**<<PROJECT TITLE>>**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: CONCEPT NOTES FOR <<AREA OF INTEREST>>**

(Version: X/X/20XX)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KEY DATES** | |
| **Action** |  |
| Request for Concept Note Issued | X/X/20XX |
| Information Webinar for Concept Notes and Proposals | X/X/20XX |
| Deadline for Submission of Concept Note | X/X/20XX |
| Tentative Notification of Selected Concept Notes for Full Proposals request | X/X/20XX |
| Tentative Deadline for Full Proposal submissions | X/X/20XX |
| Tentative Notification of Selected Projects | X/X/20XX |
| Tentative Earliest Start of Funded Projects | X/X/20XX |

*Direct questions regarding the <<project title>> to:*

Dr. XXXX XXXXX   
University of Illinois  
College of XXXX  
Building XXXX  
XXXX Street  
Champaign, IL 618XX  
(217) XXX-XXXX

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Inquiries regarding the University’s nondiscrimination policies may be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, University of Illinois, 100 Swanlund Administration Building, 601 East John Street, Champaign, IL 61820, (217) 333-0885.

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The <<project name>> (hereafter “XXXX”), managed by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U of I) under a X-year award from the <<funding agency>>, invites concept notes for collaborative research and capacity-building projects to generate mutual benefits for <<XXXX country>> and United States (US) agriculture. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of <<funding agency>>, the maximum available for the <<project nickname>>is $XX million over a XX-month period. Activities will be completed by <<month+year>>. The concept notes precede submission of a full proposal. Based on the evaluation criteria and evaluation by our <<internal/external/named>> Advisory Committee and other technical experts, and overall portfolio needs, a limited subset of applicants will be invited to submit full proposals.

<<The lead project investigator submitting the concept note must reside in the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source.>> Concept notes originating from or including small, mid-sized and minority-serving institutions or organizations are particularly encouraged. Project directors should propose a start date of <<full date>> and an end date of <<full date>>. This program focuses on short-term projects that can be completed during the term of the award. Cost extension requests will not be considered; projects that cannot be completed within the XX-month time period should not be submitted to this program.

The University of Illinois is the management entity (ME) for the project and is home to the College of <<XXXX>>. The project is funded by of <<XXXX>> under Cooperative Agreement Number <<XXXX>>. The ME is located at the University of Illinois, College of <<XXXX>>, of <<XXXX Building>>, <<XXXX Street>>, Champaign, IL 61801, <<XXXXemail>>.

Concept notes must be submitted in PDF format no later than <<DAY, DATE X, 20XX>> (5:00 PM CT) through the online system using the forms provided <<WEBSITE>>.

Address your submission to:

Dr. <<XXXX>>  
University of Illinois  
College of <<XXXX>>  
<<XXXX>>Hall  
<<XXXX>>Street  
Champaign, IL 61801

Website: <<XXXX>>

Email: <<XXXX>>

# BACKGROUND

The <<project name>> reflects a programmatic alignment with the US government’s <<XXXX>> ([https://www. <<XXXX>>](https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy)), which sets out how to achieve the goal of the <<agency>> through the primary strategy objectives of <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, and <<XXXX>>. The <<project name>> will work across these areas to achieve the overall goal of <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, and <<XXXX>>. Critical in this process is engagement of a diverse group of partners, with continuous learning and adaptation along the way to ensure purpose-driven research. Rather than a linear process, it entails feedback loops and opportunities for input and change.

The <<project name>> focuses on <<number>> <<agency>>-designated <<goals/areas>>:

* <<XXXX>>**:** <<description>>.
* <<XXXX>>**:** <<description>>

To achieve the <<project name>>’s goals of <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, and <<XXXX>> through science, technology, and innovation, the ME is requesting concept notes that address <<XXXX>>. In this <<goal/area>>, the ME is soliciting concept notes for <<XXXX>>and<<XXXX>> that will lead to improved efficiency and <<XXXX>> of the following <<XXXX>>:

* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>>

<<Goal/area>>reflects an alignment with the US  government’s <<agency name>> ([https:// <XXXX>](https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/us-government-global-food-security-strategy)) and is complementarity to the <<initiative name>> (http://<XXXX>). To meet the challenge of <<XXXX>>, the <<XXXX>> community will need to fully harness the benefits of <<XXXX>> science and technology. Significant challenges exist in transforming global <<XXXX>>systems to better meet the demands for <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, and <<XXXX>>-led economic growth. Major challenges include <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, <<XXXX>>, and <<XXXX>>. While the <<project name>> will not develop new <<XXXX>> or research to address these challenges directly, the tools, technologies, and methods developed under the <<project name>> must be useful for addressing these challenges−even if indirectly. Confronted with these challenges, <<XXXX>> systems will need to <<XXXX>> in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable manner that increases productivity, incomes, and <<XXXX>> for <<XXXX>> and <<XXXX>>populations while reducing risks from economic, environmental, and climatic shocks.

