and well-structured presentation of the proposal.

**A9.** The Advice and Instructions for Applicants for the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research state that all components in that section are to be addressed under the four Assessment Criteria. Applicants are advised to adhere to the requirements set out in the Advice and Instructions for Applicants. The synopsis is where the applicant can accurately, and briefly, summarise the research proposal. Kindly refer to 5.2 A-PA: Application Properties of the NHMRC Advice and Instructions to Applicants 2017.

**Q10.** Under the heading ‘Rigour of proposal’, it references budgets (covered in RGMS) and addressing risks (covered in “approaches to risk... section”); are we required to re-address these issues under this assessment criteria?

**A10.** When addressing selection criteria, there are a number of sub-components which require attention however the section of the proposal entitled ‘Approach to risk, safeguards and cross-cutting issues’ requires applicants to provide additional detail relevant to some risk areas which are of concern to DFAT. In relation to the budget information to be included in your proposal, the budget section in RGMS is used to justify the requested budgetary components, whereas under the heading of ‘Approach to risk, safeguards and cross-cutting issues’ in the grant proposal, applicants are addressing the fiduciary risk of the research investment.

**Q11.** We’re trying to work out if it will be possible to provide evidence of in-principle support from [a funding mechanism operated by another government in the Asia-Pacific region]. It remains unclear as to whether the NHMRC mechanism will allow co-development with our partners [supported by the other government in question] and how we might establish the leverage. If this was acceptable to NHMRC, the project could best proceed with differentiated roles, e.g. with DFAT funding going more towards ODA objectives and [matching funding from the other government supporting other elements of the proposal].

**A11.** Decisions will be made in accordance with the grant guidelines, particularly the exclusion criteria in paragraph 21 of section 3 and the eligibility criteria in section 4. The guidelines allow for proposals from 'consortia which include partnerships between Australian and international organisations'. The guidelines do not exclude proposals that might require additional or matching funding from other sources for their full implementation. However, for an assessment of feasibility it will be important that proposals include clear evidence of in-principle funding commitments from any third parties where those commitments are essential for implementation of the proposed research activity. It should be emphasised that in any dialogue with third parties proponents should be careful not to create the impression that the Australian government has provided an opinion on the likelihood that their proposal will receive funding in the current research call.

### **Attachments to this Addendum**

No attachments to this Addendum.

All other information and documentation in relation to the Stronger Systems for Health Security call for research remains unchanged.