

Request for Applications – Research Organization for Malawi Youth Landscape Analysis

Organization:	International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)
Issue Date:	September 24, 2021
Submit Questions by:	October 4, 2021
Service Dates	November 15, 2021 – May 15, 2022
Response Due Date:	October 22, 2021

About IREX

[IREX](#) is a global development and education organization. We strive for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world in which individuals reach their full potential, governments serve their people, and communities thrive. With an annual portfolio of \$ 87 million and over 500 staff worldwide, we work with partners in more than 110 countries in four areas essential to progress: cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to quality education and information.

Background to the Project - Malawi Youth Landscape Analysis

IREX is the prime holder of the USAID-funded global YouthPower 2: [Youth Excel](#) award. Under this award, IREX will be implementing the five-year Youth Landscape and Learning Platform (YLLP) Activity. The activity will support the USAID/Malawi Mission's implementation of Development Objective 2 (DO2) of their [Country Development Cooperation Strategy](#): Youth lead healthy, informed, and productive lives and the ability to collaborate, learn, and adapt across USAID's Program Cycle. YLLP will continuously provide key information on the youth context in Malawi and support the Mission's DO2 Learning Agenda, facilitating feedback loops with relevant stakeholders, including the Government of Malawi, and will also track and report on selected youth indicators.

In delivering the YLLP, IREX will undertake at least two Youth Landscape Analyses (YLAs) aimed at establishing a deep understanding of the current youth context in Malawi. The YLA will provide formative information for USAID's cross-sectoral youth focused activities in the country. The assessment will draw from USAID's Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, the Mission's Project Design Document's (PDD) learning questions, and the PAD's prioritized indicators. The YLA will adopt a multi-pronged approach that will include a desk review of existing literature and secondary data on youth in Malawi and include primary data collection through interviews with young people and key stakeholders on USAID/Malawi's youth-related interventions. The YLA will utilize principles of participatory methods, with appropriate COVID-19 prevention methods being applied, and the research will engage youth and youth researchers at every step. The YLA team will collaborate with USAID, the Ministry of Youth & Sport's Joint Technical Committee on Youth Empowerment (JTC), the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) and other national and local level youth stakeholders.

The first YLA¹ will take place from November 2021 – May 2022, as follows:

- Finalize research methodology, select and train enumerators, and prepare instruments. (November-January)
- Data collection (February-March)
- Data analysis and preparation of report (April-May)
- Close-out (May)

¹ A second YLA will take place in 2023 and there will be a separate procurement for a partner for that activity.

This Request for Applications (RFA) therefore seeks to identify a Malawian research organization to lead the qualitative and quantitative research elements of the YLA as proposed above. In close collaboration with the USAID/Malawi Mission, the successful research organization will work under the supervision of the YLA Team Lead and will co-design and implement qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis, among a representative sample of young Malawians between the ages of 18 and 35 as well as parents of Malawian children between the ages of 0 and 18 years, and with key stakeholders in various sectors of the Malawian economy whose work directly impact young people.

The research organization will ensure that youth are central to designing, implementing, and analyzing the research.

The primary research activities - informed by a preliminary desk review - will be based on research methodology co-developed by the successful research organization and the YLA Team Lead, and will cover a representative sample of males and females from across each of Malawi's 28 districts, reflecting the country's different ethnic and faith groupings, and encompassing urban and rural dwellers as well as employed, unemployed and in-school young people, and including USAID sectors of work such as health, education, livelihoods, and civic engagement. Other potential respondents for this study should include USAID implementing partner staff, youth-focused organizations and associations, service providers, educational and training institution officials, private sector stakeholders, government officials, and donors.

Specifications of the Request for Applications

We are inviting Malawian research organizations (interchangeably referred to as applicants) to submit their responses to this RFA, to conduct data collection and analysis for the Youth Landscape Analysis aimed at providing a better understanding of the youth context in Malawi. The analysis will provide robust insights into how young Malawians live the challenges they face, their aspirations, and their recommendations for action to enable them to lead healthy, informed, and productive lives.