This call for concept notes corresponds to <<goal/area>>. The <<PROJECT NAME>> will request full proposals from a subset of concept notes selected based on the criteria elaborated below.

The Office of <<XXXXsubagency>> within the <<XXXXagency>> has an internal strategic framework for <<XXXX>>, which provides an integrated approach to support development and scaling of <<XXXX>>as drivers of productivity, growth, resilience, and <<XXXX>>. This framework provides a broad foundation to align and coordinate diverse <<XXXXagency>>investments across multiple operating units for enhanced <<XXXX>> and <<XXXX>>security impact. All activities across the strategic framework aim to improve public- and private-sector capacities within target area’s innovation, <<XXXX>>, and market systems to foster the self-reliance needed to sustain <<XXXX>>improvement efforts. These efforts will inform key drivers of <<XXXX>>security, economic growth, resilience, and improved <<XXXX>>.

# TECHNICAL AREA OF INQUIRY

This call is for concept notes focused on <<XXXX>>. Applicants should propose effective best practices, tools, and technologies for accelerating plant breeding for improved, locally-appropriate <<XXXX>>targeted to <<XXXX>>. Implementation of technologies and tools should tie downstream market demand to a continuously responsive upstream <<XXXX>> system; link improved <<XXXX>> to the <<XXXX>> systems that take them to scale; and support <<XXXX>> systems to deliver improved <<XXXX>> that drive gains in <<XXXXtarget populations>> and on local and regional markets—with impact-oriented performance metrics to monitor outputs and outcomes at each stage of the process. <<XXXX>> and <<XXXX>> centers will be responsible for creating improved <<XXXX>>. All activities must contribute to improvement of key capacities of public- and private-sector actors within <<XXXXtarget population’s>> innovation, <<XXXX>>, and market systems to foster the increased self-reliance needed to sustain <<XXXX>> improvement efforts as key drivers of <<XXXX>> security, economic growth, resilience, and improved <<XXXX>> moving forward.

The research, tools, and technologies in <<goal/area>> will address and advance <<XXXX>> and <<XXXX>> stability, resilience, and contributions <<XXXX>> to enhance <<XXXX>> and contribute to production systems. These factors will also contribute to capacity building and may address, but are not limited to:

* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>
* <<XXXX>
* <<XXXX>>
* <<XXXX>>
* other issues as identified in Appendix X

# LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Institutional capacity building is a priority for the <<PROJECT NAME>>. Projects must incorporate meaningful collaboration between US institutions and one or more partner country institutions (<<XXXX>> institutions, universities, and <<XXXX>> organizations). The long-term sustainability and success of <<XXXX>> security and <<XXXX>> interventions are dependent on continuous capacity development for <<XXXX>> innovation. Research capacity development is a complex and long-term process that must ensure a continuing pipeline of improved technologies, practices, and knowledge. Development and adaptation of innovations tailored to local contexts require a strong and empowered team of competent and professional researchers and practitioners from high-performing organizations and institutional networks. <<XXXX>> researchers are best placed to identify the challenges, opportunities, and needs of their organizations and local research networks. Consequently, the applicant should propose a local capacity development approach that ensures that opportunities are in alignment with <<XXXX>> national and regional research priorities and strategically targeted to contribute to a strengthened local <<XXXX>> innovation system. This will ensure that the local capacity development approach reflects <<XXXX>> and/or regional partner input as well as the alignment of capacity development activities across the project portfolio so that capacity development efforts are not duplicative, but reinforcing.

