

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Date: December 22, 2020

Reference Request for Proposal Number: FON-217772-WGDP-2020-03 for Call for Proposals: Using Blended Finance to Build Financial Resilience for Women

Dear Offerors,

Please see below answers to the questions submitted FinanceWomen@thepalladiumgroup.com

ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS

No	Question	Answer
1	What is the meaning of the Offeror's?	The Offeror is defined as the applicant to this opportunity.
2	How to get the FON Number?	The FON Number is FON-217772-WGDP-2020-03.
3	Is there a concept note form? If there is, you can share with us so that it is used as a guide?	No concept note form is provided. Each Offeror is welcomed to use their own concept note template.
4	Is there a budget template that can be shared for this call?	The budget template is available for all Offerors. All costs must be presented using the provided budget template. However, Offerors may also submit budget information in additional templates, as they prefer.
5	Given the proximity of the deadline to the holidays, is it possible to extend the deadline by 1 week to January 11? As we are sure you appreciate, 2020 has been tough for many people so this would seem more sensitive to people's holiday season plans. If the deadline stays the same, does this mean that it is possible that already 6 winning concepts are selected before January 4? In other words, should we submit as soon as possible to make a chance?	The deadline for this opportunity shall be extended until 12:00 pm (local time) on January 31, 2021.
6	Page 4 of the Call for Proposals states that activities will "begin implementation no later than March 31, 2023." Can Palladium explain why the beginning of implementation is anticipated to be as delayed as this date suggests? What is the most early start date and what is the maximum project duration? Can you please indicate what is the minimum and maximum duration awards under this Call for Proposals may be?	Correction: Activities will begin implementation no later than March 31, 2021. The maximum project duration shall be up to June 30, 2024.
7	Page 5 mentions that all mandatory documents should be submitted. What are the mandatory docs? We understand the Concept Note (Word File), the budget (Excel file) and Attachment A: Eligibility Certification. Is this correct, or should we submit more documents?	Correct.
8	Does the page limit of 10 pages include annexes?	No.
9	In the FON Guidelines is mentioned to submit to the e-mail "financewomen@thepalladiumgroup.com". But in PalladiumWebsite is said to apply through the USAID CATALYZE site. Which is the correct channel to send our proposal?	All proposals must be submitted to financewomen@thepalladiumgroup.com for this opportunity, per the instructions in the Call for Proposals.
10	We already have a DUNS number. Do we need to have a registration in sam.gov?	A DUNS number is required. Offerors do not need to register with SAM.gov.
11	The RFP states that "grants shall not include any profit or fee when priced" can you please indicate if this includes fees incurred by the grantee related to	Appropriate indirect costs are allowed.

	admin overheads, implementation/ technical support, External Auditor, Launching)	
12	How is USAID exclusive branding policy applied for programs that have cost share or programs in which the USAID grant amount will be used to help scale up existing programs funded by our organization?	All branding and marketing materials shall be approved by Palladium prior to publication.
13	Your deadline is Jan 4, yet a DUNS application may need 30 days lead time to receive a number, which is not possible now. Please advise.	The deadline for this opportunity is extended until 11:59 EST on January 31, 2021. Proof of a DUNS application is acceptable at the proposal stage, but the successful Offeror(s) shall have an active DUNS number prior to signing a contract or agreement.
14	For the purpose of a DUNS registration, would your Call qualify as a federal government contract? If so, how might we proceed down that path?	Any contract or agreement executed as part of this Call for Proposals is between Palladium and the Offeror(s). Therefore, this does not qualify as a federal government contract. However, the successful Offeror(s) shall have an active DUNS number prior to signing a contract or agreement.
15	What is the next step requirement i.e. a more fuller design doc?	Please follow the Call for Proposals guidelines.
16	What is the timeline/ when can we expect to hear back?	Please refer to the stated deadlines provided in the Call for Proposals.
17	What material can be provided in an appendix- does it count or would it disqualify us?	An appendix is considered separate from the 10-page application. The Offeror(s) must decide what information they wish to provide via appendix, if any.
18	Regarding the cost share- is this included in the budget or a standalone doc?	All Offeror budgets must include all cost share information. The budget must distinguish who is responsible for what portion of the budget.
19	We are looking to work with a nonprofit to provide technical assistance for us with regards to this bid. [REDACTED] has a DUNS Number but our technical partner currently doesn't. Do they need to apply for one?	A DUNS number is required for Offerors and technical partners, per CATALYZE contract flow-downs.
20	If we do not have a NICRA rate, can we use an indirect cost rate substantiated by our audited 2019 financial statements?	Yes.
21	Does font size requirement apply to the Cover page of the concept note?	Yes.
22	We understand that Attachment A is not counted within the page limit. Do we understand correctly that the cover page (max 1 page), technical approach (max 8 pages), and supporting information (Annexes) must not exceed 10 pages in length when added together?	The annexes shall be considered separate from the 10-page application and is not subject to page limits.
23	What's the frequency of summary you want to see, do you require a monthly, quarterly in addition to the yearly Budget.	Quarterly summaries are expected.
24	Is it possible to provide a rough timeline for the Selection Process? Knowing when a funding decision is likely to be made would help us provide a more accurate execution plan and timeline in our Concept Note.	Please refer to the Call for Proposal guidelines. Offerors will be notified by March 30, 2021.
25	Page 5 indicates that the cover page must be no longer than 1 page -- may offerors include additional text, such as an executive summary on the cover page?	The cover page must be no longer than 1 page.
26	Are expenses linked to set up of new locations, purchase of fixed assets (tablets, hand-held devices) eligible for the grant?	All eligible costs shall be reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the contract or grant.
27	Can the proposal be submitted in Spanish?	All proposals must be submitted in English.
28	Will a new round of questions be enabled before the final date of submission of proposals?	No.