The selected research organization will co-design the research methodology, conduct research activities using tools codeveloped with the IREX research team, guided by USAID Project PAD learning questions and the PAD's prioritized indicators. They will then co-produce a high-quality research report summarizing the key findings and presenting recommendations for contextually appropriate cross-sectoral interventions to improve policies and approaches to the empowerment of young people. They will also be responsible for developing learning products and knowledge sharing materials tailored to different audiences and stakeholders, where necessary

The applications submitted in response to this call should, at a minimum, recommend a scientifically robust mixed-methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative methods, with a stronger focus on qualitative methods, including key informant interviews and peer group discussions.

The proposed approach and methodology should also clearly highlight a systematic sampling method, including details on how the data would be cleaned and analyzed. The proposed sampling framework and approach should particularly ensure a representative sample of youth across Malawi's 28 districts and show how we will deliberately engage the marginalized and vulnerable, youth with disabilities, students, rural, poor and ultra-poor, and also consider urban/peri-urban/rural youth. The proposed methodology and approach should also incorporate specific provisions to capture insights regarding the current status of youth engagement across

the key sectors of interest, i.e., Health, Education, Livelihoods, Agriculture, Workforce development, Civic Engagement, and Gender.

The successful research organization will work with the IREX research team and the YLLP team to develop and refine the research methodology and tools which will be subjected to stakeholder consultations and a final approval by USAID. The research organization will also facilitate the necessary Malawian IRB approvals as would be required. (IREX will facilitate U.S.-based IRB approvals, if required.)

The final research report should clearly outline the study method used, how the sample was defined, and how the data was collected and analyzed. The research organization will provide information to the participants about the research and clarify the expected role of each participant prior to the beginning of data collection. The successful proposal should outline ethical considerations to be taken during research, particularly where young or vulnerable individuals are engaged, or how parents, guardians, or caretakers' consent will be sought for research participants who are under 18 years. Any interviews and focus groups conducted during the research should be recorded, transcribed, and translated into English.

The research report should contain the following sections at a minimum. It should include user-friendly data presentations, visualizations, and summaries².

- Introduction and context, outlining the rationale for the study and its objectives.
- Methodology, including how the research was conducted and the data analyzed and reported on, and the strengths and limitations of the methods used.
- Results – the key findings from the survey and presentation of findings
- Analysis of findings and key themes.

The research partner will be named and co-branded in YLA public products.

Reporting:

The research partner will be under day-to-day technical supervision of the YLA Team Lead. Youth Excel's Malawi-based Activity Lead (Project Director) will provide oversight.

Deliverables

Application stage
Research proposal in Word (with a preliminary research approach outlined as part of the research proposal) ³
Research budget
Workplan
Research Dissemination Plan
CVs for Research Team Lead and other core team members

² The YLA Team will review other countries' Youth Landscape Assessments ([available here](#)), but is not required to use the same format.

³ To be refined at a later stage in consultation with IREX and USAID

Research Implementation
Finalized YLA Assessment methodology (drawing from draft methodology and created in collaboration with YLA Team Lead).
IRB approvals by relevant authorities in Malawi.
Field Data Collection and Management Protocols (If not included in Methodology)
COVID-19 Mitigation Plans
Enumerator recruitment and training plan (if not included in methodology)
All raw and cleaned datasets
Reporting
Progress reports: Fortnightly updates of progress throughout the project period. Should include progress of primary research; enumerator training and management; community engagement; challenges and lessons learned; and dissemination (to be undertaken jointly with IREX).
Initial Findings Brief:
1 st draft in MS Word format
Final draft in MS Word format
YLA Assessment Report
1 st draft report in MS Word format
2 nd draft report in MS Word format
Final draft report in MS Word Format

Timeline for the RFA

Activity	Date/time
Issue of RFA Notice / availability of RFA documents	September 24, 2021
Deadline for clarification questions	October 4, 2021
Deadline for IREX response to clarification questions. <i>Responses will be posted on webpage.</i>	October 11, 2021
Deadline for submission of RFA responses by potential suppliers (Response Deadline)	October 22, 2021, by 11:59pm Central African Time

Final decision on award	November 1, 2021
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Instructions for responding to the RFA

The documents to be submitted as your response to the RFA are listed in the Submission Checklist annexed as part of this call. All documents required as part of your response should be submitted by email to Candy Smith at csmith@irex.org with a copy to excelyouth@irex.org and a subject line: **Malawi YLA RFA** by the deadline indicated in the Timeline section of the RFA.