Applicants must present a persuasive line of reasoning for the need and type of capacity building efforts proposed. Additionally, applicants must provide evidence of institutional commitment, identify potential benefits from collaboration, and include letters of commitment by the respective institution(s). Applicants should ensure that the concept notes integrate capacity development into <<XXXX>> improvement research design, innovation, and implementation. Integration of capacity development into the <<PROJECT NAME>> will unleash, strengthen, and maintain the ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole in the target areas to manage their affairs successfully. Ultimately, local capacity development activities will enable the <<organization(s)>> to continue the process <<XXXX>>. Applicants should also review the <<XXXXagency>> guidance on capacity building ([https:// <<XXXX>>](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cceboo2F_ahTWx81-V5NFjhOEdzDCBi_/view) ) and incorporate the principles into the concept notes. Applicants should consider scholarly exchanges made possible by communication technologies and web-based learning platforms (e.g., online courses), sabbatical leaves to enhance curriculum development, and early career faculty and student mentoring, among other options. Likewise, applicants should provide sound rationales and examples of why and how collaborations with local institutions and entities will build capacity and achieve outcomes.

# INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR FOR CONCEPT NOTES AND PROPOSALS

A webinar will be held on MONTH DATE, YEAR at X AM/PM CT to address any questions on the proposal process or other specifics. Interested parties are encouraged to submit all questions on the XXXXX website via “Contact Manager” (WEB ADDRESS). Questions should be submitted prior to the webinar to ensure that the ME has adequate time to address your question. Interested parties are encouraged to use this method instead of sending emails to the <<PROJECT NAME>> email. To register for the webinar please visit WEBSITE. The recorded webinar and a summary of questions and responses will be posted on the <<PROJECT NAME>> website at WEBADDRESS.

# PROJECT FUNDING

The total maximum award period of funded projects will be approximately <<XXXX>> months, with all activities completed by <<DAY, DATE X, 20XX>>. The ME anticipates awarding between <<X and X projects under AOI1 with each project awarded a maximum of US $XXX,XXX. A total of six to eight concept notes will be selected to submit full proposals from this call. Projects that allocate approximately X% of direct costs to host country partners will be viewed favorably. Capacity development funding allocation is also important. No cost share is required with these projects, but cost sharing is viewed favorably.

Travel costs must include the costs of the US <<and Country>> PIs to attend the <<PROJECT NAME>>’s Research Planning meeting to be held in COUNTRY (MONTH 20XX). Travel to two additional research-oriented meetings (one in MONTH 20XX in <<Champaign, IL>> and one in MONTH 20XX <<in COUNTRY>>) must also be included. This is in addition to other travel costs. Applicants must also consider travel needs for PIs, researchers, and students to attend relevant conferences. Student travel must be included in the project funding.

# ELIGIBILITY

Projects must identify a single lead institution that is either a US university, priority country national <<XXXX>> research or educational institution, or an international <<XXXX>> research institution. Preference is given to projects with US universities as the lead institution and all projects must include at least one US university. Projects must also include at least one partner institution in a priority country, such as national or regional <<XXXX>> research institutes, or universities. Projects may involve additional partners, including private sector partners, and other priority country institutions, other US universities, and international <<XXXX>> research institutions with active <<XXXX>> programs. Minority-serving institutions as defined by the Title XII legislation of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (and its subsequent amendments) are encouraged to apply. This includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal colleges and universities, Native American serving nontribal institutions, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander serving institutions, Alaska Native serving institutions, Native Hawaiian serving institutions, and Pacific Islander serving institutions.

The lead institution must demonstrate the capacity to provide the necessary scientific leadership for proposed activities as well as the skills to contract and manage funds internationally. A single lead PI must be identified for the lead institution and the 2-page CV of the PI included, ensuring intellectual leadership for the research and capacity building.

# COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The <<PROJECT NAME>> is designed to reinforce and leverage partnerships with <<XXXX>> partners, US universities as well as the US and host country private sector entities. Projects that evidence strong partnerships with these institutions will be favored. Private sector engagement is strongly encouraged. Budgetary support and capacity-building efforts will be evaluated with this in mind.

# GUIDELINES FOR CONCEPT NOTES

# DOCUMENT FORMAT

Concept notes must be no more than 4 pages using letter-sized paper (8.5” x 11”) single spaced with 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins in Times New Roman 12-point font. On each page, the page number and the name of the lead US institution must be placed in the header. Concept notes must be written in English and submitted as a single PDF document, with the exception of the budget, which must be provided in an unprotected Microsoft Excel XLS or XLSX format. The required budget template can be downloaded from WEBSITE and submission must be completed using the XXXX system at WEBSITE by <<DAY, DATE X, 20XX>>, at 5:00 PM CT.

