Issuance Date:	**November 6, 2014**
RFA Clarification Questions Due:	**November 25, 2014** , **2:00P.M. (Local Time)**
Closing Date and Time for Application Submission:	**January 21, 2015 2:00P.M. (Local Time)**

Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) Number: RFA-514-14-000004

Lighting Excitement for Excellency in Reading Activity

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for an Assistance Agreement from organizations for funding to support an activity entitled "Lighting Excitement for Excellency in Reading." The authority for the RFA is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Description in Section I for a complete statement of goals and expected results.

While for-profit firms may participate, pursuant to 22 CFR 226.81, it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments such as cooperative agreements. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, that are related to the implementation of the program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (22 CFR 226, OMB Circular A-122 for non-profit organization, OMB Circular A-21 for universities), may be paid to the Recipient under this award.

Applicants under consideration for an award that have never received funding from USAID will be subject to a pre-award audit to determine fiscal responsibility, ensure adequacy of financial controls and establish an indirect cost rate.

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID intends to provide approximately $20,000,000 in total USAID funding to be allocated over the five (5) year period. USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Award will be made to that responsible applicant whose application best meets the requirements of this RFA and the selection criteria contained herein. Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

This RFA and any future amendments can be downloaded from http://www.grants.gov. Select "Find Grant Opportunities," then click on "Browse by Agency," and select the "U.S. Agency for International Development" and search for the RFA. In the event of an inconsistency between the documents comprising this RFA, it shall be resolved at the discretion of the Agreement Officer.

Applicants should also note that the documents listed in this RFA under "Useful References" are intended only as sources for background information that may be helpful to applicants, but are not a part of this RFA. All guidance included in this RFA takes precedence over any reference documents referred to in the RFA. Any clarification questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing to Eyole Luma via email at eluma@usaid.gov and Omar Trigo at otrigo@usaid.gov by the date listed above. If there are problems in downloading the RFA from the Internet, please contact the grants.gov help desk at 1.800.518.4726 or support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

For the purposes of this RFA, the term "Grant" is synonymous with "Cooperative Agreement"; "Grantee" is synonymous with "Recipient"; and "Grant Officer" is synonymous with "Agreement Officer".

The applicant must submit applications electronically to the following e-mail addresses: eluma@usaid.gov and otrigo@usaid.gov. Applicants are requested to submit both technical and cost portions of the application in separate parts.

Applications must be received by the closing date and time indicated at the top of this cover letter. Late applications will not be considered for award. Applications must be directly responsive to the terms and conditions of this RFA. Telegraphic or fax applications (entire proposal) are not authorized for this RFA and will not be accepted.

Thank you for your interest in this USAID/Dominican Republic program.

Sincerely,

Charis Nastoff
Agreement Officer

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SECTION I - FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A.   BACKGROUND

Lighting Excitement for Excellency in Reading (LEER) is a five year activity with the overall objective of increasing the reading skills of students in targeted areas by supporting sustainable best practices in education in the Dominican Republic. The activity will improve reading skills of approximately 200,000 primary school students in targeted poor neighborhoods through improved instruction and the use of traditional and supplemental reading activities. Reading will also be improved through the creation of school environments that are inclusive, safe, tolerant, and conducive to academic achievement for all students, and an increase in the availability of materials and training that promote tolerance, respect for gender, and that address students with special needs.

A.1   Development Challenge

The provision of a quality public education is one of the Dominican Republic's most fundamental challenges. Considerable research shows that low primary school completion and attainment rates and low secondary school enrollment rates are significant risk factors for participation in gangs and drug trafficking. Very few young Dominicans have the educational levels needed to allow them to enter the workforce: in 2011, Dominican Ministry of Education (MOE) statistics revealed that only 71% of boys and 80% of girls finished primary school. Even more alarming, only 39% of boys and 55% of girls completed secondary school. In terms of student achievement outcomes, the Dominican Republic's education outcomes are well below the expected level for a middle-income country. The 2006 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that only 26 percent of Dominican students in mathematics, 46 percent in reading, and 50 percent in science achieved a level one, the minimum standard of learning that every student should achieve. The average educational achievement for girls is higher than boys. As a result of lower education levels, male young people are disproportionately likely to be illiterate, constituting between 59 and 69 percent of those unable to read and write, respectively, depending on the age group[1].

Although 86 percent of Dominican teachers have the necessary certifications to teach, a rate higher than in countries like Ecuador and Costa Rica, they have not achieved similar education results[2]. Results from a recent teachers' examination to fill vacant positions revealed that almost 60% of the teachers that took the test failed. A study (Gonzalez, Gonzalez, Tapia, and Dominguez 2007) showed that mathematics teachers in selected schools understood only 42 percent of the material they were supposed to be teaching. Although this may not be a representative sample, it does indicate serious problems with teacher training, and is consistent with the finding that there is little difference between student performance in the public and private schools. Time on task is another serious issue. In the Dominican Republic, the typical school day is only 2 hours and 40 minutes long, and although, by law students should receive 1,000 hours of class per year, in reality they only receive 500. In public schools with 500 students or more (accounting for 68 percent of total public school enrollment), the student-teacher ratio can reach as high as 78:1. Such overcrowding severely hampers teachers' capacity to address individual student needs. In addition to overcrowding, to date, poor learning outcomes, lack of classrooms, and two school sessions per day contribute to high repetition and drop-out rates, resulting in more delayed and over-age students in each successive grade. One spark of hope is the recently introduced *tanda extendida* (extended school day), by which the Dominican government plans to lengthen the school day—having classes from 8am to 4 pm— feed the children while in school, and build new classrooms to allow greater access to education.

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[1] Central Bank: National Labor Force Survey Database, 2nd Semester 2008
[2] *Informe sobre las Políticas Nacionales de Educación: Republica Dominicana*, OECD, 2008

Based on available statistics over the last few years, as a result of late enrollment, repetition, and temporary desertion, the percentage of students who are delayed (1 to 2 years behind the corresponding year) or are overage (2 years or more above the corresponding age for the class level) is high. In 2008–09, the proportion of these students increased with each subsequent grade, from 17.2 percent being behind and 4.6 percent overage in first grade, to 19.6 percent remaining behind and 10.6 percent overage in the eighth grade. More than 40 percent of secondary students were either behind or overage for their corresponding grade level[3].

Aside from the actual physical classroom itself and teachers' abilities or lack thereof, the learning environment is also affected by entrenched attitudes and behaviors relating to gender roles and behavior. In a survey administered to 382 fifth to eighth grade students and teachers to discern a reference point on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors relating to school safety and gender-based violence, results revealed that 60.9% of students think it is "normal" for boys to be more aggressive than girls[4]. Almost 43% of students believe it is normal for students to be sexually aggressive with one another ("*que se molesten sexualmente entre si*"). Moreover, students have cited the following conditions indicating the insecurity in which they live: fights among peers, unwanted sexual propositions, unjust punishments, violence—physical, psychological, and/or sexual—perpetrated against the child, and antagonism between teachers and students. In order to improve the environment in which children learn, and by extension, their academic attainments, violence and school safety must be addressed.

Inclusiveness in education is also a serious problem in the Dominican Republic. Organizations supporting people with disabilities in the Dominican Republic state that education is their top priority. But many, if not most, schools in the Dominican Republic are not even physically accessible to students with special needs. Regular public school teachers are seldom trained in how to teach children who have special needs. Special needs students either attend special schools, or they do not attend school at all. A UNESCO study published in December 2012 reported that 70 percent of children with a disability are currently not in school.

A.2.   Relationship to USAID Policies and Strategies

The USAID Education Strategy 2011-2015 emphasizes the importance of education as the foundation of human development and as a catalyst of broad-based economic growth and democratic governance. This activity will support the strategy's Goal One, *"Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015"*. Activities will aim to increase the reading skills of children in primary schools and provide remedial reading for either in or out of school children. Implementer(s) must also take into consideration USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, addressing gender sensitivity and competency as part of Dominican education professionals' core professional development plans. Diversity and tolerance will be promoted and supported in all components of this activity[5]. Finally, the activity will support the USAID Disability Policy, providing training to teachers to identify children with special needs and to apply inclusive education methodologies.

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[3] MINERD. (2010). *Boletín de indicadores: Año lectivo 2008–2009*.
[4] Safe Schools internal report (unpublished), Effective Schools Program, Dominican Republic, PUCMM, 2013
[5] USAID's LGBT Vision for Action: Promoting and Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals is an important reference that can be found at the following website: http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1874/LGBT%20Vision.pdf

A.3. Relationship to USAID/DR Country Development Cooperation Strategy and Other U.S. Government Programs and Geographic Focus

This activity will support the USAID/Dominican Republic FY 2014-2018 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), Development Objective 1 (DO 1): "Crime Prevention Strengthened"[6]. The USAID/DR CDCS Results Framework is presented in Annex 1 to this document. Under DO 1, USAID is pursuing a tripartite approach to crime prevention in the Dominican Republic. The various activities in the portfolio aim at reducing crime by 1) working with at-risk youth in the country's poorest, most violent, and most densely populated urban areas; 2) improving reading skills of primary school students and children in targeted poor neighborhoods (the focus of activities under this activity) through the use of traditional and supplemental reading activities; or 3) implementing systemic reforms to the criminal justice system. The LEER activity will support Intermediate Result (IR) 1.2, "*Increased Reading Skills of Students in Targeted Areas"*. In all supported activities, USAID will promote inclusiveness of special needs students, as well as focus on addressing gender concerns, such as violence against girls, boys' learning achievement, gender stereotyping, and intolerant behavior, such as bullying. Gender concerns in education will also focus on addressing issues related to higher boy drop-out rates and their poorer academic performance. The logical framework for IR 1.2 is contained in Annex 1.

Activities will be geographically focused in the urban corridor (Duarte Highway Corridor – see map in Annex 2), which runs from Santo Domingo north to Puerto Plata. It includes six of the nation's 32 provinces, 70 percent of the Dominican population, and 63 percent of youth. The cities where crime is the highest in the Dominican Republic all lie within this Duarte Highway Corridor. USAID has experience working in this corridor in education, democracy, governance, disaster assistance, and at-risk youth programming. USAID's At-Risk Youth (ARY) program, *Alerta Joven*, works in the Duarte Highway Corridor and has a target population, by priority, of youth aged 11-17 with interventions focused on education and health, and those aged 18-24 with interventions focused on workforce development, education, and health. Activities will not be restricted only to *Alerta Joven* communities, but implementers are required to coordinate with the education work of *Alerta Joven* whenever possible and relevant.

A.4. Relationship to Partner Country, Local Stakeholders, and Other Donor Programs

This is an opportune moment to invest in education in the Dominican Republic due to the recent commitment demonstrated by the Government of the Dominican Republic (GoDR) to greatly increase the priority it places on education. The increases in education funding made by the GoDR in the last two years are unprecedented, with the highest levels of education funding in more than twenty years as a percentage of GDP, as a percentage of government spending, and in per capita student funding. Over the last several years, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has taken a number of critical steps toward improving public education. For example, since 2010 the MOE has worked with funds from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as well as national funds to increase the number of classrooms in the country, lengthen the school day, and improve learning in math and language in the first four years of primary school (the latter being the focus area of USAID-supported efforts)[7]. All of these actions are necessary for sustaining access to and quality of education over the long term. The commitment shown by the GoDR to devote urgently needed national resources to education is a necessary first step toward increased sustainability in the sector, with the establishment of clear quality standards as an additional essential element which must be addressed going forward. Activities will support further definition of standards of quality in the delivery of training and support to teachers and students in the early grades of

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[6] USAID/DR's CDCS can be found at the following website:
http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/Dominican%20Republic%20CDCS_public%20version_FY14_FY18.pdf
[7] *"Programa de Apoyo al Plan Decenal de Educacion MINERD-BID, Informe del Ejecutor"*, Octubre 2013, datos del Banco Central de República Dominicana y del Ministerio de Hacienda, elaboración con datos del Ministerio de Hacienda y de la Oficina Nacional de Estadística

reading, bringing an added focus on education for special needs children who are often left out of discussions about what is needed to make education available to all.

