USAID Youth Excel: Our Knowledge Leading Change Program Grant Competition

**Using 'Research-to-Change' (Implementation Research)
to Strengthen Local, Youth-Led, Inclusive Solutions and Advocacy
for Advancing Peace and Security through Local-Level Social Cohesion
Around the Globe**

**Request for Applications (RFA) No. FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-03
Questions and Answers
May 24, 2022**

Please review the following questions and answers for the USAID-funded Youth Excel global grants competition submitted by applicants over Twitter, Facebook, email, and online form as of May 20, 2022. Questions have been consolidated and summarized for clarity and concision. In addition, please review recordings of the live question and answer Sessions 1 and 2, which includes a tutorial for navigating the grant competition website and materials, held on Facebook on May 19, 2022. Youth Excel will continue to respond to applicants' questions on public Twitter and Facebook platforms, and provide basic information and technical troubleshooting by social media or email to excelyouth@irex.org, subject line: FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-03. Please note that any modifications to the grant competition requirements or new guidance on their interpretation will be published and announced online for the information of all applicants. In addition to monitoring the grant competition website and social media posts, applicants may sign up to receive email updates here.

Question and Answer Topics

Eligibility

Question: What are the requirements for one to participate?

Answer: This grant competition is open to local, registered, organizations led by youth under age 35 years, including new recipients of USAID funding and organizations led by or serving marginalized groups, from an eligible country with USAID presence around the world. Your proposed activities must focus on building local-level social cohesion to promote peace and security. You can determine your organization's eligibility to apply by reviewing the criteria in Section 4 (Page 10) and the list of countries that the grant competition is open to in Section 5 (Page 11) of the request for applications.

Question: I am from Afghanistan. Since I saw USAID eligible countries list in the Asia region, we are eligible. In this case can I apply and share our concept?

Answer: Afghanistan is an eligible country per Section 5 (Page 11) of the request for applications.

Question: I'm from Papua New Guinea. I could not find my country under the regions mentioned so I am wondering if we can also apply for this grant.

Answer: Papua New Guinea is not an eligible country per Section 5 (Page 11) of the request for applications.

Question: I would like to ask if applicants from Malaysia are eligible to apply because Malaysia is not listed in the countries list of the global regions?

Answer: Malaysia is not an eligible country per Section 5 (Page 11) of the request for applications.

Question: Our organization is DRC based we apply for legal documents, but we are still waiting for the document to be delivered although the circumstances we are doing activities until we get the paperwork. Can we still apply for this?

Answer: DRC is an eligible country per Section 5 (Page 11) of the request for applications.

Applicants must be legally registered per Section 4 (Page 10) of the request for applications. Applicants are required to provide their registration certificate in Attachment 3 to their application, so the legal documents must be available at the time of application submission by the deadline of June 6, 2022.

Question: Can I apply for the funds if our youth group is not registered?

Answer: Unregistered groups are not eligible to apply to the grant competition per Section 4 (Page 10) of the request for applications. However, if you would like to apply, but your organization is not registered, you are encouraged to identify an eligible organization to administer the award from Youth Excel. Young leaders and groups may form memoranda of understanding with the eligible organization to ensure their inclusion in project governance and fund management structures. Youth implementing the activity and research may sign individual compensation agreements with the eligible organization to receive funding from the award.

Question: We are an unregistered initiative can we still apply?
Answer: Unregistered initiatives are not eligible to apply for this grant competition Section 4 (Page 10) of the request for applications.

Question: Does owning a business qualify you to participate?
Answer: The grant competition is open to private companies per Section 4 (Page 10) of the request for applications.

Question: Please can freelance journalist and entrepreneur apply?

Answer: The grant competition is not open to individuals per Section 4 (Page 10) of the request for applications.

Question: How we can apply for this grant if our organization is working with another organization? is there a specific guideline that we need to follow?

Answer: The grant competition is not open to applications jointly submitted by multiple organizations per Section 4 (Page 10) of the request for applications. Each grant competition award will be made to a single recipient organization. An organization may not pass through award funding to other organizations, due to the small simplified nature of grant competition awards. However, an organization may (and is encouraged to) collaborate with other organizations through the implementation of their activity and research.

Question: If our organization is registered in 2 countries, and does different work in each of them, can we apply with two different project proposals from each country where the organization is registered?

Answer: You may submit a proposal in any eligible country where your organization qualifies as a local organization based on the definition provided in Section 4 of the Request for Applications guidance:

Is legally organized under the laws of [country of activity implementation];

Has its principal place of business or operations in [country of activity implementation];

Is majority-owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of [country of activity implementation];

Is managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of [country of activity implementation].

Theme and Technical Approaches

Question: Where can I view the training available for the grant competition?

Answer: The training on Youth Excel's "research-to-change" approach and how you can develop a learning goal for your application is available here.

Question: Are we correct? There are 2 researches; one is light in the first month on Rapid intersectional gender and protection analysis and 2nd on social cohesion interventions to find out how, why and what went well and what did not go well (and on the base of findings, how we can improve or strengthen our programming in future) while implementing social cohesion intervention/activities.

