



**Amendment number (001)
Technical & Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program Small Grants Fund**

**Subject: Program Improvement Awards (PIA)
RFA Number: SC-TOPS-SG-2011-01**

The purpose of this amendment is to make the following revision to the RFA:

- 1. Responses received by the deadline are provided as follows:**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Under “**Section I. Background**” page 3, the RFA states that the program “will prioritize collaboration (with preference given to proposals involving multiple organizations and/or multiple countries.” Given the small amount of funding, is development of a tool or approach that will benefit multiple organizations after development under the agreement sufficient for the proposal to be prioritized?

Response: Yes, if the tool fills a gap or a recognized need in effective food security and nutrition programming and as long as the tool is useful and accessible to many FS implementers and not just the staff of a single PVO. TOPS welcomes proposals, however, that substantively involve more than one participating PVO in the conduct of the proposed actions in order to broaden the learning across many implementing organizations.

2. Under “**Section II. Small Grants Program Improvement Award (PIA) Description**” letter C on page 3, states that the maximum award amount in each cycle may be up to \$100,000 for any one proposal. Is it possible to propose a follow-on proposal in cycle 2 to scale-up an activity developed/identified and funded in cycle 1?

Response: Yes, it is possible.

3. Under “**Section II. Small Grants Program Improvement Award (PIA) Description**” letter C on page 3, the RFA states that “applicants may apply for one small grant per cycle.” We request

that organizations be allowed to submit more than one concept paper as prime, even if the full proposal is limited to one organization per cycle.

Response: Applicants may submit more than one concept paper but no more than three per cycle.

4. Under **“Section II. Small Grants Program Improvement Award (PIA) Description”** letter F on page 4, unallowable uses are identified including a subcontract to other organizations. Can you explain the definition of a subcontract to other organizations? For example, if the proposal has a lead which is contracting to a technical partner a portion of the work to be completed, is this considered unallowable even if it is included in the proposal narrative and budget? For example, could we propose to hire an outside firm to assist in the design and creation of a database to support direct distribution activities? We believe that this might be considered an allowable expense, If subcontracts are excluded, please provide the rationale as this may limit some activities that could be undertaken. For example, would we have to directly hire individuals as employees to do that work for us not an independent firm?

Response: The intent is to encourage partnerships and not restrict innovation. Therefore, TOPS is issuing a correction to the Unallowable Uses list and is removing bullet 2, “subcontracting to other organizations.” Sub-awarding is now allowed, provided it is reasonable within the context of the proposal.

5. Under **“Section IV. Eligibility Information, B. Who many not apply?”** on page 7, can you clarify that this list includes a description of who cannot apply directly but still could be a sub-recipient under the application? For example, a proposal may identify one organization to be the prime recipient of funding but may include one or more entities that is on the list of who may not apply. Would this constitute a conflict especially in cases where at the country level there may be existing collaborative efforts as part of a Title II consortium? Also, please clarify the statement “NGOs that sub-award/subcontract to governmental or quasi-government entities”. This could be read different ways (i.e., NGOs that have contracts with a government such as the USG or that provide subcontracts to a host country government). Why would other contracts/sub-grants that do not impact the proposed TOPS sub-award restrict an organization from applying?

Response: TOPS is issuing a correction to the Who May Not Apply list and is removing bullet 2, “NGOs that sub-award/subcontract to governmental or quasi-government entities.” NGOs that issue awards to governmental or quasi-governmental entities may apply. The others on the list may not apply nor can they qualify for a sub-award under a small grant. Please also refer to Response 4.

6. Under **“Section V. Application Instructions, C. Preparation of Application”** number 2 on page 8, the RFA states that “concept papers must not exceed three pages in length.” Does this three page limit include the summary budget or can that be in addition to the three pages?

Response: The three page limit includes the summary budget. Please refer to the instructions outlined in attachment 1. Please note that the Concept Paper template starts at “General Information” and does not include the instructions. Please do not include the instructions in your submission.

7. Under **“Section V. Application Instructions, C. Preparation of Application”** number 4 on page 8, it states “TOPS will notify all applicants of the REC’s decision on their concept paper by April 9, 2012.” Can you clarify if TOPS has the intention to notify some applicants of the REC’s decision before April 9? If so, how will it ensure fairness and that some applicants don’t have a longer period of time to complete their full submission package than others? Furthermore, please clarify what it means to be “put on hold” – does this mean that the concept paper would automatically go into a second cycle round or that proposals may be funded after a first round of consideration?

Response: To ensure transparency and fairness, all applicants will be informed about the Review and Evaluation Committee (REC) decision on April 9, 2012.

TOPS would like to clarify that the term “put on hold” means that the concept paper may be held for consideration for the second cycle round. However, there is no guarantee that the applicant will be asked to submit a full application in the second cycle round.

Those applicants whose concept papers will be put on hold will be notified on April 9, 2012.