Both public and private sector partners have taken important steps in the last few years to promote transparency, accountability, and concrete improvements in the quality of education. The clearest example of this is the action recently taken by Dominican civil society toward ensuring sustainability of commitment to improving education. The Coalition for a Dignified Education is a civil society initiative launched in 2011 to address critical educational issues. The Coalition includes more than 200 civil society organizations that demanded that the government comply with the Education Law, which required an increase from two point five to four percent of GDP be invested in education. The Coalition was able to obtain a public commitment from each of the candidates in the May 2012 Presidential election to comply with the four percent requirement and as noted above, the increased funding is now a reality. In response to the Coalition's work to mobilize education stakeholders, in October 2012 the Ministry of Education launched the "*Iniciativa Dominicana por una Educacion de Calidiad*" (Dominican Initiative for a Quality Education - IDEC). IDEC is a multi-sectoral initiative led by the Ministry of Education, created as a space for dialogue and consensus between the GoDR, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector. Its stated objective is to identify priority areas for attention and action in the education sector, to ensure that the GoDR's increased investment in education achieves increased levels of quality. IDEC established ten working groups based around priority themes and actions needed to help the MOE advance its educational plans through 2016. IDEC has also created a monitoring system to track progress toward established goals.

In August 2013, the Dominican Republic's Office of the Presidency also launched the "Education Pact" or *Pacto Educativo*, as a mechanism for obtaining consensus through broad consultation with civil society on key goals in the education sector. The Education Pact is, in many ways, an outgrowth of IDEC's work, turning many of the proposals identified and discussed under IDEC into agreed-upon areas for action. The Education Pact's foundational document lays out specific areas of education for wide public discussion and signals the GoDR's commitment to address issues ranging from access to and quality of primary schooling to teacher preparation, vocational training and university-level education[8]. The Education Pact's website provides updates on public consultations held, invites comments for posting on the site, and posts specific action proposals for different sub-sectors of education under discussion and debate[9].

In addition to participation in IDEC, several large donors are working in education. In 2010, the IDB approved a four-year $50 million loan (with $10 million in local counterpart contribution) to the GoDR in support of the Ministry of Education's Ten Year Education Plan[10]. One component of the loan supports in-service teacher training, classroom support, didactic materials, and achievement testing for grades Kindergarten-3 in language and mathematics in 667 schools of more than 500 students each. A new IDB loan is in preparation in 2014 with planned funding of $50 million plus GoDR counterpart funding. Teacher training interventions will continue to be one component of the loan, an area which will directly complement activities under this activity.

A.5. USAID Basic Education Activities in the Dominican Republic

USAID/DR began its emphasis on early grade reading in the Dominican Republic in 2002, with its participation in the USAID Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) program. CETT, which ended in 2010, was a USAID regional program functioning in three regions and 14 countries in Latin

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[8] See document entitled "*Pacto Nacional para la Reforma Educativa*", at http://pactoeducativo.do/documentos/

[9] See website www.pactoeducativo.do for a copy of the Pact and public consultation documents.

[10] "*Programa de Apoyo al Plan Decenal de Educación MINERD-BID, Informe del Ejecutor", Octubre 2013*

America and the Caribbean. In 2006, USAID/DR added an additional program called the "Activities to improve the Effectiveness of Teachers and Local Governance" activity, commonly referred to as the TEF project. TEF was designed to improve learning in mathematics in the first cycle of primary education (1st – 4th grades) and to complement the CETT program by including a literacy component for the fourth grade. A school management component was integrated as part of this program in the second year of implementation. The TEF program ended in 2009.

During that same period of time, in 2006, USAID and the American Chamber of Commerce in the Dominican Republic (AMCHAMDR) entered into an agreement to improve the quality of public education by engaging private sector businesses in public-private partnerships. The purpose of the Basic Education Program (BEP) was to utilize strategic alliances between the public and private sectors, with AMCHAMDR's administrative and technical assistance, to improve the quality of basic education in 139 public schools. The Program exceeded the target number of schools, and instead provided assistance to 156 schools, benefited 30,337 students and 1880 teachers and 81 school directors, and engaged 91 private sector businesses. Additionally, more than 30,000 students received textbooks; and the program leveraged approximately $17 million in resources. During the execution of the Agreement, which formally ended in September 2014, AMCHAMDR signed alliances with different institutions (public and private), including the Ministry of Education and EDUCA, to promote commitment to education. During 2013 – 2014 school year, BEP advanced the "abcdespañol Program" in 55 schools, with important results on literacy. Initially the intervention was planned for the 1st and 2nd grades, but the deficiencies identified in conjunction with the schools' teaching staff, forced them to extend the reach up to the 5th grade. At the end of implementation that school year, more than 40 schools showed interest in continuing this methodology with the support of their communities, because of the results attained.

The Effective Schools Program (ESP) began in 2009 and will end in April 2015. The components of the program are: 1) Education/School Management; 2) In-Service Teacher Training in Literacy and Mathematics and Curriculum Development; and 3) Monitoring and Evaluation. ESP activity components emphasize measurement of results through student achievement testing; teacher training and classroom support (including observation and assessment); and training and support for school administrators and school management structures that include parents.   The Safe Schools activity was introduced in 2013 as part of the ESP program to develop and deliver trainings for teachers, students, parents, and other members of the educational community, so that they jointly learn to define fair processes in dealing with school-related gender-based violence and to put these processes into action to create a safe learning environment. Also in 2013, USAID added a component called "Inclusive Learning Opportunities for Children with Disabilities" to the ESP. The overarching objective of the component was to work in 100 ESP schools to build the capacity of public schools in the Dominican Republic to detect, diagnose, treat, and support school-aged children with disabilities.

A.6.   USAID Education Priorities Going Forward

Under this activity, USAID wishes to leverage the success of ESP, including components related to inclusiveness and safe schools, and expand it both in scope and quality, focusing on improved reading, to align with the USAID Education Strategy Goal 1. In 2011, the Dominican MOE began a concerted effort to support early grade reading and mathematics through its "Policy to Improve Student Learning in the First Cycle of Primary School in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics"[11]. While only one full year of implementation has taken place and there has been no formal evaluation yet, an IDB study in 2013 highlights the Effective Schools Program's learning efficiency and effectiveness vis-à-vis other

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[11] Actions taken to implement the MOE's "*Politica de Mejoramiento de los Aprendizajes de los estudiantes del primer ciclo en Lectoescritura y Matematica*" are described in the document "*Linea Base para la Sistematizacion, Componente de Apoyo a los Aprendizajes en Lectoescritura y Matematica", Programa de apoyo al Plan Decenal de Educacion, MINERD-BID", 2013*

institutional approaches[12]. The IDB report recommends that the MOE develop a basic model going forward that supports activities found by global education research to have an impact on learning. The IDB defines these key activities as: <u>teacher training, classroom support for teachers, provision of learning materials for both students and teachers, and evaluation—both formative student assessment in the classroom practiced by teachers and baseline and end-of-year achievement testing</u>.

There is a great need to establish performance standards and a baseline for student performance, and to create a system of monitoring to evaluate performance and results achieved for all of the implementing institutions. Only the ESP has developed the required tools, materials and approaches that the IDB report recommends, and the IDB has found the ESP methodology to be the most rigorous of the three implementing institutions, with all critical areas covered. There will be continued benefit if ESP tools and approaches can be used to establish standards that would be applied to any organization working to improve reading, writing, and math in early grades. The work of this activity will be to support adoption of the successful ESP methods as standards that can be used to improve early grade reading and math nationwide, as the MOE continues to move ahead in meeting the needs for quality primary school education in the Dominican Republic. Because the USAID global priority for education is on reading, USAID will focus its attention on reading and writing going forward, and seek non-USAID support for continued development of mathematics learning. In order to promote sustainability, there is a 15% cost share requirement under this agreement.

B.   PROGRAM OBJECTIVE AND RESULTS

The overall objective of this program is to increase the reading skills of 200,000 students in targeted areas by supporting sustainable best practices in education in the Dominican Republic. There are two main purposes: (1) to *improve the quality of basic reading instruction* and (2) to *create a supportive learning environment for students* in CDCS targeted areas. In order to achieve these goals, the activity will focus its efforts on four results:

> **Result 1:** Student reading outcomes improved in targeted areas
> **Result 2:** Supportive learning environment created for students in targeted areas
> **Result 3:** Sustainable partnerships supporting USAID-targeted education interventions strengthened or created
> **Result 4:** Knowledge of effective reading instruction and education activities generated and shared with key stakeholders

Cutting across all results, USAID will promote inclusiveness of special needs students, as well as focus on addressing gender concerns, such as violence against girls, boys' learning achievement, gender stereotyping, and intolerant behavior, such as bullying. Gender concerns in education will also focus on addressing issues related to higher boy drop-out rates and their poorer academic performance.

C.   GENERAL PROGRAM PARAMETERS

The recipient shall consider the following parameters in undertaking this activity:

    C.1   Geographic coordination – As stated above, while this activity will not be restricted only to *Alerta Joven* communities, the implementer is required to coordinate with the education work of with *Alerta Joven* whenever possible and relevant. *Alerta Joven* communities have challenging urban at-

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[12] Op. cit. MINERD-BID, 2013, page 38

risk youth issues, credible organizations with tested interventions, and a network of community/private sector support that may be useful and appropriate for this activity. Annex 2 contains a list of *Alerta Joven* areas.

C.2   Build on successful ESP methodologies - Teaching and learning materials and successful teaching methodologies developed under ESP for grades 1-4 shall be used as the basis for this activity. Test results show that up to four times as many students whose teachers received one to three years of USAID training and materials support, performed at or above the minimum standard, as compared to students whose teachers were not trained through this USAID-funded program[13]. The offeror must also demonstrate knowledge of evolving global best practice in early grade reading. In addition, coverage of reading interventions will be expanded to include up to sixth grade. Activity design must employ an integral package of interventions to include the following: teacher training; classroom support and mentoring for teachers; provision of learning materials for both students and teachers; increased instructional time for reading; and evaluation (both formative student assessment in the classroom practiced by teachers and baseline and end-of-year achievement testing to measure results).

C.3   Build on current momentum in education, including private sector involvement – This activity will continue to support and expand successful ESP methodologies for early grade reading, extending coverage of reading interventions to include up to the sixth grade level. Because reading is now the main basic education priority for USAID globally, the implementer is encouraged to seek non-USAID support for other important interventions such as mathematics and school management, for example, that were previously included under the ESP. This support may come from the GoDR through public financing for education, or through private sector contributions in support of education. Building on current momentum in education also includes promoting the capacity of local Dominican organizations to take active leadership roles in LEER's implementation.