Answer: Yes, grant competition winners will conduct an intersectional rapid gender and protection analysis to learn about inclusion and protection of diverse youth in the local context in the first month

of the project. They will also conduct research-to-change to learn how to improve program activities and influence stakeholders throughout the project. These two research activities will be interconnected in order to support the grant competition theme of strengthening inclusive solutions. Please refer to Section 3 of the [Request for Applications](#) and the [research-to-change training](#).

Question: Is there a sample or already implemented project related to research implementation that will help us understand research to change well? If yes, please share with us.

Answer: Please see some real examples included in the [Youth Excel research-to-change toolkit](#) and videos of Youth Excel partner research-to-change journeys [here](#) and [here](#).

Question: To whom, research ethics will be got approved?

Answer: The grant competition winners' research-to-change plans will be approved through the Youth Excel ethics review process.

Question: Should the research inquiry be restricted to our location or it can be anywhere in the country?

Answer: You must propose to do research where you will implement your program activities. Youth Excel's research-to-change approach entails gathering data and learning about your program activities, as described in Section 3 of the Request for Applications and the research-to-change training. You may propose to do your program activities and research anywhere within your country. You are encouraged to choose area(s) where you have familiarity and experience with the context.

Question: Are we correct in understanding that learning and adaptation can take the form of a Developmental Evaluation where monthly feedback is provided from the beginning of the project to the end?

Answer: Yes, Youth Excel's research-to-change approach that grant competition winners will use is based off of implementation research methodologies including developmental evaluations, and entails continuous learning and adaptation throughout the project.

Question: Is "DATA STORY " the findings that will come out during research implementation on social conscious intervention including positive and negative along with the way forward for strengthening our programing?

Answer: Yes, the "data story" refers to what you learn from the data that you collect through research-to-change on your program activities, as part of your knowledge mobilization. Please refer to Section 3 of the [Request for Applications](#).

Question: Can we propose to document, develop and publish knowledge product in the shape of brochure which we disseminate during dissemination workshop, share with youth, stakeholders and donors and etc vie email and social media

Answer: Yes, you must propose to develop and disseminate a knowledge product, which may be a brochure or different formats, such as other types of documents, podcasts or radio, video, or any other format that you propose. Please refer to Section 3 of the Request for Applications.

Question: Are the capacity survey is relevant to capacity strengthening related to priority areas?

Answer: Yes, grant competition winners will complete a capacity survey in order to identify their capacity strengthening priority areas and set goals. In your application, please select 1-2 capacity strengthening priority areas that you may be interested in pursuing; grant competition winners may adjust their priority areas based on the results of the survey.

Question: How the term "Peace and Security" are to be interpreted? Whether it is expected from the applicants to design peace-building measures with youth participation with the impact being generated at the local level?

Answer: Yes, you should propose youth-led measures to build peace at the local level. Please find a brief description of the grant competition theme and activities in Sections 1 and 2 of the Request for Applications guidance. However, please note that Youth Excel does not have a specific definition of "peace and security" or prescribed set of interventions. Youth Excel is interested in understanding what peace and security means to you and supporting your solutions.

Question: How the term local level is to be interpreted? Whether it is in terms of state, region, or nation as a whole?

Answer: "Local level" refers to the areas where you will work within your country, and may be the community level up to the national level.

Question: Would our application go through if it does follow the guidelines, but it has a different approach?

Answer: All applications that follow the guidelines in the request for applications will be considered. You are welcome to propose any type of approach that builds local-level social cohesion, per Section 2 of the request for applications. Please let us know if you have other questions.

Application Requirements

Question: How can I apply for this grant?

Answer: You can submit your application online. Make sure to read the full instructions in the request for applications and questions and answers before applying.

Question: Could you please share the application with us in word format?

Answer: Please find the Word version of the application template attached where you may draft your responses prior to final submission in the online form.

Question: the project text must be in English?

Answer: Yes, the application must be submitted in English per Section 7 of the request for applications.

Question: I can't find the link for planning and costing tool template

Answer: Please find the planning and costing tool template for Attachment 1 of the application here.

Question: please I need further clarification on the following statement "A signed letter from your Local partners or organization stakeholders". Does this mean we can get the letter from organizations we have partnered with? And is there a format for the letter?

Answer: Yes, the letter of support may be from an organization with which your organization has partnered. There is not a required format. Please note that the letter must be signed.

Question: If organization haven't partners, can i request application without this letter?

Answer: A letter of support is required for Attachment 2. You may request a letter of support from another local stakeholder who can speak to your organization's work; for instance, a participant or community member engaged in your programs.

Question: I have a certificate of registration from my organisation. Am I still required to submit a support letter from another organisation?

Answer: Yes, the letter of support is required for Attachment 2 and the registration certificate is required for Attachment 3.

Question: I asked about applying as a newly established NGO, without an experience as an organization, is it ok to put the details of members and their past experience?