# table 1: CONcept note outline

| **Requirement** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| Cover Page | <<Title of Call>> Project Title  PI, Co-PI(s) names, titles, departments, institutions, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers  Research themes (keywords)  Research country focus (where the research will be conducted)  Project length (months, maximum 60)  Total budget requested (in US dollars) |
| Research Plan  (2 pages) | Executive summary (250-word summary of proposed project)  Brief background and context (including descriptions of any previous research)  Justification for research country focus  Research objectives and hypotheses  Research design and methodological approaches  Anticipated outputs and outcomes  Approach(es) for capacity-building, including non-student training  Linkages with other programs and initiatives  Describe dual benefits to US (if any)  Address relationship to each cross-cutting theme |
| Management of Project (+/- 1/2 page) | Qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of team members |
| Work Plan (1 page) | Timeline of activities (table) |
| Summary Budget Narrative (1/2 page) | Describe key budget categories, amounts, and their purposes |
| Preliminary Budget (separate XLS document) | Excel document (using the provided template) indicating estimated total budget for each partner institution for the duration of the proposed project |
| **Appendices** | |
| References | Use a consistent style to format references that is typical for your discipline |
| PI Qualifications | Curriculum vitae (CV) of the lead PI (maximum 2 pages) |
| Collaborators Interest | Letters of Interest or emails from proposed collaborators, indicating that they are willing and able to conduct proposed research |
| Institutional Interest | Letters of Interest from the collaborating institutions are recommended in Concept Notes (and required for Full Proposals) |

# BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The summary budget for the concept note must follow the template format and indicate the full project period. A summary budget justification in a narrative format must indicate the main budget lines to be covered and sub-awards for other institutions receiving the funds.

Total project costs must not exceed US $XXX,XXX, including indirect costs.

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

The ME, the Advisory Committee, and the <<agency>> Agreement Officer’s Representative will evaluate the concept notes. The Advisory Committee includes a US industry representative, but additional industry input may be sought during the evaluation process. The <<agency representative>> may share with <<agency>> as deemed necessary for additional input on impacts to development goals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria for Evaluation of Concept Notes** | **Points** |
| Technical merit of research design and methods | 25 |
| Relevance to <<XXXX>> Strategy, <<PROJECT NAME>> Objectives, and <<XXXXagency>>Mission Priorities | 20 |
| Strength of collaboration and partners | 20 |
| Relevance of anticipated outputs and outcomes | 15 |
| Capacity-building investments relationship to institutional and <<XXXXagency>>Mission priorities | 10 |
| Contribution of outputs to US and in-country <<XXXX>>communities | 5 |
| Cost-effectiveness and distribution of funds among partners | 5 |

Concept Note scores will be used to assist the ME and Advisory Committee in selection of funded projects with approval of the <<agency>> representative. However, the <<PROJECT NAME>> is selecting a portfolio of research to address the full scope of <<PROJECT NAME>> priorities, and it reserves the right to make project selections based both on proposal score and portfolio needs. Applicants are also advised that the ME, following advice from the Advisory Committee and <<XXXXagency>>, may request changes to concept notes for full proposal and thereafter at any time based on changing priorities and needs of <<XXXXagency>>. Such changes may include bringing in new partners, additional research activities, modified activities, or removal of activities. The <<PROJECT NAME>> reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The <<PROJECT NAME>> also reserves the right to request modifications to proposals to meet overall program needs – such modification requests will be made under mutual cooperation. However, refusal of modification requests may cause the application to be rejected or activities to be terminated.

# SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Concept notes are due MONTH DATE, 20XX, at 5:00 PM CT in the US, using the web link WEBADDRESS.

# GUIDELINES FOR FULL PROPOSALS (subject to revision)

For those Concept Notes selected for Full Proposal submission, the PIs will be contacted to submit the necessary documents. Full proposals must be submitted through the online XXXX system and applicants will receive full information at that time, including any revisions to the information below. This information is given to ensure that Concept Note applicants are aware of the information and details required at the full proposal stage.