From 2009 to 2012, USAID/DR funded a $1 million grant to the Major League Baseball (MLB) – Dominican Development Alliance (DDA), which resulted in the leveraging of over US$1.9 million from MLB teams, players and fans as well as various members of the DDA. The MLB has expressed interest in possibly beginning a new phase of cooperation with USAID, which the recipient shall explore for potential support to LEER. The offeror must demonstrate in its technical approach how it will involve Dominican organizations to build country capacity to sustain LEER activities.

C.4   Promote inclusive education - The creation of school environments that are inclusive, safe, tolerant, and conducive to academic achievement for all students is an emphasis area of this activity. An increase in the availability of materials and training that promote tolerance and respect and that address students with special needs is another targeted outcome. All classroom reading interventions must not only ensure inclusion of children with disabilities, but also sensitize educators to inclusion challenges and approaches[14]. Private sector partnerships to support these focus areas of the program are highly encouraged.

C.5   Promote gender equality in school access and learning outcomes - This activity shall address issues of equity in curriculum and teaching materials, as well as teaching practices, to ensure equitable education outcomes for both boys and girls. Materials must be developed and reviewed through a gender lens; this includes ensuring that curricular content and illustrations promote inclusion and do not

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[13] USAID/DR Portfolio Mid-Term Performance Evaluation Basic Education Program, Annex B: Analysis of the Program Database/*Análisis de las Bases de Datos del Programa,* AMEX International & DevTech Systems, Inc., January 2013, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacx192.pdf and http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACU985.pdf

[14] Annex 3 contains a report by the Ministry of Education's Direction of Special Education with information from a recent school survey on special needs students: *"Informe preliminar sobre levantamiento de la información de estudiantes con discapacidad en las escuelas eficaces, octubre 2013"*

reinforce gender stereotypes. Moreover, bullying and harassment in schools due to gender identity are issues that can be addressed in line with promoting a safe learning environment for children.[15]

D   PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS

D.1   RESULT ONE

Result 1: Student reading outcomes improved in targeted areas

Under this result, USAID wishes to leverage the success of the Effective Schools Program and expand it both in scope and quality, focusing on improved reading. The ESP program has generated learning gains among participating students that are significantly greater than non-participants, and garnered support from the private sector as well as the GoDR[16]. This activity will utilize the best practices learned under ESP to develop activities that continue to improve the quality of reading instruction.   The activity will also support the provision of adequate learning and reading support materials, including decodable readers for first grade and leveled readers for grades 1-6, for both students and teachers, to ensure that adequate materials exist to encourage reading development.

Also under this result, USAID will support development of evidence-based supplemental reading programs. These supplemental reading programs will be flexible enough to be administered by a trained teacher, technician, NGO trainer, or aide as an after-school program, a remedial reading program during regular school hours, or during an extended after-school program. The objective is to improve students' basic reading skills. This may include support to young people in and/or out of school who are unable to read. This will be discussed further under Requirement 1.3 below.

Requirement 1.1: Primary grade reading instruction improved
Under this requirement, the recipient shall support expansion of proven approaches to improve early grade reading in the Dominican Republic. The ESP experience must be the starting point for the proposed approach, given that it has been acknowledged as the most robust methodology currently being practiced in the DR and has shown learning gains among students over time. While the ESP must be the point of departure for designing this activity, the offeror is encouraged to include innovation, experience, and best practices learned in the education sector both in the Dominican Republic and globally in its proposed approach under this requirement. The recipient will be required to work in partnership with the MOE at national and local levels, providing technical support as needed to strengthen the MOE's capacity to support early grade reading.

The offeror shall describe in its application how it will improve primary grade reading instruction for students in at least 600 schools. The ESP covered grades 1-4. Under this activity, the offeror shall design interventions that extend support for reading to include grades 5 and 6, so that students moving on to higher grades continue to receive high quality reading support from teachers who are trained in successful pedagogical approaches, and results can be measured to see whether improvements are being maintained. In order to take advantage of the opportunity to study the long-term effects of ESP methodology on the schools where ESP has been working, at least 200 of the 600 schools must be schools previously covered by ESP. The offeror must describe in its application how it will specifically address gender concerns such

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[15] USAID's LGBT Vision for Action: Promoting and Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals can be found at the following website: http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1874/LGBT%20Vision.pdf.
[16] USAID/DR Portfolio Mid-Term Performance Evaluation Basic Education Program, Annex B: Analysis of the Program Database/*Análisis de las Bases de Datos del Programa,* AMEX International & DevTech Systems, Inc., January 2013http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacx192.pdf

as boys' higher drop-out and lower learning achievement, gender stereotyping, and intolerant behavior, such as bullying.

In addition, USAID will support the integration of technology into schools and classrooms to strengthen student learning, with a focus on reading. The recipient shall integrate information technology (IT) into this activity to support the goals of improving student reading and/or creating a supportive learning environment for all students. Technology integration could be an ideal activity for cultivating private sector partnerships (supportive partnerships will be discussed further under Result 3 below). A number of private sector organizations in the Dominican Republic are working with the MOE to train teachers to use technology in their teaching, for example. Some are working with community technology centers, training facilitators to improve IT knowledge and skills of children and youth in their communities. IT is also used in many countries to supplement face-to-face teacher training, as a vehicle for delivering additional support and continuous learning from a distance. The offeror shall identify opportunities to assist students and teachers with technology usage at the primary school level, and propose how technology will be integrated into efforts to improve student reading supported by this activity. The offeror shall also include in its proposed approach the potential for using technology in innovative ways to reach children with special needs with the goal of improving their overall learning and more specifically their reading skills.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Building on best practice approaches of the ESP methodology to improve reading
2) Working in 600 schools that fall within the Duarte Corridor, of which no fewer than 200 must be former ESP schools so that continued progress of students can be tracked
3) Training grades 1-6 teachers in best practices to improve early grade reading skills, active child-centered learning approaches and classroom management
4) Training teachers to practice inclusive education and gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches, addressing any identified gender issues with targeted interventions
5) Training and mentoring pedagogical advisors and school directors to assist grades 1-6 teachers with in-classroom reading practices, including promotion of gender sensitivity and inclusion
6) Training grades 1-6 teachers in use of continuous assessment of students' reading performance
7) Providing classroom accompaniment (i.e., coaching and mentoring) and support for grades 1-6 teachers and pedagogical advisors
8) Supporting the Ministry of Education when there are curriculum revisions and/or updates for early grade reading
9) Supporting the Ministry of Education to develop approaches and materials in reading for grades 5 and 6
10) Working with the Ministry of Education on policy issues such as support for early grade learning, increased instructional time for reading and structured and effective use of the extended school day hours
11) Measuring improved performance of teachers through classroom observations
12) Measuring teacher content knowledge improvements
13) Conducting baseline and end-of-year student achievement testing of reading in grades 1-6 in activity schools
14) Utilizing IT to creatively deliver reading lessons to children supported by this activity, including those with special needs
15) Utilizing IT, electronic equipment, and interactive technology to provide teacher professional development courses and/or mentoring and coaching in reading instruction
16) Identifying private sector partnerships, as relevant and possible, to add value to proposed IT interventions supporting reading

Standards:
- Targeted students improve reading skills as a result of improved reading instruction
- Targeted teachers trained and mentored to improve reading in grades 1-6
- Targeted teachers receive ongoing classroom-level support
- MOE officials receive technical support and training as needed to serve leadership roles in activities
- Baseline and end-of-year testing conducted annually to measure reading achievement in grades 1-6
- Gender issues in primary schools addressed through targeted interventions
- IT integration approach designed that is suitable for use and has taken into account the Dominican context, clearly supporting improved reading achievement of targeted primary school students and children with disabilities.
- Partnerships and collaboration created with other organizations working in the Dominican Republic with IT in education

Requirement 1.2: Sufficient didactic reading materials and guides received by students and teachers

Student and teacher support materials are critical for creating the environment necessary for early grade reading to take place.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Providing high quality learning materials focused on reading for both students and teachers for grades 1-4 (e.g., decodable and leveled readers, textbooks, workbooks, teacher guides, etc.). The ratio for decodable and levels readers should be at least 10 titles/child.
2) Developing and distributing new learning materials for both students and teachers to support reading for grades 5 and 6
3) Creating or adapting and distributing to schools other supportive learning materials such as posters, big books, leveled readers, etc.
4) Providing classroom libraries to schools supported by the activity
5) Ensuring that all materials are reviewed so that they are free of gender bias and reflect inclusive education principles and tolerance in both content and illustrations

Standards:
- Materials provided to and in use by both students and teachers to support reading in grades 1-6. (Materials to be used include classroom libraries and support materials that have the potential to create interest and excitement around the topic of reading and help students to improve their reading levels.)
- Clear plan describing how and when materials will be distributed to activity schools
- Clear plan describing what materials will be used for home reading practice
- Clear plan presented for reviewing all materials to ensure that they are free of gender or other biases, promoting tolerance and inclusion.

Requirement 1.3: Supplementary reading programs created and implemented in at least 200 schools to benefit 6,000 children per year

Under this requirement, USAID will support evidence-based supplemental reading programs focused in, but not exclusive to, areas targeted by the at-risk youth *Alerta Joven* Program. There is an opportunity at present for supplemental programs, with the gradual introduction of an extended school day in some

schools in the country. The MOE's goal is to have 80% of schools operating with a full school day by 2016, although this may be ambitious given the current delays reported by the IDB in infrastructure construction. Currently, many schools under the extended school day are using the additional hours as they see fit, without standardized guidance from the MOE. Using some of the additional hours to enrich reading could be a way to provide students with the time-on-task they are not currently getting given the short school day, and could provide an opportunity to open the school to bringing in out-of-school students. It would also be a means to assist students with special needs who need extra support, time with teachers or tutors, and/or adapted methodologies. Some of the current supplemental reading programs in the Dominican Republic bring out-of-school students into schools with the goal of transitioning them back into the formal system after a determined period of time[17].

Under this requirement, the offeror shall design and implement supplemental reading programs that will be flexible enough to be administered by a trained teacher, technician, NGO trainer, or aide. The objective is to improve basic reading skills of targeted children at primary school grade level (even though they may be over-aged children), creating the potential to meet the needs of both those who are in and out of school. Offerors are encouraged to propose flexible and creative programs with improving reading skills as the goal. Programs shall build on best practices in reading instruction and take into account the needs of at-risk children in poor communities who are currently not reaching desired levels of reading competence and would benefit from extra attention and support. Targets for student progress and corresponding appropriate tools for assessment must be established, i.e., the reading fluency of beneficiary children within and without the formal school must be assessed. Targets for student progress and corresponding appropriate tools for assessment must be established. Requirement 2.4 below requires the recipient to address inclusive learning opportunities for children with special needs. The offeror shall consider in its proposed approach how special needs children can benefit from the supplementary programs designed under this requirement. The approach must describe specific interventions and support systems that the recipient will use to improve reading of selected special needs children (more detail on the special needs target group is provided in Requirement 2.4 below).

