DFC Full Proposal Webinar Q&A transcript: 7/20/17

**Q: Is it a problem that a project has an element of demand creation as long as it shows what drives the demand, has gender considerations, and implications for increasing nutrition for poor households?**

**A:** No, it’s not a problem if the project has an element of demand creation, and it might be a way of producing new knowledge. The project must be tied to an understanding of the drivers of that demand.

**Q: Is it a problem that the potential impact of a project is not clear from the start, but will be answered by the project findings?**

**A:** We usually do not know the full potential impact of a project until we do it, so as an applicant, you should make a compelling case for why you expect that there will be impact and what you think the impact may be. In other words, explain why it is plausible and credible that some impact may be seen.

**Q: What are the data sharing requirements if the new study for which we are applying for funding is nested into an ongoing trial?**

**A:** The data used to produce findings that are funded by DFC are expected to be made public following the guidelines outlined in the RFP. This is a commitment that our funders have made to openness and the sharing of information. Not all data from the full trial need to be made available, but the data used to create findings from a DFC-funded project must be.

**Q: Do I need to include all researchers involved in the project, or only co-PIs?**

**A:** Please include biosketches for all investigators and co-Investigators that will have major input into the project. This information will help reviewers to see whether the investigators’ competencies, experience, and expertise are sufficient to carry out the work proposed.

**Q: Do we need a letter of support from all collaborators or just the implementing partners?**

**A:** It is to your advantage as an applicant, as well as to us, that any collaborators whose contributions are important to success of the project provide a statement of commitment, regardless of whether their involvement is through their institution or personally as a consultant. It is important for us to know that they have institutional permission to participate, have made a personal commitment to the project, and have put that commitment into writing.

**Q: What are fringe costs and indirect costs?**

**A:** Fringe costs are the extra costs beyond salary that are expected in funding the participation of an individual to cover benefits such as health insurance. Indirect costs are incurred by institutions because they make resources available (e.g., electricity, computer networks, administrative assistance) so that employees are able to participate in projects.

**Note:** Our funders have limited indirect costs to 10% of the direct costs, which supersedes any other institutional arrangements. If your institution has other mechanisms in place for charging for real costs of research, please contact us to discuss your situation before submission of your proposal.

**Q: Can we have a Theory of Change in the Evaluation section?**

**A:** Feel free to include in this section anything that helps explain the way that your project will have impact.

**Q: Are there certain requirements or preferences in terms of money spent in the country, where the project is implemented vs. countries in which Co-PIs / PIs have their institutional affiliations? Are there certain requirements or preferences in terms of money spent for fieldwork vs. analysis?**

**A:** The RFP articulates the importance of projects being done with and in LMICs, and in such a way that we leave a legacy of building capacity, advancing the ability of people in those countries doing research. As a result, some of the resources need to involve country collaborators and be spent in country. Projects where nearly all money is going to western institutions will not be reviewed as favorably as ones where some money is apportioned to the LMIC.

**Q: Should I include a logic model in my proposal?**

**A:** We do not require a logic model, but feel free to include one if it will help you to convey how the elements of your project fit together.

**Q: Is it expected in the current call to conduct a large-scale intervention?**

**A:** We recognize that the funding available for a project makes a large country-wide scale unlikely, but it is good to show that a project can be implemented on a reasonable scale and is inherently scalable if successful and it would make sense to do so.

**Q: How many concept memos were selected for full proposal submission, and how many full proposals will be funded?**

**A:** We received a few hundred concept memos. Through a multi-step review process, less than 10% of the concept memos received were selected for invitation of a full proposal.  We expect to fund 25-30% of the submitted full proposals depending on how many we receive and the budgets they request. As outlined in the RFP, we expect to fund about 7 projects.

**Q: It is mentioned that in the Evaluation section guidelines that if a project involves an intervention we should describe "how the results in the intervention group or area will be compared to outcomes in a control area.” Should that be part of the methodology section while the evaluation is an M&E for the whole project?**

**A:** The methodology section should include a description of the design and methods, including how analyses will be conducted. The Evaluation section should include a more reflective discussion of how data and design will be used to provide information to judge the impact of intervention but also be able to see what that tells us about the importance and relevance of project as a whole and how that will enhance our knowledge and understanding of drivers of food choice.

**Q: Where do we include letters of support in the application?**

**A:** On page 20 of Full Proposal submission guidelines, #8 says to provide letters of support as attachments to proposals. These are outside the page limits, but are allowed in the format described.

**Q: Must detailed qualitative research also be stored and be made publically available? What if this conflicts with issues of confidentiality and anonymity of research participants?**

**A:** Yes, we would expect that data from qualitative research will be made available and that this will not conflict with anonymity and confidentiality. Data should be de-identified and we will work with you to help determine what information and what level of aggregation or summarization needs to be made available.

**Q: What exactly does the demonstration of efficiency and effectiveness of fiscal management by an institution entail - audited financial statements?**

**A:** We would like to see evidence in your description of the investigators and institution that there is a demonstrated experience in managing projects of this size. We do not need audited financial statements in the full proposal but may require them from institutions selected for funding during the contractual process.

**Q: Regarding the qualitative data to be made publically available, would you want de-identified transcripts, as opposed to actual audio recording?**

**A:** It would be reasonable to provide de-identified transcripts and not necessarily the audio recordings.

**Q: What is meant by "rigorous study design"; is an RCT expected?**

**A:** We are open to all kinds of study designs that will provide good scientific evidence that help the intent of the program, namely increasing the body of knowledge about the DFC in LMIC. These designs could be RCT, but could also be plausibility designs, observational or quasi-experimental designs, etc., as long as there is a persuasive argument provided to demonstrate that the design chosen 1) is appropriate for the study specific aims, 2) will lead to a substantial knowledge increase, and 3) will be implemented well. If you are doing an intervention study and a RCT is not feasible, please explain your choice of study design, including how your objectives, constraints, and situation resulted in that choice.

**Q: Can changes be made to the budget requirements we set out in the original concept note? To what extent can we amend the budget?**

**A:** Yes, changes can be made to the budget that was presented in the concept memos. We expect that the budgets presented at the CM stage were illustrative. In the full proposal stage, you will need to present a more detailed budget that could be different in various ways from what was in the concept note. We will be judging the budget in the full proposal against the proposal narrative to determine feasibility and appropriateness.

**Q:** **Can changes be made to investigators as well?**

**A:** You may make changes to the investigatorsfrom who was presented in the concept memo stage. We ask that you contact us prior to full proposal submission to detail the proposed changes in investigators so that we may give guidance. Concept memos were picked partly on the strength of investigators, so we would like to avoid a situation where you make changes that may decrease the strength of your application.