The following requirements should be complied with when submitting your response:

- Please ensure that you submit your response on time. Late submissions will automatically be rejected by IREX.
- Do not submit any additional supporting documentation with your response unless specifically requested to do so as part of this RFA.
- All attachments/supporting documentation should be provided separately to your main proposal response and clearly labelled to make it clear as to which part of your proposal response it relates.
- Where supporting evidence is requested as 'or equivalent' you must demonstrate such equivalence as part of your response.
- Any deliberate alteration of an IREX requirement as part of your response will invalidate your response to that requirement and for evaluation purposes you shall be deemed not to have responded to that requirement.
- Responses should be concise, unambiguous, and should directly address the requirement stated.
- All responses must be valid for a period of no less than sixty (60) calendar days from the closing date.

Instructions for Technical Proposal

Provide a narrative and workplan (maximum 10 pages, not including cover page and Annexes) that outlines the following. Any submissions above the page requirements will not be reviewed. Shorter submissions are welcome as long as the requirements are addressed.

1. Cover page, including a) your organization's legal name, address, Malawi registration number, non-profit or for-profit status, DUNS number (if available) and b) your authorized signatory's name, title, phone, email, and signature.
2. Your institutional capacity and past performance, describing at least three (3) relevant projects. (1-2 pages). Note that past performance references for these projects must also be provided in Section C of the due diligence questionnaire.
3. A description of the cross-sectoral youth landscape in Malawi, demonstrating your understanding of demographics, gender and inclusion dimensions, and key stakeholders at the community and national levels. (1 page)
4. Explanation of how youth will be engaged throughout the activity and how you will leverage the positive youth development framework. (1/2 – 1 page)
5. Illustrative qualitative research methodology to reach diverse youth demographics (including parents of children under age 18) across Malawi. (1 page)
6. Illustrative quantitative research methodology to reach a representative sample of youth groups, to include all relevant socio-economic classes, age, gender, and ethnicities across Malawi. (1 page maximum)
7. Specify all data collection, analysis and management systems that will be used (1 page maximum)
8. Workplan. Use a Gantt chart and include verbal explanations of each point below.

- a. Timeline for full activity. Methodology, tools, and enumerator recruitment and training should take place in 2021, with data collection beginning in January 2022 and lasting 5-7 weeks. (1 page)
 - b. Detailed explanation of how each data collection approach will be implemented, to reduce errors, guarantee data quality and integrity, and to protect all data (1 page maximum)
 - c. Additional information on data collection (1 page):
 - i. Specify how data collection teams will be identified, recruited, trained and supervised
 - ii. Specify the processes and procedures that will be put in place to minimize the spread of COVID-19
 - iii. Brief descriptions of any challenges anticipated and propose suitable mitigation measures
9. Annex (not counted in page limit):
- a. Organogram of proposed research team.
 - b. CVs for Team Lead and key team members
 - c. Research Dissemination Plan. (1/2 – 1 page) describing how the report may be disseminated in Malawi and the region. *Dissemination to be undertaken in collaboration with IREX.*

Instructions for Key Personnel

The lead consultant(s) must have the following qualifications:

1. Post graduate degree in relevant fields such as research methods, statistics, development studies, social studies, or community development.
2. A minimum of 7 years undertaking research studies and/or evaluations
3. Demonstrate excellent oral and written English.
4. Excellent analytical skills and report writing skills.
5. Demonstrate experience in undertaking landscape assessments or related studies in Malawi or similar countries.
6. Ability to develop formulae for assessing the level of achievement of indicators overtime
7. Proficiency in statistical analysis packages like SPSS, Stata
8. Proven experience in conducting participatory qualitative and quantitative research with superior analytical skills
9. Knowledgeable in the Malawi youth development sector and other relevant sectors.
10. Evidence of theoretical knowledge and practical application of cross-cutting issues in youth development such as education, gender, innovation.