The offeror must work in at least 200 schools in the Duarte Corridor, estimating approximately 30 children per supplementary session per school, for a *minimum* of 6,000 beneficiaries each year of the activity. Priority for selection of schools should be given whenever possible to schools in areas targeted by the USAID-supported *Alerta Joven* program (a list of geographic areas where *Alerta Joven* works is included in Annex 2), to enable collaboration with that program and offer further support to at-risk children who have a variety of academic, social, and economic needs. Supplemental reading support may be offered as an after-school tutoring program, a remedial reading program during regular school hours, or as part of an extended school day program. A possible opportunity exists to enrich use of extended school day hours to provide extra reading support for children; this would require working closely with schools and relevant local MOE personnel, as needed, to design and implement such supplemental programs. The recipient must include in its proposed design a description of how it will measure reading progress of all children participating in the supported supplemental reading programs.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Designing and implementing flexible, research-based supplemental reading programs to reach at least 200 schools and 6,000 children per year focused on, but not exclusive to, areas targeted by the *Alerta Joven* program
2) Identifying and designing supplementary reading opportunities to meet the needs of children at the primary level in the formal schools and/or out-of-school children
3) Identifying and designing supplementary reading opportunities to increase inclusion of children with special needs

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[17] An example is the *Espacios para Crecer* program which also receives support from the USAID *Alerta Joven* program.

4) Training teachers, technicians, NGO trainers, and/or aides to implement supplemental reading programs
5) Designing a system of performance measurement and monitoring and evaluation for children, to measure reading gains and/or re-entry into school

Standards:
- Supplemental reading programs in place in 200 schools, reaching 6,000 children
- Proposed supplemental reading programs designed based on evidence-based best practice for improving reading
- Performance measurement and monitoring system to evaluate children's reading progress designed
- Supplementary reading sessions address needs of special needs children

D.2.   RESULT TWO

Result 2: Supportive learning environment created for students in targeted areas

Under this result, USAID wishes to ensure that Dominican primary schools have the conditions necessary for student learning to take place, emphasizing the key skill of reading. Activities must build upon lessons learned, and where applicable, expand programs that USAID has supported to improve school learning environments such as Safe Schools, parent involvement activities, and school inclusion efforts addressing special needs children. New elements, such as the use of technology to support classroom learning, will contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to learning. The emphasis under this result is to ensure that all students in targeted areas have access to quality education and that the MOE, parents, and communities have the necessary knowledge and tools to help primary school children learn to read. The result supports the creation of school environments that are inclusive, safe, tolerant, and conducive to academic achievement for all students. Activities will support an increase in the availability of materials and training that promotes tolerance, respect for gender, and that address students with special needs. Activities under this result will operate at various levels, working directly in schools and communities, and at higher policy levels by supporting civil society activities that increase engagement in education reform. Private sector partnerships for this area of the program will be cultivated.

Requirement 2.1: Community involvement in supporting early grade reading increased

This requirement aims to create a supportive learning environment for reading in targeted primary school students by involving both parents and the community in educational activities. Activities will focus on improving reading, and also on the broader need to create the conditions necessary for a safe and tolerant learning environment in primary schools. The offeror shall make explicit the rationale and evidence base for design of its community and parental involvement approach, demonstrating how proposed activities will lead to improved early grade reading. The recipient is required to conduct community involvement activities in all participating schools covered by the activity.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Training parent associations and school management committees to support evidence-based school-level reading activities and to generate demand for responsive, quality education
2) Increasing parental involvement in supporting children's reading through work with parent groups in schools

3) Increasing parental awareness of gender and issues of tolerance in education so that learning can take place
4) Stimulating community involvement in and support for reading
5) Increasing the number of parent and community groups supporting supplementary student reading programs

Standards:
- Clear plan developed for working with parents and communities to support student reading
- Specific activities or events identified to increase parental and community awareness of and support for the importance of children learning to read in the early grades of primary school
- Parents and communities trained to increase their knowledge of gender and tolerance issues in primary school education to support overall learning and reading in particular
- Communities and parents mobilized to support supplementary reading programs

Requirement 2.2: Stakeholders' engagement in education reform to improve reading supported

In order to achieve this activity's goal of improved early grade reading, it is necessary for USAID-supported education activities to maintain a high profile, drawing attention to the need to sustain quality improvements and best practices in reading that require GoDR and civil society leadership. For this reason, the recipient must be actively involved in public discussions and fora about how to improve early grade reading, as well as broader discussions that generate support for primary education in general. This requirement aims to support the high level of activity and momentum that has developed over the last several years in the education sector in support of increased national funding for education and reform at various levels. The commitment shown by the GoDR to devote urgently needed national resources to education is a necessary first step toward increased sustainability in the sector, with the establishment of clear quality standards as an additional essential element which must be addressed going forward. Activities under this requirement will support further definition of standards of quality in the delivery of training and support to students and teachers in the early grades of reading, bringing an added focus on special needs children who are often left out of discussions about what is needed to make education available to all. The education initiatives taken by both civil society and the GoDR provide the opportunity for this activity to contribute directly to priority areas established by Dominican civil society and the government, setting the stage for sustainability of reading gains when USAID's assistance is no longer available.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Supporting the IDEC coalition of civil society and private sector organizations and the Pacto Educativo to provide independent analysis and advocacy for education reform, focusing on reading as the core skill to be mastered in early grades
2) Strengthening MOE planning and teacher training capacity to be able to implement IDEC (or other appropriate civil society monitoring mechanism) recommendations with an emphasis on early grade reading
3) Providing technical support to MOE in key areas of education reform, e.g., strengthened early grade reading instruction, curriculum reform, teacher training policies, inclusive education and standards setting

Standards:
- Clear understanding demonstrated of current education reform efforts in the Dominican Republic with an emphasis on promoting the importance of early grade reading
- Opportunities identified for contributing to ongoing education policy discussions and promoting the importance of reading

- Clear strategy for engagement with IDEC (or other appropriate civil society monitoring mechanism) presented that describes how recipient will contribute to Pacto Educativo discussions, in particular those centered around improving early grade reading, and monitoring and evaluation efforts
- Specific technical areas identified for support to the MOE in implementing IDEC (or other appropriate civil society monitoring mechanism) recommendations for improving reading instruction

Requirement 2.3: Safe Schools activity expanded to address school security issues in 200 schools to benefit 4,000 children per year

As stated above, the overall objective of this activity is to increase the reading skills of students in targeted areas, supporting sustainable best practices in education and reading instruction in the Dominican Republic. While acknowledging reading improvement as the overarching goal to be achieved, USAID recognizes that precarious safety and security conditions in many schools in the country work against children's ability to learn and feel comfortable and safe in the school environment. For this reason, under this activity, USAID will support work to improve learning conditions for children in early grades by increasing the safety of their school environment and experience. This will allow them to be able to focus on the foundational skill of reading and fully benefit from this activity's efforts to improve reading outcomes. This is fully in line with the USAID Education Strategy's Goal 1, Result 1.1 "Improved Reading Instruction", particularly since there are strong gender elements associated with school safety and reducing barriers to learning[18].

Recognizing the prevalence of school safety and security issues in the Dominican Republic, USAID initiated a Safe Schools activity in 2013 under the ESP activity. This began with design of survey instruments and materials for teachers, students, and community members in a select number of communities in the ESP activity area. Surveys were conducted and training and activities began in the 2013-2014 school year in 91 pilot schools. Under this requirement, the recipient will capture the lessons learned under the pilot, make any needed revisions or adaptations to the program, and build upon its successes and lessons learned to expand it to reach a total of 200 schools. The offeror shall take into account relevant work by other organizations in the Dominican Republic and global best practices when considering how to modify the Safe Schools program as it expands to 200 schools and approximately 4,000 children. The ultimate goal is to provide the children in the Safe Schools program with the opportunity to improve their reading skills and benefit from improved quality of reading instruction and support by removing the insecurity of an unsafe environment.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Capturing lessons learned of the USAID-supported Safe Schools program and expanding it to 200 schools (4,000 children)
2) Using the Safe Schools training manual series "Abriendo Puertas" for students, teachers, and community members, and distributing required materials to all participating schools
3) Developing a monitoring and evaluation system that measures changes in knowledge, attitudes, or practices of the schools and communities as a result of the activity
4) Training teachers, other school personnel, parents, and community members on gender sensitivity and violence as part of Safe Schools
5) Setting up referral systems for victims of gender-based violence (GBV)

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[18] One of the illustrative examples to improve reading instruction under Goal 1, Result 1.1 is to "Address gender issues and reduce barriers that impact reading levels of girls and boys". http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacq946.pdf, page 11.

6) Creating an awareness campaign at the community level around issues of school security and creation of a safe environment for all children
7) Engaging the MOE and the private sector to explore funding for expansion of the Safe Schools activity

Standards:
- Plan presented for expanding Safe Schools activity to 200 schools, benefiting 4,000 children
- Gender sensitivity training conducted for all stakeholders participating in Safe Schools activities
- Training or workshops on school-based violence
- System designed and operating for monitoring and evaluating changes resulting from the Safe Schools program over time

Requirement 2.4: Inclusive learning opportunities for children with special needs created to benefit 1,000 children per year

The USAID Education Strategy clearly supports inclusion of learners with disabilities and special needs as a crosscutting issue that will be given serious attention, stating that:

> *"This strategy will emphasize inclusion in schooling of marginalized groups, with a focus on removing barriers to the inclusion of learners with disabilities, including the physical barriers to reaching education venues, pedagogical barriers, and the social exclusion that is a result of a society's negative attitudes towards disability."*[19]

In September 2013, USAID/DR added a component called "Inclusive Learning Opportunities for Children with Disabilities" to the ESP. The overarching objective of the component was to work in 100 ESP schools "to build the capacity of public schools in the Dominican Republic to detect, diagnose, treat, and support school-aged children with disabilities". One of the main objectives of the component was to create a model, jointly with the Ministry of Education staff, to identify disabilities in children attending public schools in the Dominican Republic and to make adequate referrals for professional diagnosis and treatment when possible. Activities include training of professionals, teachers, school personnel and community members to support children with special educational needs and design of inclusive strategies to give them better learning opportunities. The Inclusive Education component works closely with the MOE's Directorate of Special Education (DEE) for capacity building and preparation of materials to benefit children with special education needs, among other activities. Annex 3 contains a preliminary census of special needs students conducted by the MOE in late 2013; ESP work with the MOE to refine this information and develop a model for identifying needs is continuing.

USAID recognizes that the term "special needs" encompasses a wide range of issues, and that this activity will not be able to provide comprehensive services to all potential children identified. Following the overall objective of this activity to improve early grade reading, this requirement aims to achieve the following results:

1) The recipient shall work in 200 schools, using the lessons learned of the ESP inclusive education component and international best practice, *to identify and diagnose the needs* of children with learning challenges in those schools. The recipient shall continue working closely with the MOE (specifically the DEE), as was done in the ESP project, to refine models being developed for diagnosing different types of disabilities in the school-aged population. The goal is that the model being developed, refined, and field-tested under this activity will have the potential to be used nationwide.

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[19] USAID Education Strategy, February 2011, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacq946.pdf, page 17

2) The recipient shall work with the school, MOE, and community, as needed, to *create referral and support systems* in the targeted schools and local communities to address identified needs resulting from the applied diagnostics. The initial estimate used here is that there could be approximately 50 special needs children per school, for a total of 1,000 targeted children, whose particular support needs could be identified, and referrals provided, with the help of this activity. The creation of referral systems may include the need to involve parents and communities, to increase their knowledge of and support for issues of special needs children.

3) Some of the identified special needs children will be able to improve their learning if teachers and school support personnel learn how to modify their teaching styles to address particular learning challenges. The recipient shall *provide training to targeted teachers in the 200 schools both to identify disabilities, and to be able to make necessary curricular adaptations* for students when their needs are not so severe as to warrant special attention that the school is not equipped to provide. As an example, while a school may not be able to meet the needs of a child with severe cognitive dysfunction and might be able to assist only with referrals for specialized treatment, there may be children with dyslexia, mild autism, audio-visual difficulties, or mobility issues whose needs can be met if teachers and school support personnel are trained to make curricular adaptations to assist them. Early grade reading remains the targeted foundational skill: the recipient shall ensure that targeted teachers and school support personnel acquire skills to be able to adapt their teaching of reading to address issues of special needs children in their classrooms and schools.