29	Would you characterize this FON as an extension of the W-GDP co-creation workshop in end-2019 and resulting awards, with similar goals and mandate? Or are there any important shifts in W-GDP's funding approach since then, that this FON is intended to support?	The W-GDP Resilience buy-in is under the USAID CATALYZE project. Please refer to the Call for Proposals for all objectives and expected results.
30	Can we modify the template for the budget to, for example, include the financial and in-kind contributions, or must we strictly adhere to the current form of the template as circulated?	Offerors must submit budgets using the Palladium template provided but may also submit additional budget documents using forms/templates that they choose.
31	Can you confirm that the Completed Eligibility Certification is all that is required under "Certifications and Evidence of Responsibility"?	Yes.
32	What is CATALYZE's definition of "New Partner"?	Per USAID's NPI Key Definitions page (https://www.usaid.gov/npi/npi-key-definitions), new partners are "individual[s] or organization[s] that ha[ve] not received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years."
33	The applicant is an investee of [REDACTED] and through our holding we have access to a pool of experts. These are arm's length transactions. Are these costs eligible for the grant?	All eligible costs shall be reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the contract or grant.
34	Are future operational expenses which are part of an already signed contract but originally costed directly to the proposers eligible for the grant?	All eligible costs shall be reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the contract or grant.
35	We will need to fully dedicate some of our staff members to the project. Can those current staff costs be covered partly or fully by the grant?	All eligible costs shall be reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the contract or grant.
36	The applicant will administer much of the administrative costs of this award if won. We charge a set overhead for costs such as management time, computer costs, vehicle use, governance and external/internal audits, and administrative salaries and this rate is fully justified by audit and applied to all grants from donors. Can this cost be covered by the award?	All eligible costs shall be reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the contract or grant.
37	Page 8 states, "Offeror submits all mandatory documents prior the deadline stipulated in the FON." What are these documents please?	Please refer to the Call for Proposal guidelines for all required documents.
38	The budget template provided with the RFP is not technically geared towards a fund investment. Will fund investment proposals be considered for this RFP? And if so, is it necessary to use the budget template provided?	All costs must be presented using the provided budget template. However, Offerors may also submit budget information in additional templates, as they prefer.
39	The application will be made by a single firm on behalf of a group of women-led firms that are teaming up for this project. Kindly confirm if it is acceptable to provide administrative information for [REDACTED] only as the lead offeror.	This is acceptable.