8. Under **“Section V. Application Instructions, C. Preparation of Application”** number 6 on page 10, the RFA lists out numerous attachments. These have not yet been provided. Please provide them as soon as possible as part of the full RFA so that organizations may submit any questions associated with the templates.

Response: The attachments are provided on the following site: <http://bit.ly/topsrfa>

9. Under **“Section V. Application Instructions, C. Preparation of Application”** number 10 on page 8, can you clarify if the Save the Children/TOPS Program will provide any written feedback to unsuccessful proposal applicants as a capacity-building exercise?

Response: Upon written request, TOPS can provide applicants brief feedback on unsuccessful applications once the small grants are issued for the cycle round.

10. Under **“Section V. Application Instructions, D. Application Submission Procedures,”** can you clarify if Save the Children/TOPS Program will confirm receipt of submission package via e-mail to each application?

Response: Yes, TOPS will confirm receipt of submission via e-mail.

11. Under **“Section VI. Evaluation Process, A. Selection Criteria”** on page 9, the RFA states that a successful proposal will “demonstrate multi-stakeholder involvement, especially local partners.” Please clarify whether local partner involvement is required for acceptance. For example, the development of a new monitoring and evaluation tool/information management system may not significantly include local partners but would focus on collaborating with other Title II implementing organizations.

Response: Local partner involvement is encouraged and part of the selection criteria.

12. Under “**Section VI. Evaluation Process, A. Selection Criteria**” on page 10, can you further clarify the meaning of: “A submitting organization cannot lead on more than one proposal; an organization may partner on more than one proposal.” Please see question #2.

Response: An organization submitting a proposal may only prime on one proposal. However, an organization may be proposed as a sub recipient on more than one proposal.

13. Under “**Section VII. Other Information, D. Small Grants Reporting Requirements**” on page 12, the RFA mentions “monitoring and evaluation (M&E) Reporting deliverables. What is required in terms of a baseline report, if any, in order to assess impact?”

Response:The monitoring system will vary by nature of the proposal. TOPS will provide guidance after the proposals are approved, and will mainly be expecting programs to measure progress against milestones.

14. **General:** Please provide language how information or concepts will be treated as confidential and proprietary given that concepts proposed may be used in other funding bids by the organization if not funded under TOPS.

Response: Applicants are invited to use the following disclaimer on its applications:

This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside this application and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed-whole or in part-for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this applicant as a result of-or in connection with-the submission of this data, the TOPS program and the U.S. government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extend provided in the resulting grant. This restriction does not limit the right for TOPS or the U.S. government to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained to all pages of this application.

15. On page 8 the RFA refers to Attachment 1 for the concept paper format; however this is not included. Can you please provide this?

Response: The attachments are provided on the following site: <http://bit.ly/topsrfa>

16. The RFA states that subcontracts to other organizations are not allowed; however can you kindly clarify if contracted consultancies for specific technical expertise and services, such as tools, are an allowable cost?

Response: Please refer to Responses 4 and 5 above.

17. The RFA states that the current grant-holding members of the prime TOPS implementing consortium are not eligible to apply. However, if one or more of these organizations are currently members of a consortium led by the prime applicant for this RFA, and will participate and benefit from the proposed activities as a collaborator (not prime or sub), would this consortium still be considered eligible?

Response: It is the organization seeking the grant that would be eligible as long as the organization is not a current grant-holding member of the prime TOPS implementing consortium. One or more of the TOPS grant-holding members may be members of another consortium led by the prime applicant so long as the TOPS member is not a direct recipient of the applicant's small grant funds resulting from this solicitation.

18. Are concepts that include and benefit both Title II and non-Title II food assistance programs, such as Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP) eligible under the activities supported by this RFA?

Response: Yes. (Also, see response in # 22 below)

19. We do not currently hold a Title II program and I wonder if we must be in order to apply?

Response: Applicants do not have to hold a Title II program to apply.(Also, see response in # 22 below)

20. Can a university apply as a prime?

Response: Yes.

21. I see the earliest start date for min-grant projects is June 1, 2012 – but is it a fixed end date?

Response: There is no fixed end date. The small grants end date depends on the applicant's proposal up to a limit of 12 months.

22. Does the proposed project have to be explicitly linked to a Title II funded program?

Response: No. The TOPS Small Grants programs are primarily--but not exclusively--intended for FFP implementing partners in FFP-managed assistance programs. FFP manages two broad categories of programs from two sources of funds--Title II funds for development and emergency food assistance programs (formerly called MYAPs and SYAPs), and International Development Assistance (IDA) funds for Emergency Food Security Programs (EFSP).TOPS will consider proposals, even if not linked to FFP Title II or IDA funds, if the projects are intended to develop information, tools, and approaches that will improve the knowledge, practices, and quality of food security and nutrition programming in the overall community of practice (FFP and non-FFP supported).

23. We are also interested in submitting a proposal for a micro grant. Would an application for one negate our eligibility for the other?

Response: No.