The offeror's proposed approach to this requirement must demonstrate an understanding of DEE structures such as the *Centros de Recursos para la Atención a la Diversidad (CAD)* and *"aulas de apoyo"*. The approach shall describe how the recipient will make use of structures and personnel that are in place such as the CADs and trained special education specialists, linking these resources directly with schools and communities so that special needs children in activity schools receive proper diagnosis and teachers and communities are trained to be able to assist them.

Finally, the offeror shall describe in its approach how it will seek to cultivate collaboration with the private sector, international groups, and/or other non-governmental or governmental organizations working in the Dominican Republic to assist children with disabilities. Specific examples of partnerships to be explored will strengthen the offeror's proposal. The idea is to make the most of existing resources to support inclusion of children in primary school education.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Strengthening and expanding to 200 schools (and approximately 1,000 children) work done in the ESP Inclusive Education component, based on lessons learned
2) Strengthening MOE capacity to incorporate children with special needs into public schools, including improving the ability to assess students with learning challenges and provide referrals for treatment
3) Training teachers in approaches to adapt curriculum to reach students with different learning styles, emphasizing how to adapt the teaching of reading skills
4) Supporting the MOE to expand the number of teachers trained to teach students with special needs
5) Training teachers in inclusive education practices and gender sensitivity and awareness
6) Integrating the work done by foundations, private groups or NGOs to assist persons with disabilities such that it supports this activity's objective to create a supportive learning environment for children in primary schools

Standards:
- Understanding of current DEE efforts to support children with special needs demonstrated, and areas for collaboration with the MOE defined
- Teachers trained and supported to identify and adapt teaching styles to accommodate special needs students, emphasizing the teaching of early grade reading skills
- Areas of collaboration identified for supporting special needs children with non-MOE organizations such as those in the private sector, foundations, or NGOs

D.3. RESULT THREE

Result 3: Sustainable partnerships supporting USAID reading interventions strengthened or created

As described above, USAID has supported early grade reading in the Dominican Republic since 2002. This new activity further sharpens the reading focus to align with USAID's global Education Strategy. The increased focus on reading means that some previously supported elements of USAID/DR education projects, such as work on mathematics or school management, will fall outside of this current activity. The objective under this requirement is to facilitate sustainability of prior USAID investments and capitalize on opportunities to generate new partnerships that will benefit and/or complement early grade reading. Identification and cultivation of such partnerships need not require a large outlay of resources. *The offeror is instructed to design this requirement (i.e., the creation of sustainable partnerships) devoting not more than 10% of the overall activity budget to its accomplishment.* In other words, in order for USAID to maintain its priority focus on direct support for early grade reading interventions, the majority of the overall activity budget will go towards reading-based interventions, and not more than 10% of the overall activity budget will support partnership creation for non-reading activities. The recipient is encouraged to generate as much outside funding or in-kind support as possible – there is no limit to the amount of funds that can be raised and used in support of this activity—as complementary non-reading interventions continue to be important for early grade learning, but simply will not be financed in large part with USAID funds. The 10% limit refers to the maximum amount of activity funding that can be used to raise these funds, for example, staff time or public outreach costs that would be used to seek out partner support.

A participatory workshop held in November 2012 and attended by representatives of 13 private sector companies generated interesting feedback from participants.[20] While tight budgets were cited as a limiting factor for private sector support for education, other factors mentioned were a lack of awareness on the part of businesses as to the value of investing in education, a lack of clear policies and initiatives for corporate social responsibility in the private sector companies, and mistrust by companies of how receiving organizations or schools would use and manage funds. Private sector representatives also stated that at times they face resistance to change on the part of school management groups, to the point where schools sometimes refuse to accept funding. The observation was that schools may be afraid of being held accountable for funds received, signaling a potential lack of transparent management capability on their part. The recipient may be able to address some of these issues in its activity design, e.g., assisting schools in managing private sector funds or facilitating private sector-MOE-school linkages.

Requirement 3.1: Strategic partners engaged in supporting targeted education activities that complement USAID reading activities

Under this requirement, the recipient shall create working partnerships to encourage other organizations to provide support that complements and furthers the reading objectives of this activity. The objective is to encourage sustained investment (through programmatic and financial assistance) in primary education

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[20] *"Taller conversatorio: El rol del sector empresarial en el desarrollo de la Republica Dominicana a traves de la educacion",* Newlink Research, Santo Domingo, Noviembre de 2012, USAID BEP Activity

with an emphasis on early grade reading, incorporating the assets and resources of the private sector, foundations, and non-governmental or civil society organizations. The receipient's application will be strengthened by including concrete examples of potential areas for strategic partner involvement and evidence of discussions and/or commitments obtained from identified strategic partners to support future work under this activity. <u>Documented cash or in-kind resources provided by partner organizations may count toward fulfillment of the recipient's overall 15% cost sharing requirement under this agreement.</u>

As an example of potential partnerships that could be developed under this requirement, public and/or private entities could support expansion of successful primary level mathematics interventions previously supported by USAID; this would complement USAID continued support for expansion of reading interventions in grades 1-6. Private/public sector support for mathematics, inclusion, or Safe Schools programming would complement USAID support for reading. There may be partners who could support production or provision of learning materials for reading or technology usage in the classroom. Engaging multiple actors through partnership ensures buy-in and sustainability. The commitment to quality education programming shown to date from organizations such as Dominican private sector foundations, multilateral donors, international development banks, and others is a basis for continued improvement of the overall education system and learning environment. USAID has also worked with American-affiliated groups of businesses and major league sports organizations in the past to support education, and there is continued potential for collaboration with these types of organizations.

Illustrative areas that may be targeted for partner support could include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Providing additional support for reading activities
- Supporting mathematics or other subject areas not funded by this activity but that are complementary to primary school children's learning of reading
- Training teachers, parents, or support personnel to further improve reading quality
- Supporting Safe Schools interventions
- Supporting technology integration for the teaching and learning of reading
- Supporting activities for special needs children
- Other activities that complement USAID's principle project activities

The recipient shall develop a clear set of guidelines for strategic partner involvement under this activity, which will enable a proposed partner to demonstrate how its activities will add value to or complement what USAID is trying to achieve. *Partnership activities must be strategic, not ad-hoc in nature*; they will only be considered "strategic" if they truly complement and add value to overall activity reading objectives. All partnership activities will need to have defined targets and measurable outcomes and results. This requires the recipient to establish a strong monitoring and evaluation system for any strategic partner-sponsored interventions, to be able to track performance and measure impact. Developing clear guidelines for use of investments and measuring their effectiveness will increase chances for sustainability of private sector and other organizational investments in education in the future.

The applicant must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Obtaining commitment from strategic partners to support and complement the overall reading goals of this activity
2) Developing expectations and guidelines for potential partnerships, showing how proposed partnership investments directly complement USAID reading efforts and are not ad-hoc activities
3) Developing a monitoring and evaluation system to demonstrate impact of all partner-funded activities

Standards:
- Clear and transparent processes for creating strategic partnerships defined and implemented
- Examples given of possible strategic partnerships that will complement USAID goals under this activity
- Monitoring and evaluation systems established, to allow for measurement of results accomplished under partnership activities

D.4.   RESULT FOUR

Result 4: Knowledge of effective reading instruction and supportive approaches generated and shared with key stakeholders

USAID's Education Strategy Result 1.3 is "Greater engagement, accountability, and transparency by communities and the public". One of the illustrative activities to support this result is "Strengthening community and education stakeholder access to and utilization of education data for local decision-making"[21]. Result 4 aims to facilitate the creation, distribution and use of knowledge about successful practices that improve the quality of basic reading instruction and create a supportive learning environment for students (the two purposes of this activity). Sharing knowledge about best practices and lessons learned is a means to improve the use of data for decision making and the scale-up of best practices, tools, and models, both by the MOE and by local organizations and institutions. This result seeks to ensure that data and other types of information generated through this activity and by other actors is used to inform the planning and implementation of USAID, GoDR, and other donor and NGO activities.

The recipient shall develop a plan for capturing information and knowledge about early grade reading and creation of supportive learning environments from a broad array of potential sources, including this activity, the work of other donors, universities, NGOs, the private sector, and the MOE, among others. Making knowledge generation and sharing an explicit result gives prominence to the importance of moving increasingly toward sustainability of actions taken to date to improve primary education in the Dominican Republic. As stated above, a 2013 IDB study found that the ESP had developed the required tools, materials and approaches that are critical to sustainable primary education improvement. There will be continued benefit if ESP tools and approaches that are being carried forward and refined with this activity can be used to establish standards that could be applied to any organization working to improve reading, writing, and math in early grades. Devoting some of the resources of this activity to knowledge generation and sharing, public discussion, and practical, focused research activities will help mobilize support for successful methodologies and tools.

Successful and innovative experiences of other projects, activities, and NGO work will also be identified and utilized to encourage public discussion and debate of evidence-based methodologies that can contribute to improving primary grade reading and inclusiveness in the Dominican Republic.

Requirement 4.1: Best practices and lessons learned in early grade reading and inclusive education in the Dominican Republic identified and shared with key stakeholders

Under this requirement the recipient shall provide policy makers and community members with information, as well as with the analytical skills and tools required to use such information, in order to improve policy decisions and local planning processes. Knowledge may be gleaned from indicator data, activity reports, evaluations, studies, research, perception surveys, rapid assessments, or other sources.

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[21] USAID Education Strategy, February 2011, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacq946.pdf, page 12

Such data and information will be collected and packaged in easy-to-understand formats as part of the efforts supporting this result and disseminated through work with the MOE, the media, NGOs and other community stakeholders.

As stated above, the commitment shown by the GoDR to devote urgently needed national resources to education is a necessary first step toward increased sustainability in the sector, with the establishment of clear quality standards as an additional essential element that must be addressed going forward. Activities under this requirement will support further definition of standards of quality in the delivery of training and support to students and teachers in the early grades of reading, as well as to special needs children. The recipient shall create a plan for tracking activity progress and lessons learned and using this information to provide the MOE with critical information for policy formation that will support early grade reading, and the creation of safe and inclusive primary school environments in the Dominican Republic.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:

1) Developing a plan for capturing information and knowledge about early grade reading and inclusive education practices from a broad array of potential sources, including this activity, the work of other donors, universities, NGOs, the private sector, and the MOE, among others
2) Creating a system for tracking activity outcomes, results, and lessons learned on early grade reading, safe schools, and inclusive education in simple, user-friendly formats that allow for public discussion and debate
3) Sharing student performance information and best practices in early grade reading with key stakeholders to include the MOE at national, regional, and local levels, as well as civil society groups such as those participating in IDEC
4) Sharing early grade reading information with communities and parents to encourage support for children's learning
5) Sharing knowledge and lessons learned from Safe Schools activities about school and community security with communities involved
6) Providing communities, schools and districts with information gleaned regarding special needs children in the local area and developing strategies to support them

Standards:

- Best practices and lessons learned in early grade reading shared and discussed with key stakeholders in the MOE, NGOs, training institutions, and communities
- System to track activity results and present them in user-friendly formats for public discussion developed
- Discussions held with MOE on defining and implementing best practice policies to support reading in grades 1-6
- Communities are aware of and take action to address issues raised regarding safety and security in local primary schools
- Communities are aware of and take action to support the inclusion of special needs children in primary schools

Requirement 4.2: Partnerships to support reading-related studies and research created

This requirement aims to create a space within the activity for studies and research that are relevant to the overall reading goals and objectives of this activity. The recipient shall create partnerships with local universities and/or other institutions or individuals to support research on themes relevant to reading, and generate new knowledge that will benefit the activity and its specific target geographic areas. The recipient will propose topics to be studied on an annual basis starting with Year 1 of the activity, and

present the proposed list each year to the USAID AOR for approval. The objective is to generate, validate and disseminate knowledge, distilling information in a concise and useful way for target populations. USAID may wish to propose particular thematic areas for study – this can be discussed during preparation of the recipient's annual list of proposed research and study topics.