**Full Proposals must not be more than 15 pages in length**, using letter-sized paper (8.5” x 11”) single spaced with one-inch (2.54 cm) margins in Times New Roman 12-point font. On each page, the page number and the name of the lead institution must be placed in the header. Full Proposals must be written in English and submitted as a single PDF document, except for the budget, which must be provided in a separate file in unprotected Microsoft XLS or XLSX format using the provided Full Proposal Budget Template. Detailed instructions on technical and budget preparation can be downloaded from WEBADDRESS and submission must be completed using the XXXX system link provided to PIs of selected Concept Notes. The total length of 15 pages excludes the following sections: cover page, table of contents, acronyms, executive summary, references, and the appendices. The budget must be submitted in a separate unprotected Microsoft XLS or XLSX file using the template provided. The outline below must be followed.

# BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The Full Proposal budget must follow the format in the template (available at WEBADDRESS with separate tabs for each USAID-based Fiscal Year of the project. Enter values in the separate tabs for each Fiscal Year of the project. The project totals on the Summary tab are calculated by formulas included in the template. Each table contains the information for funding for all partners (one column per partner) in a given fiscal year according to the budget classifications.

A budget justification must indicate how each of the main budget lines is allocated over time and across partners. Refer to the Budget Justification Instructions at WEBADDRESS.

Total project costs must not exceed US $XXX,XXX, including indirect costs.

# TABLE 2: OUTLINE FOR FULL PROPOSAL

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Description** |
| 1. Cover Page | Area of Inquiry 1 and Project Title  PI, Co-PI(s) names, titles, departments, institutions, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers  Research themes (keywords)  Research country focus (where the research will be conducted)  Project length (months, maximum 47)  Total budget requested (in US dollars) |
| 1. Table of Contents |  |
| 1. Acronyms |  |
| 1. Executive Summary | 1 page maximum (does not count against total page limit) |
| 1. Research Plan | Background and context (especially describe previous research and rationale for proposed research)  Justification for research country focus in terms or research objectives and hypothesis  Research design and methods  HICD approach, including non-student training, proposed project meetings, training sessions, or workshops  Linkages with other initiatives and programs  Expected outputs and potential for scaling of those outputs Describe dual benefits to US (if any) |
| 1. Project Management | Qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of each team member |
| 1. Work Plan | A detailed work plan by fiscal year for all key activities. Indicate the what, when, by whom, and where of these activities. |
| 1. Data Management Plan | Detailed description of types of data, samples, physical collections, software, curriculum materials, and other materials expected to be produced; standards to be used for data and metadata format and content (where existing standards are absent or deemed inadequate, this should be documented along with any proposed solutions or remedies); and plans for archiving data, samples, and other research products, and for preservation of access. |
| 1. Budget Narrative | Detailed budget narrative that properly explains all the project costs |
| 1. Budget | Use Excel Full Proposal budget template |
| **Appendices** |  |
| 1. References | Use a consistent style to format references that is typical for the discipline |
| 1. PI Qualification | Curriculum vitae (CV) of the PI (maximum 2 pages) |
| 1. Collaborator Qualifications | Curriculum vitae (CV) of the co-PIs (maximum 2 pages each PI) |
| 1. Letters of Interest | Letters of Interest for all co-PIs and collaborating institutions (maximum 1 page each) |
| 1. Conflicts of Interest | Indicate any potential Conflicts of Interest |
| 1. Current and Pending Awards | All current and pending awards, including this proposal. |

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

The ME, the Advisory Committee, and the <<agency>> representative will evaluate the full proposals. The Advisory Committee includes a US industry representative. Additional expert evaluation and industry input may be sought during the evaluation process.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria for evaluation for Full Proposals** | **Points** |
| Technical merit of research design and methods | 25 |
| Relevance to <<XXXX>> Strategy, <<PROJECT NAME>> Objectives, and <<XXXX>> Mission Priorities | 20 |
| HICD investments, adherence to <<agency> guidelines, and relationship to Mission and Institutional priorities | 20 |
| Demonstrated capacity of lead institution to manage project | 10 |
| Incorporation of private sector collaborators | 5 |
| Distribution of funding across partners | 5 |
| Cost-effectiveness on use of funds | 5 |
| Contribution of outputs to US and global <<XXXX>> communities | 5 |

# submission deadline

Full proposals are due MONTH DATE, 2020, at 5:00 PM CT, using the web link WEBADDRESS.