ELIGIBILITY/AWARD QUESTIONS

40	May you please kindly specify the list of developing countries, shall we follow the USAID list on: https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work or United Nation list of developing and transitioning countries or the World Bank Group Atlas Method?	As we are funded by USAID, activities must be implemented in USAID countries of operation. A full list can be found on the USAID website.
41	Can we be considered to apply and potentially become awardee/grantee through this FON/program while we are also recipients of W-GDP through the DAI's INVEST program? The current relationship we have with DAI now is indirect as the lead partner is another party. So, Pro Mujer has not yet received direct funding from USAID/W-GDP/DAI-INVEST yet.	Per USAID's NPI Key Definitions page (https://www.usaid.gov/npi/npi-key-definitions), new partners are "individual[s] or organization[s] that ha[ve] not received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years." Any entity fitting this definition is welcomed to apply.
42	May a company submit more than one proposal if they are different geographic regions with different partnerships?	Yes.
43	Is the total funding allocated for this Call for Proposal \$6 million?	Yes.
44	It is noted under Eligibility Requirements that "[the entity] can be a bank, non-bank financial institution, microfinance institution, insurance firm; fintech, debt fund, venture capital fund, private equity fund, investment fund, fund manager, or other entity that can raise and deploy capital;" but that partnering with other organizations is allowed. Could an entity who does not fit the requirements stated above directly be eligible to prime if they are partnered with other entities that do fulfill this requirement? Would this partnership arrangement be required to demonstrate a full teaming agreement at the time of proposal or would it be possible for such partners to be presented as resource organizations, or with letters of interest, at the time of proposal?	Partnering between and amongst such entities is allowed. A teaming agreement or MOU is not required to be submitted as part of an Offeror's proposal, per the guidelines contained in the Call for Proposals. However, the successful Offeror(s) shall expediently obtain and provide these agreements/MOUs upon award.
45	Would CATALYZE consider proposals whereby the prime contractor would perform a deal identification and investor matchmaker function (e.g., a consultancy doing opportunity identification and pipeline development with an investment entity capable of raising and deploying capital doing the due diligence and deal structuring) in order to increase the number of potential transactions? The emphasis in the RFP of an applicant being a single entity with the ability to raise and deploy capital seems to go against the need for diverse investors to enable a match with investment opportunities.	Partnering between and amongst such entities is allowed.
46	Page 2 of the Call for Proposals outlines five objectives. Is it necessary for applicants to address all five?	The successful Offeror will ensure that they will achieve the results expected of this award, even if they do not focus on all five objectives outlined in the Call for Proposals.
47	Page 4 of the Call for Proposals suggests that Palladium anticipates making one or more awards. Can you provide any indication of how many awards you intend to make?	This decision resides with Palladium.
48	Page 5 of the Call for Proposals references USAID's New Partner Initiative (NPI) and states that new partners "are organizations that have never received funding from USAID directly or indirectly". However, USAID's definition of a new partner is "an individual or organization that has not	Per USAID's NPI Key Definitions page (https://www.usaid.gov/npi/npi-key-definitions), new partners are "individual[s] or organization[s] that ha[ve] not received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years."

	received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years". Please clarify which definition Palladium is applying to this solicitation.	
49	We are a company that is legally established in [REDACTED] but that makes a 100% impact in developing and emerging markets. Are we eligible to apply with our [REDACTED] legal entity?	Yes.
50	Is it acceptable if we apply without any project partners? Given the wide variety of countries we work in we foresee with some third parties however. Should we submit Letter of Commitments and quotations for their services already?	It is acceptable to apply without any project partners. Please refer to all required documentation outlined in the Call for Proposals.
51	Our organization works across the Global South. We have identified two regions [REDACTED] as the specific areas for which funds would be deployed. Do we need to be even more specific (i.e. listing countries of implementation) in the RFP?	Specificity will allow the panel to better judge the proposal.
52	The FoN mentions that "Palladium may award a subcontract or a grant as a result of any applications/proposals received and evaluated." Regarding this, we want to understand if we need to specify in the concept paper about whether we choose to be evaluated as a sub-contract or a grant.	Successful Offerors will provide adequate detail and specificity for the panel to decide the nature of the award based on submitted details.
53	Our proposal expects to provide capacity building, mentorship and financial capital to women-led SMBs across [REDACTED]. Can we apply within this FON or is limited to financial entities?	All new partners that can achieve the results outlined in the Call for Proposals are welcome to apply. Per USAID's NPI Key Definitions page (https://www.usaid.gov/npi/npi-key-definitions), new partners are "individual[s] or organization[s] that ha[ve] not received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years."
54	Kindly confirm if the [REDACTED] as a multilateral development agency (MDB) eligible to submit a proposal	All new partners that can achieve the results outlined in the Call for Proposals are welcome to apply. Per USAID's NPI Key Definitions page (https://www.usaid.gov/npi/npi-key-definitions), new partners are "individual[s] or organization[s] that ha[ve] not received any funding from USAID as a prime partner over the last five years."
55	The FON solicits applications/proposals for interventions that will be implemented in all areas of the Global South, and offerors should clearly mention the geographic areas in which project activities will be implemented", we would appreciate your clarification on the expectation of the solution implementation process? are you looking for a list of countries where we plan our project to be implemented or projects designed even for one country but "that will be implemented in all areas of the Global South"?	Specificity will allow the panel to better judge the proposal.
56	Is there an upper threshold for the grant amount awarded for first-time applicants for USAID funding?	Please refer to the guidance provided in the Call for Proposals. The award amount will be between \$1 million and \$6 million.
57	Is the funding disbursed in tranches? Is there a time limitation to implement activities funded via the investments? Is it possible to use the funding over the course of 36 months?	The duration of implementation is up to June 30, 2024.
58	We are seeking grant funding and understand that the budget should not include any profit or fees. As in other USAID grant Cooperative Agreements, will it be possible to include overhead or "indirect costs" into the budget?	Yes.