The offeror must demonstrate how the following will be addressed in the proposed approach:
1) Developing a research plan that allows for studies throughout the life of the activity of reading-related themes and objectives
2) Submitting an illustrative list of proposed study or research topics for Year 1
3) Working with partners to support the printing and dissemination of original research on themes such as reading improvement, community mobilization, intra-familiar violence and its impact on learning, attention to special needs students, or others
4) Developing a plan to communicate and discuss findings of reading studies with policy makers and other stakeholders at the community level, as relevant to the type of study conducted

The recipient shall include the following topics for Year 1 of the activity:
- A study on gender relations and their impact on learning in primary schools, to include teachers, students, and MOE officials
- A review of official primary school textbooks and materials to determine whether they are free of gender bias and reflect tolerance and inclusiveness

Standards:
- Supportive studies and research conducted that contribute to knowledge on reading themes relevant to this activity
- Year 1 illustrative research plan submitted that reflects well-selected, topical, and relevant themes for study
- A culture of knowledge generation and use is encouraged in the Dominican education sector around timely and relevant themes

E.   PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The recipient shall collect data that will monitor performance of activities throughout the life of the activity using output and outcome indicators. These indicators will track the number of people and systems impacted by the activity in various categories. The indicators must be in line with the USAID agency standard indicators (required Foreign Assistance Framework indicators are listed under the Performance Monitoring Plan section below) and will be used both for M&E purposes as well as USAID internal reporting. All indicators must be disaggregated appropriately to provide necessary details for proper analysis. All training data must be disaggregated by gender, type of training, geographic location and any other categories required by USAID.

The recipient shall collect the following data on the activity, which will be incorporated into the Performance Monitoring Plan:
- **Student gains on regularly administered classroom literacy assessments**. The recipient shall conduct student assessments in project schools at the beginning and end of each school year to measure progress in reading in grades 1-6. Assessments will utilize appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools and focus on reading fluency and comprehension, in line with USAID global goal of "improved reading skills" as "increases in fluency and comprehension in reading grade level text".

- **Percentage of teachers demonstrating essential skills in teaching reading**. This outcome indicator is designed to measure the impact of interventions on the performance of teachers in the classroom. The recipient shall measure teachers' ability to teach scripted lessons, assess student learning, and support student reading practice. Classroom observation data for this indicator will be collected through the use of a classroom observation schedule of purposively selected schools on a regular basis throughout the year.

Performance Monitoring Plan
The Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) shall guide key activity activities, indicators of achievement, and the associated annual and life-of-activity targets. This plan shall be developed by the recipient, reviewed, and approved by the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR). The recipient shall submit a final PMP no later than 90 calendar days after mobilization. It is expected that the receipient will mobilize within 30 days after award. The final PMP shall be incorporated into the agreement by reference. Performance monitoring must take into account the requirements for two levels of reporting: (1) the selection of indicators consistent with USAID/DR's annual Operational Plan; and (2) the selection of indictors for internal, activity-level management. The recipient may utilize separate, additional indicators for each level since some standard indicators may not be appropriate for all levels. While the recipient may suggest more relevant indicators to better illustrate progress and outcomes of the activity, particularly taking into account the Implementation Guidance and Technical Notes of the USAID Education Strategy, the AOR will make final indicator selection upon the review and approval of the PMP. These indicators will take into account the results, performance requirements, and performance standards. All people-level indicators must be sex disaggregated. At minimum, the following Foreign Assistance Framework (FAF) and other indicators must be included in the PMP, with targets as specified below:

Foreign Assistance Framework Indicator	Data source	2014 Target	2015 Target	2016 Target	2017 Target	2018 Target
3.2.1-3: Number of administrators and officials trained	Implementing partner records	0	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
3.2.1-14: Number of learners enrolled in USG-supported primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings	MOE enrollment figures	0	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
3.2.1-27: Proportion of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text	Implementing partner records	0	TBD*	TBD	TBD	TBD
3.2.1-31: Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who have successfully completed in-service training or received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support	Implementing partner records	0	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
3.2.1-33: Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provided with USG assistance	Implementing partner records	0	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
3.2.1-35: Number of learners receiving reading interventions at the primary level	Implementing partner records	0	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
Number of learners benefitting from Safe Schools interventions	Implementing partner records	0	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Number of primary school special needs learners receiving support to improve learning	Implementing partner records	0	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

* Targets for this indicator will be set in cooperation with USAID before activity start-up, based on the most recent student reading achievement data from the ESP project.

In addition, the recipient must measure:
- Percentage of teachers using improved instructional approaches for reading
- Percentage of teachers using formative assessment
- Number of sets of decodable and leveled readers provided.

Finally, the recipient shall consider including in its PMP, as applicable, indicators from USAID's Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter 205, "Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle"[22]. The following indicator from ADS Chapter 205 may be applicable to the Safe Schools component of this activity, for example:
- GNDR-7: Percentage of target population that views Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as less acceptable after participating in or being exposed to USG programming.

Other potential indicators are included in the Logical Framework in Annex 1 to this document.

Evaluation
This activity may be selected by USAID for external evaluation. If this is the case, the Recipient will be required to collaborate closely with the Independent Evaluation Unit of USAID's Regional Basic Education Project in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as described below.

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[22] ADS Chapter 205 is found at website http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/205.pdf. A table of potential indicators is found in Section 205.3.7.2 Performance Plans and Reports, page 21.

Relationship with Independent Evaluation Unit:
Under USAID direction, the Evaluation Unit will perform rigorous evaluation of the activity as well as provide technical assistance to the Recipient, as needed, to support successful evaluation. Additionally, the Evaluation Unit will provide technical assistance to systematize the intervention, as needed. The Recipient will be required to cooperate with the Evaluation Unit to plan roll-out of the intervention in order to facilitate the rigorous evaluation. This is likely to include, but not limited to, collaborating with the Evaluation Unit to: develop monitoring instruments; design appropriate record-keeping systems for needed budgetary and programmatic data; collect requested budget and programmatic information; identify treatment and control groups; plan comparative implementation of intervention components; measure the impact on children's learning; and other tasks as required for rigorous evaluation. Flexibility will be required on the part of the Recipient in planning roll out and overall implementation of the activity.

F.   SPECIFIED KEY PERSONNEL

The application must include detailed descriptions of proposed Key Personnel as follows:

1) Chief of Party (COP) - The COP will provide overall technical and administrative leadership and serve as the primary liaison with USAID/DR on management and technical matters. S/he must be an education expert with strong leadership skills. At a minimum, the COP shall have:

- Master's-level degree in education, social sciences, or a relevant field to education programs from an accredited university.
- At least 10 years of experience in leading and implementing education programs in developing countries, preferably in the implementation of a national scale-up.
- Demonstrated exemplary management, communication, and interpersonal skills to ensure internal cohesion among diverse team members and productive relations with the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR), donors, and the international community.
- Deep knowledge of Dominican cultural, political and economic context.
- Familiarity with and commitment to addressing gender equality and disability constraints in education programming.
- Previous experience in the Dominican Republic or Latin America is required.
- Fluency in Spanish and English.

2) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist – The M&E Specialist is responsible for all project M&E and must ensure that all activities are in line with the USAID Evaluation Policy[23]. S/he will be the key person responsible for collection and reporting of student achievement test results in reading. Additionally, s/he will need to ensure that required periodic reports and reporting (oral and written) be made to USAID. At a minimum the M&E Specialist shall have:
- Master's-level degree in education, social sciences, or a relevant field to education and data collection from an accredited university.
- At least 5 years of experience and a deep understanding of the role of data, evaluation, and knowledge management in education programming and policy.
- At least 5 years of experience with the collection, interpretation, analysis, and reporting of primary education achievement test results.

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[23] http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2151/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf

- Demonstrated knowledge of database systems and direct experience in conducting multiple types of evidence collection and evaluation appropriate to primary education student achievement, including participatory and qualitative approaches.
- Previous experience in the Dominican Republic or Latin America is required.
- Fluency in Spanish and English and demonstrated ability to write reports in both languages.

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3) Language Coordinator – The Language Coordinator is the technical leader responsible for implementation and monitoring of reading achievement and language components of the activity. At a minimum, the Language Coordinator shall have:

- Bachelor's-level degree in education, social sciences, or a relevant field to education programs from an accredited university.
- At least 7 years of experience leading design, management, and implementation of reading and language improvement activities for primary school children in a developing country setting.
- Demonstrated experience with the collection, interpretation, analysis, and reporting of primary education achievement test results.
- Demonstrated ability to work with Ministry of Education officials, teachers, and students to conduct reading support activities in a developing country setting.
- Previous experience in the Dominican Republic or Latin America is required.
- Fluency in Spanish and strong working-level proficiency in English.

Short and longer-term assistance may be needed in the following areas:

- Public-Private Partnership and Government Relations
- Safe Schools (gender-based and school-based violence)
- Disabilities /Inclusive Education

Short and long term technical assistance positions, while not considered "key personnel" subject to USAID hiring approval, may need to be utilized under the project. Such personnel should be mentioned through an approved work plan. To ensure local ownership and a transfer of skills and knowledge, the recipient should emphasize Dominican expertise and strive for a reasonable and appropriate mix of Dominican and non-Dominican staff.

G. **ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS SYSTEM**

1. Definitions:

   a. "Cash Payment System" means a payment system that generates any transfer of funds through a transaction originated by cash, check, or similar paper instrument. This includes electronic payments to a financial institution or clearing house that subsequently issues cash, check, or similar paper instrument to the designated payee.

   b. "Electronic Payment System" means a payment system that generates any transfer of funds, other than a transaction originated by cash, check, or similar paper instrument that is initiated through

an electronic terminal, telephone, mobile phone, computer, or magnetic tape, for the purpose of ordering, instructing or authorizing a financial institution to debit or credit an account. The term includes debit cards, wire transfers, transfers made at automatic teller machines, and point-of-sale terminals.

2. The recipient agrees to use an electronic payment system for any payments under this award to beneficiaries, subrecipients, or contractors.

3. Exceptions. Recipients are allowed the following exceptions, provided the recipient documents its files with the appropriate justification:

   a. Cash payments made while establishing electronic payment systems, provided that this exception is not used for more than six months from the effective date of this award.

   b. Cash payments made to payees where the recipient does not expect to make payments to the same payee on a regular, recurring basis, and payment through an electronic payment system is not reasonably available.

   c. Cash payments to vendors below $3000, when payment through an electronic payment system is not reasonably available.

   d. The Recipient has received a written exception from the Agreement Officer that a specific payment or all cash payments are authorized based on the Recipient's written justification, which provides a basis and cost analysis for the requested exception.