Essential

1. Demonstrated experience working with youth and youth-serving organizations, and a variety of public/private sector stakeholders to develop and implement research activities
2. Significant expertise in Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning;
3. Ability to communicate accessible findings and recommendations to a variety of audiences and stakeholders
4. Experience in facilitating learning and participatory processes to validate and integrate research findings into learning
5. Experience working across Malawi

Desirable

1. Experience conducting evaluation activities remotely;
2. Experience in facilitating workshops and other learning activities online;
3. Experience in a range of participatory evaluation techniques
4. Experience working on USAID related research activities and evaluations

Instructions for Cost Proposal and Organizational Information

Subject to the availability of funds, IREX expects to award 1 fixed amount award sub-grant, ranging from \$140,000 to \$190,000. The expected duration of IREX's support or the period of performance is November/15/2021 – May /15/2022. IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Non-profit and for-profit organizations are eligible to apply; however, note that no profits or fees are allowable.

Submit budget, budget narrative, and due diligence questionnaire in the templates provided.

Cost Restrictions:

- Sub-grant funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to finance any of the ineligible or restricted commodities as per ADS 312 Eligibility of Commodities
- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to successfully complete the activity, including any sub-grantee headquarters expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.
- Any costs unallowable under USAID and/or federal regulations such as referenced 2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles and FAR 31.2 Cost Principles for Commercial Organizations.

Clarification Requests

- All clarification requests should be submitted to at csmith@irex.org by the Clarification Deadline, as set out in the Timelines section of this RFA. IREX is under no obligation to respond to clarification requests received after the Clarification Deadline.
- Any clarification requests should clearly reference the appropriate section of the RFA.
- IREX reserves the right to issue any clarification request made by you, and the response, to all potential suppliers.
- IREX may at any time request further information from potential suppliers to verify or clarify any aspects of their response or other information they may have provided. Should you not provide supplementary information or clarifications to IREX by any deadline notified to you, your proposal response may be rejected in full, and you may be disqualified from this procurement process.

Evaluation Process and Criteria

Initial assessment: Responses will be reviewed for completeness with those responses correctly completed with all relevant information being moved to the second final stage of review. Any responses not correctly completed in accordance with the requirements of this RFA and/or containing omissions may be rejected at this point. Where a response is rejected at this point it will automatically be disqualified and will not be further evaluated.

Final evaluation: Any response that is moved to the final stage will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation methodology set out below. Organizational information provided as part of RFA response may also be verified as part of this stage.

Evaluation criteria: Responses from research potential suppliers will be assessed using the criteria and weightings below and will be assessed entirely on the response submitted. Previous or current relationships with suppliers cannot be considered when evaluating submissions unless the previous/current experience is clearly evidenced within the response.

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Institutional Capacity and Past Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bidder has requisite depth of experience managing projects of similar scope, magnitude, and complexity. • Bidder has experience of delivering similar work in Malawi or other developing contexts/countries. 	25
Technical approach / Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the methodology is responsive to the desired outcomes • Approach involves young people at every stage of the process with special considerations made to the engagement of marginalized categories of young people. • Understanding of the prioritization and sequencing of activities and tasks, feasibility of proposed timelines. 	30
Quality of key personnel for the assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key personnel demonstrate the requisite expertise, experience, language skills, other capabilities, and gender balance necessary to support the proposed technical approach, while remaining cost-effective. • Key personnel are representative of Malawian diversity. 	20
Cost/Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall costs proposed are realistic for the work to be performed. • Costs reflect the applicant's understanding of the requirements and are consistent with the technical application. • Costs are reasonable, allocable, and allowable. 	25

Annex 1: Submission checklist:

- 1) Technical proposal in MS Word, inclusive of workplan, with the following attachments:
 - A) Organogram
 - B) CV(s) for Key Personnel
 - C) Research dissemination plan

- 2) Cost proposal, composed of:
 - A) Budget in MS Excel
 - B) Budget Narrative in MS Word
 - C) Due Diligence Questionnaire in PDF and requested attachments