Answer: In the application, Section A, Question 12 asks for relevant capacities and past experiences of both your organization and its individual leaders and members. Newly established organizations are encouraged to highlight the relevant capacities and past experiences of leaders and members.

Question: Please guide us a bit more about inclusion and protection strategy for diverse youth; are these youth will be the project targeted beneficiaries during the implementation of social cohesion activities?

Answer: Yes, Section B, Question 6 of the application asks you to describe your inclusion and protection strategies for the diverse youth involved in your program activities and research.

Questions: Can we send two project proposals if we have 2 good ideas? or each NGO may only apply with one project?

Answer: There are no restrictions on the number of applications that each organization may submit.

Question: I would like to know when is the result? And how shall we learn from you? Will it be online or face-to-face?

Answer: Youth Excel expects to notify applicants of results in July 2022 and announce winners in August 2022. Decisions will be sent to the email address provided by the person who submitted the application.

Planning and Costing

Question: We would like to inquire about the expected budget of the project in order to prepare a budget estimate of the project.

Answer: The budget range is USD $7,000-$10,000. Please review the full budget guidance in Section 5 and 6 of the Request for Applications and prepare your budget in the planning and costing tool.

Question: The total amount of the project is not clear to me. Are they between 7,000 and 10,000 USD per month for a period between 3 and 6 months?

Yes, you can request between USD $7,000 to 10,000 for a proposed project length as well between 3-6 months per Section 5 of the Request for Applications.

Question: For research workshop and preparation to start activities, we should allocate budget for 2 research and project managers or we can develop capacity/engage our other relevant staff / youth volunteers?

Answer: Yes, you are encouraged to identify one person to serve as the main project lead/manager and one person to serve as the main research lead/manager, and you may engage other relevant staff or volunteers. You may plan and budget for any staffing and volunteer support that is necessary for your project. Please see Section 6 of the Request for Applications.

Question: Should we plan our close out activity and research internally with project and research manager and other staff / youth volunteers? or we can do it with stakeholders just needed clarity in order that we allocate budget accordingly.

Answer: You may plan and budget for any staffing and other volunteer or stakeholder support that is necessary for your project. Please see Section 6 of the Request for Applications.

Question: Can we allocate budget for refreshment, banners, venue charges, stationary and etc for participants during activities?

Answer: Yes, you may budget for supplies and other costs to support your project's participants and activities. Please see Section 6 of the Request for Applications.

Question: If required, can we allocate budget for youth physical and psychosocial support to ensure their inclusion and protection during activities?

Answer: Yes, you are encouraged to budget for inclusion and protection costs. Youth Excel recommends budgeting for a designated team member to serve as protection focal point with 20% of their time (approximately 1 day per week) dedicated to protection, and a flexible funding pool up to $500 for inclusion and protection needs. Please refer to Section 6 of the Request for Applications. Youth Excel will also support grant competition winners with technical assistance for gender equality and social inclusion and protection during project implementation.

Questions: Are the grants restrictive to certain parts of the project? More specifically, the grant can be used for any costs for the organization or a certain project eg salaries or equipment. Makes sense?

Answer: The grant can support direct costs for the project, including salaries and supplies, and indirect costs for the organization, including executive and administrative salaries, rent and utilities, and bank fees, at the rate of 10%. Please refer to Section 6 of the Request for Applications.

There are restrictions on equipment. Items with a unit cost of $5,000 or more and a useful lifespan of 1 year or more are defined as "equipment" and will not be funded by this grant competition. Other items may be classified as "supplies" and may be funded up to a total of $2,000 by this grant competition. Computing devices may be included as supplies. Ineligible and restricted commodities listed below, including motor vehicles, will not be funded by this grant competition, regardless of their cost and classification as supplies or equipment.

Question: Is the Admin is 10% of project cost or 10% of total allowable budget?

Answer: The 10% indirect rate to support your organization's administrative costs may be charged on total direct costs for the project. For example, if your direct costs for your project total $9,000, you may request indirect costs for your organization in the amount of $900 (10% of $9,000) and a total of $9,900 (sum of $9,000 and $900). Please note that the total budget, including direct and indirect costs, must be within the range of USD $7,000 to $10,000. Please refer to Section 6 of the Request for Applications.

Question: For conversion from local currency to dollars, official bank rates usually do not translate to exact conversion during transactions. Should we go ahead to plan with the official bank rates? How would you advise?

Answer: You may estimate the exchange rate using www.oanda.com or other official rates. Youth Excel acknowledges that the exact conversion value will vary when funds are transferred during implementation. Please use your best estimate for budgeting purposes.

Question: The Nigerian exchange rate constantly fluctuates. If we create the budget based on current prices, there is a possibility that the prices would have increased by the time the project is being implemented. Is there an allowance for inflation? Would you prefer that we factor in inflation while creating the budget?

Answer: You are encouraged to select a conservative exchange rate that will allow your organization to absorb fluctuations in the local currency. Youth Excel may negotiate the exchange rate with finalists and it may be revised prior to award signing. If significant inflation is anticipated during the 3-6 month project timeframe, you may include an inflation factor in your budget and justify it in the budget notes.