4. More information about how to establish, implement, and manage electronic payment methods is available to recipients at http://solutionscenter.nethope.org/programs/c2e-toolkit."

[END OF SECTION I]

SECTION II - AWARD INFORMATION

USAID expects to award one (1) cooperative agreement based on this RFA. The anticipated total federal funding amount is approximately $20,000,000, subject to availability of funds. The period of performance is five (5) years, starting from the date of Agreement Officer's signature.

USAID will be substantially involved during the implementation of this Cooperative Agreement in the following ways:

1. Approval of the recipient's annual work plans, reports, monitoring and evaluation plan, and all modifications that describe the specific activities to be carried out under the Cooperative Agreement;

2. Approval of and any changes to specified key personnel; and

3. Agency and recipient collaboration or joint participation (collaborative involvement in selection of advisory committee members, concurrence on selection of sub-award recipients, and/or the substantive provisions of the sub-awards).

The Government may issue one (1) award resulting from this RFA to the responsible applicant whose application conforming to this RFA is the most responsive to the objectives set forth in this RFA. The Government may (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept other than the lowest cost application, (c) accept more than one application, (d) accept alternate applications, and (e) waive informalities and minor irregularities in applications received.

The Government may make award on the basis of initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application shall contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The Government reserves the right (but is not under obligation to do so), however, to enter into discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the program description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

Neither financial data submitted with an application nor representations concerning facilities or financing, will form a part of the resulting agreement(s).

The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed award may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed cooperative agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

[END OF SECTION II]

SECTION III - ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A.   ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

USAID policy encourages competition in the award of grants and cooperative agreements. In response to this RFA, any Dominican-based non-governmental organizations, non-for-profit, or for-profit entities (Including NGOs, business associations, universities, and academic institutions) are eligible to apply.

Applicants are encouraged to visit http://forward.usaid.gov/ to understand Local Solutions formerly USAID Forward and incorporate these Agency goals appropriately in their applications.

USAID/DR also encourages the submission of joint applications between Dominican and US based organizations and encourages applications from potential new partners.

B.   COST SHARING OR MATCHING

The minimum cost share for this RFA is 15%.   Applications with a cost share less than this are non-responsive and will not be considered for award.

[END OF SECTION III]

SECTION IV - APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE

This application is found on the internet at www.grants.gov.

B. CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Applications shall be submitted in two separate parts: (a) technical application or management plan with annexes, and (b) cost or business application.

TECHNICAL APPLICATION FORMAT

Technical applications shall be specific, complete and presented concisely. The applications shall demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. Technical applications shall take into account requirements of the program and evaluation criteria found in this RFA.

The formation of a manageable and cost effective consortium is encouraged. USAID encourages creative partnerships and innovative approaches. Applicants should be realistic in stating what can be achieved given the proposed activities, budget and timeline.

Technical applications must be written in English and on letter size paper (8.5"x 11"), single spaced, 12 font size, and have standard one-inch margins (Top, bottom, left, and right sides of the paper). All charts, tables and spreadsheets must not be less than 10 font size. All files submitted must be compatible with Microsoft Office in a MS Windows environment and/or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) *(Text within the files must be accessible and not password protected)*.

The Technical Application has a strict **page limit of fifty pages (50) including annexes**. Anything above the page limit will not be reviewed. The Technical Application must include the following three components: 1. *Cover Page*; 2. *Technical Description*; and 3. *Annexes*. Please note that applicants must address all sub-components. Please organize the application according to the outline below:

1. *Cover Page (Does not count towards page limit)*

    - Name and address of organization;
    - Contact person (lead contact name, telephone number, and e-mail information);
    - Title of proposed program; and,

2. *Technical Description*

    - *Executive Summary (Does not count towards page limit):* A brief explanation of the overall approach of the project, major objectives, activities and expected results. Brief explanation of any partners and geographical location.

    - *Situation analysis and location:* A brief background on the specific development challenge/opportunity to be addressed by the concept paper; include a description of the target population; and justification for why the applicant is the appropriate entity for addressing the identified development challenge effectively and in the long-term, and/or generating catalytic

change leading to scalable development impact. An explanation of the geographical location where the project will work and how selection was performed.

- *Proposed approach:* The proposed approach to this development challenge/opportunity; theory of change, include goals, objectives, methods (activities), and anticipated results which are logically connected and effectively address the challenge. Describe how the program will measure success and why the Applicant's organization is well suited to achieve the proposed objectives. Include innovative or scalable methods or approaches, if any, including associated risks and benefits. A results framework for the overall project will be useful to understand the Applicant's approach.

- *Sustainability and Capacity Development:* A discussion of sustainability: How will the activities be sustained beyond the life of the award? A description of how the Applicant will build capacities of local stakeholders. For this component, applicants must submit a description of their plan for implementing effective and sustainable programming; and the capacity development objectives and activities they would undertake.

- *Coordination with other activities:* How will achieving these objectives contribute to the accomplishment of USAID/DR's strategic goals and contribute to Agency priorities? How will coordination and selection of sites and activities be done. Role of proposed partners, why each was selected and how the Applicant will work with these partners, if applicable.

- *Performance Monitoring Plan:* a description of the proposed monitoring plan with estimated targets and timelines to accomplish objectives. How will the applicant monitor progress towards its established goals?

- *Gender Approach:* Discuss how the proposed project impacts boys and girls differently, how the project design incorporates gender concerns; describe plan for outreach and capacity building; and outline expected impact.

- *Institutional Capability and Past Performance:* The extent to which the applicant's organizational capacity, staffing and partnership arrangements demonstrate institutional expertise and commitment towards achieving the activity's objectives, developing sustainable local capabilities, and integration with other USAID projects. Demonstration of completion of similar type of technical work is required.

3. *Annexes*

- Annex I: Resumes/ Curriculum Vitae of key personnel;
- Annex II: First Year Work Plan;
- Annex III: Performance Monitoring Plan; and
- Annex IV: Past Performance References and Information.

A. Annex I: Curriculum Vitae Of Key Personnel -

A more detailed description of proposed key personnel and any other personnel for whom the Applicant wishes to provide CVs.

B. Annex II: First year Work plan

The Applicant must submit a first year work plan which displays expected activities per month to achieve the annual performance targets (as specified in the M&E Plan) and results required under each

requirement. The work plan will describe activities to be conducted at a greater level of detail than in the Program Description, but shall be cross-referenced with the applicable sections in the Program Description. All work plan activities must be within the Program Description and shall not change the Program Description.

C. Annex III: Performance Monitoring Plan -

The application must include as an attachment a proposed performance monitoring plan (PMP). At a minimum, the PMP should include the relevant indicators to measure performance annually and at the end of the program, baselines (or estimated baselines) for each indicator, annual and end of program targets for each indicator, a narrative describing in detail:
a) The entire data collection process (including plans for conducting data quality assessments, timing of data collection, method of data collection, data storage, data reporting, etc.);
b) Proposed plans for periodic evaluations during the agreement period (such as additional baseline studies, management assessments, mid-term evaluations, final evaluations, and/or "one time" studies to fill in information gaps); and
c) Strategy and procedures to ensure that periodic reporting to USAID is timely, accurate and efficient. Indicators and targets proposed to be used to monitor progress should also be included, such as program management indicators or cross-cutting indicators related to community-based activities.   As applicable, indicators should be disaggregated by gender, age, and geographical location and if applicable, by sub-recipient.

D. Annex IV: Past Performance References and Information –As a reference for performance, please provide a list of three U.S. Government and/or privately-funded contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, etc., and the name, address, and telephone number of the Contract/Agreement Officer or other contact person, whom we may contact if we need to. A narrative description of accomplishments under these should be provided (see Evaluation Criteria in section V).

COST APPLICATION FORMAT

The Cost Application shall be submitted separately from the Technical Application. Certain documents are required to be submitted by an applicant in order for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility.   All files submitted must be compatible with Microsoft Office in a MS Windows environment and/or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) *(Text within the files must be accessible and formulas in excel must not be locked)*.

The following sections describe the documentation that applicants for Assistance award must submit to USAID prior to award.   While there is no page limit for this portion, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary detail to address the following:

1. Include a budget with an accompanying budget narrative which provides in detail the total costs for implementation of the program your organization is proposing. Detailed budget notes and supporting justification of all proposed budget line items should be included. In addition, a summary of the budget must be submitted using Standard Form 424, Application for Federal Assistance and SF-424A, Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (Click on the hyperlinks to access the forms).

    The budget shall include:

    a. The breakdown of all costs associated with the program according to costs of, if applicable,

headquarters, regional and/or country offices;

b. The detailed breakdown of all costs according to each major partner organization or subcontractor/subgrantee involved in the program. A major partner is defined as an organization receiving at least $ 1 million over the life of the project;

c. The costs associated with external, expatriate technical assistance and those associated with local in-country technical assistance;

d. The breakdown of the financial and in-kind contributions of all organizations involved in implementing this Cooperative Agreement;

e. Potential contributions of non-USAID or private commercial donors to this Cooperative Agreement. Please note that for cost associated with Result 3, Sustainable Partnerships, the offeror is instructed not to devote more than ten percent (10%) of the overall activity budget towards this accomplishment;

2. The detailed budget (In MS Excel file format) and accompanying budget narrative (In MS Word file format) documents shall mirror and reflect one another. The budget narrative shall have appropriate headings that match those of the Detailed Budget. For example, the budget narrative shall explain how personel salaries and wages were determined and give the appropriate rational under the salaries and wages heading and the Detailed Budget shall display the estimated costs for salaries and wages under the salaries and wages budget cost element. The budget narrative shall explain in as much detail as possible how costs were derived and the methodologies used to derive and estimate costs. The detailed budget MS Excel worksheet shall display the estimated costs proposed for each budget cost element. The detailed budget MS Excel worksheet *(See table template below)* should contain the following cost elements at a minimum:

-   *Salary and Wages:* Direct salaries and wages shall be proposed in accordance with the applicant's personnel policies.

-   *Fringe Benefits:* If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate that has been approved by an agency of the Government, such rate should be used and evidence of its approval should be provided. If a fringe benefit rate has not been so approved, the application should propose a rate and explain how the rate was determined. If the latter is used, the narrative should include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., unemployment insurance, workers compensation, health and life insurance, retirement, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

-   *Travel:* The application shall indicate the number of trips, domestic and international, and the estimated costs. Specify the origin and destination for each proposed trip, duration of travel, and number of individuals traveling. Per Diem should be based on the applicant's normal travel policies (applicants may choose to refer to the Federal Standardized Travel Regulations for cost estimates).

-   *Equipment:* The budget shall provide the estimated types of equipment to be used on this project. The cost per unit, quantity and total cost per item shall be provided.

-   *Supplies:* The budget shall specify the supply items related to this activity.

- *Contractual:* The applicant shall identify any goods and services being procured through a contact mechanism, including sub-awards.

- *Other Direct Costs:* This includes, but is not limited to: communications, report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, insurance (other than insurance included in the applicant's fringe benefits), office rent abroad, etc. The narrative should provide a breakdown and support for all and each other direct costs.

- *Indirect Costs:* The applicant shall support the proposed indirect cost rate with a letter from a cognizant U.S. Federal Government audit agency, a Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement (NICRA), or include in the accompanying budget narrative sufficient information for USAID to determine the reasonableness of the rates. (For example, a breakdown of labor bases and overhead pools, the method of determining the rate, etc.).