59	We understand that CATALYZE may award a funding opportunity to one applicant or to multiple applicants (or no applicants). We also understand that one awardee could receive up to USD 6 million. Is it possible that two awardees could receive up to USD 6 million? Or is USD 6 million the maximum that will be distributed across awardees (i.e., if two awardees are selected, their combined budgets will not exceed USD 6 million)? Here we do not mean partners, but rather competing bids	This decision resides with Palladium.
60	Early in the FON, it states that NGOs may apply. However, the eligibility requirements include: "You can be a bank, non-bank financial institution, microfinance institution, insurance firm; fintech, debt fund, venture capital fund, private equity fund, investment fund, fund manager, or other entity that can raise and deploy capital" and "You can partner with other people or organizations, if you wish". This suggests to us that a financial institution should be the lead on the bid. However, for our blended finance solution, we plan to put forward a combination of a gender lens investment fund (managed by a private fund manager) and a technical assistance facility (managed by an INGO). In our partnership, is it acceptable for the INGO to be the lead and the investor to be the subcontractor?	This is acceptable.
61	If we are selected, will the follow-on proposal become a second competitive process or will it instead be a method for reaching final agreement on the program design and funding allocation?	Please refer to instructions within the Call for Proposals.
62	Page 5 indicates that the cover page must be no longer than 1 page -- may offerors include additional text, such as an executive summary on the cover page?	The cover page must not exceed 1 page.
63	Will mid-term evaluations be carried out by the co-operator, or should the project include them as part of its core activities?	Quarterly evaluations will be conducted by Palladium and the successful Offeror(s) jointly.
64	What are the estimated goals for the scope of each project?	Please refer to the Call for Proposals.
65	Can one proposal concept be awarded both a grant and subcontract award?	Yes.
66	How early could the funding from this FON be available for disbursement and implementation?	Offerors will be notified by March 30, 2021. Palladium expects rapid start-up and implementation upon award.
67	The provided budget template does not include a section for subcontracts and subawards. Can CATALYZE please confirm that offerors may add a section for subcontracts and subawards?	The budget template is available for all Offerors. All costs must be presented using the provided budget template. However, Offerors may also submit budget information in additional templates, as they prefer.
68	Are offerors expected to submit a detailed budget for proposed major subs?	Yes.
69	My firm is considering applying under a vehicle that's direct impact is on creating next-gen female first-time fund managers. It's a blended investment vehicle that acts as an accelerator and Fund-of-Funds to back first-time FEMALE-fund managers and FEMALE entrepreneurs in S/SE Asia. Would this be eligible?	This would be eligible.
70	Is there, at this stage, a need for formal MOUs or Letters of intent from other partners than the lead partner?	A teaming agreement or MOU is not required to be submitted as part of an Offeror's proposal, per the guidelines contained in the Call for Proposals. However, the successful Offeror(s)

		shall expediently obtain and provide these agreements/MOUs upon award.
71	Can CATALYZE please clarify what kind of funding agreement it anticipates under this WGDP program? The FON references a subcontract or grant. What about Cooperative Agreements?	Successful Offerors will provide adequate detail and specificity for the panel to decide the nature of the award based on submitted details.
72	Can multiple offerors jointly submit the concept note? In this case, both are partners as part of the program being structured, and both will fulfil the criteria listed in the eligibility certificate (which will be filled by representatives from both parties)	Joint submission is acceptable.
73	Are there single country, single sector risks which Palladium Group considers in evaluating proposals? What are the risks that the Palladium Group considers in evaluating proposals?	Evaluation criteria are outlined in the Call for Proposals.
74	What sectors will Palladium consider?	The Call for Proposals does not restrict nor prescribe sectors. However, the successful Offeror will be highly women-focused and will achieve the results outlined in the Call for Proposals.
75	Should a proposal meet all the expectations of the Call, what would be the deciding factor in making a decision for a particular proposal over another?	Evaluation criteria are outlined in the Call for Proposals. The successful Offeror will be highly women-focused and will achieve the results outlined in the Call for Proposals.
76	Can we present a regional proposal, for at least three countries?	A proposal that covers multiple countries is acceptable.
77	Can a smaller technical partner/vendor be on multiple applications with different financial institutions from different regions?	This is acceptable.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

78	<p>Could you please explain how you define "women-owned or led" businesses?</p> <p>Regarding "businesses that disproportionately hire women; and businesses that deliver services and technologies particularly suited to serving women", do these two types of businesses also need to be "women-owned or led" businesses?</p>	The successful Offeror(s) will self-define women-owned or led businesses in their context(s). However, the term must be taken seriously (e.g., one female board member does not constitute "women-led").
79	Page 4 of the Call for Proposals states that Palladium may issue subcontracts or grants. Given that acquisition and assistance mechanisms require different cost structures, presentation of costs and are governed by different rules and regulations, how should applicants/bidders determine which instrument to use in their proposals?	Successful Offerors will provide adequate detail and specificity for the panel to decide the nature of the award based on submitted details.
80	Can you clarify what you are looking for in terms of track record in investments? Must it only be through a financial ROI or are there other ways to capture that element?	The past record of investments can be quantitative or qualitative. The successful Offeror(s) will have a record of disbursed financing and have the resources to continue lending to women.
81	You mention the "Global South" as the focus area - are there any countries that have priority for you and/or any GDP per capita cap?	As we are funded by USAID, activities must be implemented in USAID countries of operation. A full list can be found on the USAID website.
82	I'd love to know if there is anything specific that would be key for us to demonstrate or anything that would help increase our chances of success in this process.	The successful Offeror will ensure that they will achieve the results expected of this award.
83	Can our firm request the grant to support the	Yes.

	Technical Assistance/Business Support towards the capacity building of Women Entrepreneurs?	
84	Is there a requirement or preference that the lead contractor on this bid be the implementing fund manager, or could a nonprofit working in partnership with the implementing fund manager play that role?	Partnering between and amongst such entities is allowed.
85	Is there a minimum and maximum amount to access the funds?	Please refer to the guidance provided in the Call for Proposals. The award amount will be between \$1 million and \$6 million.
86	What is the minimum verifiable counterparty percentage?	The successful Offeror(s) should have a capital mobilization ratio between 6:1 and 8:1.
87	Is contribution to a TA facility of a blended fund structure an eligible use of funds? Would this be considered a Palladium grant award?	Contribution of technical assistance is be considered eligible.
88	Is coverage of consulting/advisory services procured by/provided to the offerer an eligible use of funds? Would this be considered a Palladium subcontract award? (“defined as a firm fixed price contract to procure goods or services at firm fixed prices, where payments are made for acceptable received and inspected services or goods in accordance with the stated criteria”)	Consulting/advisory services are considered eligible.
89	Can CATALYZE please confirm that the target group includes women-owned or led businesses; businesses that disproportionately hire women; and businesses that deliver services particularly suited for women? The eligibility requirements on Page 4/8 state that applicants should be seeking to significantly scale financing and/or investment for women-led small and medium businesses, but Pages 4/8 and 6/8 also reference women-owned or led businesses; businesses that disproportionately hire women; and businesses that deliver services particularly suited for women.	The Call for Proposals is designed to support all the following categories: women-led/owned businesses; businesses that disproportionately hire women; and businesses that disproportionately deliver services suited for women. The Offeror(s) will define their terms.
90	The FON is looking for “solutions that unlock significant private capital, innovative financial and commercial solutions, and/or sustainable economic opportunities to meet the demands of underserved women in developing countries.” Is it possible for a winning proposal to focus on the latter (sustainable economic opportunities) without unlocking	CATALYZE, and the W-GDP Resilience buy-in, is focused on mobilizing finance. As such, all proposals must unlock capital.
91	Will Palladium Group allow us to leverage existing partners' funds (for origination) to support further de-risking our proposed fund?	Yes.
92	Is there any information in the public domain on the results achieved by and impact of the W-GDP Fund, in its first year and if not, can reports be provided to successful offerors as part of the inception process?	Please refer to this W-GDP Fact Sheet: https://www.usaid.gov/w-gdp/fact-sheet/aug-2020-womens-global-development-and-prosperity-fund-announces-122m-progress-partnerships
93	Will the grant/subcontract agreement include details of the envisaged reporting and client communication arrangements and is there any guidance on expected regularity of client meetings for purposes of budgeting and planning.	Client meetings will be conducted quarterly.