- *Cost Share:* Please see Section III – Eligibility Information, Part B for more information on cost sharing. Cost sharing will be a condition of the award when it is made part of the approved award budget. Cost sharing must be verifiable from the recipient's records, is subject to the requirements of 22 CFR 226.23, and can be audited. If the recipient does not meet its cost sharing requirement, it can result in questioned costs. For this RFA, A cost-share or match of 15 percent or more is expected. Amount and source of cost share contribution in cash or in kind, by Applicant; submit information indicating the financial and/or in-kind resources to be leveraged. Submit a written commitment by other organizations, partners, donors or individuals to share costs.

	Cost Element	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Year 4 Total	Year 5 Total	TOTALS (US$)
a.	Salary and Wages						
b.	Fringe Benefits						
c.	Travel						
d.	Equipment						
e.	Supplies						
f.	Contractual						
g.	Other Direct Costs						
h.	Total Direct Costs *(Sum of a-g)*						
i.	Indirect Costs						
j.	Cost Share *(15%)*						
k.	TOTALS *(Sum of h-j)*						

* Budget MS Excel worksheet template

3. A copy of the latest Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) if your organization has such an agreement with the US Government;

4. Applicants which do not currently have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from their cognizant agency shall also submit the following information:

   a.   Copies of the applicant's financial reports for the previous 3-year period, which have been audited by a certified public accountant or other auditor satisfactory to USAID;

   b.   Projected budget, cash flow and organizational chart; and

   c.   A copy of the organization's accounting manual.

5.   Applicants should submit additional evidence of responsibility they deem necessary for the Agreement Officer to make a determination of responsibility. The information submitted should substantiate that the Applicant:

   a.   Have adequate financial resources or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the award.

   b.   Has the ability to comply with the award conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, nongovernmental and governmental.

   c.   Has a satisfactory record of performance. Past relevant unsatisfactory performance is ordinarily sufficient to justify a finding of non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance.

   d.   Has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics; and

   e.   Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive a cooperative agreement under applicable laws and regulations (e.g., EEO).

6.   Required [Certifications, Assurances, and Other Statements](#) (Click on the hyperlink to access these forms). These forms include:

   a.   Assurance of Compliance with Laws and Regulations Governing – Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs;
   b.   Certification Regarding Lobbying;
   c.   Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers for Covered Countries;
   d.   Certification on Terrorist Financing;
   e.   Certification of Recipient;
   f.   Key Individual and Participant Certifications Narcotics Offence and Drug Trafficking;
   g.   Survey On Ensuring Equal Opportunity For Applicants;
   h.   Applicant Information; and
   i.   Procurement Information.

7.   Applicants that have never received a cooperative agreement, grant or contract from the U.S. Government are required to submit a copy of their accounting manual. If a copy has already been submitted to the U.S. Government, the applicant should advise which Federal Office has a copy.

8.   It is Federal statutory and regulatory requirement that all overseas programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities that USAID partially or fully funds under an assistance award or sub-award must be appropriately marked with the USAID identity. Accordingly, the "apparently successful applicant" will be required to submit a branding and marking plan. The apparently successful applicant's proposed Marking Plan may include a request for approval of one or more exceptions to the marking requirements in [22 CFR 226.91](#). The Agreement Officer evaluates

the apparently successful applicant's branding strategy and marking plan (Including any requests for exceptions) for approval, consistent with the provisions "Branding Strategy," "Marking Plan," contained in the Certifications, Assurances, Other Statements of the Recipient and Solicitation Standard Provisions, and "Marking and Public Communications Under USAID-funded Assistance" contained in the USAID ADS 320.

C. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications are due to USAID by January 21, 2015 , 2:00P.M. (Local Time). Incomplete applications run the risk of not being considered in the review process. Late applications will not be considered for award. Applications must be received by the deadline, in order to be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format.

Applications must include only one prime applicant, which shall enter into sub-agreements or contracts with partnering institutions. In this case, the prime applicant will be responsible for establishing and maintaining sub-agreement and/or contracting relationships with proposed partners. For the purposes of this RFA, the term "applicant" is used to refer to the prime and any proposed partners.

Applications must be submitted electronically to the following e-mail addresses: eluma@usaid.gov and otrigo@usaid.gov. All application files submitted must be compatible with Microsoft Office in a MS Windows environment and/or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). There has been a problem with the receipt of *.zip files due to anti-virus software. Therefore, applicants are hereby discouraged from sending files in this format as we cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server. The subject of each e-mail must read as follows:

"RFA-517-14-000004 – Lighting Excitement for Excellency in Reading - E-mail 1 of [#]."

Applicants are reminded that e-mail is NOT instantaneous, in some cases delays of several hours occur from transmission to receipt. For this RFA the initial point of entry to the government infrastructure is USAID's Washington mail server.

Applicants must retain for their records copy of the e-mails and application and all enclosures which accompany the application.

Telegraphic or faxed application is not authorized for this RFA and will not be accepted.

D. OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. Unnecessarily Elaborate Applications – Unnecessarily elaborate brochures or other presentations beyond those sufficient to present a complete and effective application in response to this RFA are not desired and may be construed as an indication of the applicant's lack of cost consciousness. Elaborate art work, expensive paper and bindings, and expensive visual and other presentation aids are neither necessary nor wanted.

2. Proprietary Information – Applicants which include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purposes, shall:

    a. Mark the title page with the following legend:

    "This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed - in whole or in part - for any purpose other than to evaluate

this application. If, however, a cooperative agreement is awarded to this applicant as a result of - or in connection with - the submission of this data, the U.S. Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting agreement. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in pages ___; and"

b. Mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following legend:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

3. Explanation to Prospective Applicants – Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this RFA must request it in writing. Questions shall be sent by the date noted on the cover sheet. Oral explanations or instructions given before award of a Cooperative Agreement will not be binding. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this RFA will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment of this RFA, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

4. Telegraphic or Faxed Applications – Telegraphic or faxed applications will not be considered; however, applications may be modified by written or telegraphic notice, if that notice is received by the time specified for receipt of applications.

5. Language – All applications must be in English.

[END OF SECTION IV]

SECTION V - APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application submitted in response to this RFA will be reviewed according to the criteria and sub-criteria set forth below.

A.1. TECHNICAL APPLICATION EVALUATION (Total of 100 points)

The criteria listed below are presented by major category, so that Offerors know which areas require emphasis in the preparation of their proposals. Offerors shall note that these criteria serve as the standard against which all technical information will be evaluated and serve to identify the significant matters which Offerors must address. Unless indicated otherwise, sub-factors listed under each factor are of equal importance. A total of 100 points are assigned according to the following technical evaluation criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Strategic and Technical Approach	40
Personnel	25
Management	20
Organizational Past Performance	15
Total	**100**

Strategic and Technical Approach (40 points)

a. The proposal demonstrates an innovative, feasible, sustainable strategy for achieving the activity principles and targets for learners' outcomes. The approach maximizes the existing capacities in the DR and clearly identifies how collaboration with proposed implementing partners and the Dominican Ministry of Education will be achieved. The strategic approach will also include any opportunities for leveraging and/or developing partnerships that will advance the overall goals of the program.

b. Country capacity to sustain activities is integrated into the technical approach. In the spirit of USAID Forward, the proposed program is wholly or partially implemented by a local organization, either as direct implementing partner of USAID or through sub-grants or sub-agreements with a U.S. based implementing partner.

c. The technical approach and monitoring system integrate an effective methodology for measuring improvements in reading outcomes. The approach incorporates gender considerations, disability, and diversity policies and practices, as outlined in the Program Description.

Personnel (25 Points)

a. Proposed Key Personnel have the capability, relevant experience working in developing countries, education, English and Spanish language skills for the designated work. Technical expertise in designing reading improvement strategies and addressing gender and disability-related constraints is required. Strong leadership, management, and negotiation skills are required.

Management (20 Points)

a.　　Implementation Plan activities are presented in a realistic, time sequenced, and logical order, demonstrating how desired targets and learning outcomes will be achieved within the proposed timeframe. Gender, disability and diversity factors are explicitly discussed and incorporated into the activity implementation plan.

b.　　The Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) identifies indicators, end of program results, and a plan for measuring learner reading achievement at defined intervals over the life of the activity. PMP indicates how gender and disability inclusion factors will be measured and monitored throughout the activity.

Organizational Past Performance (15 Points)

a. Demonstrated organizational ability to implement education development projects of comparable size with a strong focus on reading development. Demonstrated ability to address gender and disability considerations in primary education.

b. Demonstrated quality of product or service, including consistency in meeting goals and targets. Demonstrated cost control, including forecasting costs, as well as accuracy in financial and program reporting.

c.　　A.2　　COST APPLICATION EVALUATION

USAID will also evaluate the cost applications, but scores will not be assigned. The cost evaluation will focus on two sub-factors: Cost Realism/Reasonableness and Cost Effectiveness. Included in cost effectiveness is in-kind contributions and cost share. This evaluation will involve consideration of whether the budget notes and narrative provide a clear explanation of each category of estimated costs, cost-split among consortium partners, including any sub-grant or sub-contract arrangements and whether the budget aggregation has been broken down appropriately and in accordance with the instructions.

The cost realism analysis is intended to determine whether the costs estimated accurately reflect the costs that would be incurred during the actual performance of the program, and whether those costs are reasonable. In addition, the cost realism analysis will: a) verify the Applicant's understanding of the requirements and regulations; b) assess the degree to which the cost proposal reflects the approaches in the technical application; and c) assess the degree to which the cost application accurately represents the work effort included in the technical application.

Cost effectiveness involves maximizing the percentage of the budget allocated to program delivery and proposed in-kind contributions and cost share. Applicants are required to provide 15% cost share. Applicants will also receive favorable consideration for identifying other contacts and partnerships for contributions to the cost share. Specific in-kind contributions could include office space, vehicles, staff time, facility rental (conference rooms or training centers) amongst others.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

The criteria presented above have been tailored to the requirements of this particular RFA. Applicants shall note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters that Applicant shall address in their applications; and, (b) set the standard against which application will be evaluated.

A Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) will review the applications according to the criteria described above. Committee members will examine the logic, feasibility and appropriateness of the technical approach, including responsiveness to cross-cutting themes, indicators and anticipated development results or impacts; quality and availability of personnel in response to stated qualifications or requirements; and several institutional factors.

To make an objective review possible, applicants must clearly demonstrate how the organization and the application meet these criteria.

The technical review will focus on the applicant's overall ability to achieve results under the framework provided in this RFA.

Award will be made to the application that offers the best value, cost and other factors considered. The final award decision is made, while considering the recommendations of the TEC, by the Agreement Officer.

The Agreement Officer's decision about the funding of an award is final and not subject to review. Any information that may impact the Agreement Officer's decision shall be directed to the Agreement Officer.

Authority to obligate the Government: the Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the U.S. Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either an Agreement signed by the Agreement Officer or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

[END OF SECTION V]

SECTION VI - AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

A notice of award signed by the Agreement Officer is the authorizing document that the successful applicant can expect to receive via e-mail for countersignature, following selection.

B. REPORTING

1. Narrative and Financial Reports

a) *Quarterly Progress Reports*

The recipient shall prepare and submit Quarterly Progress Reports that include information of the agreement and a summary of progress of the activity activities in relation to the requirements of the agreement, indicating any problems encountered, and proposing remedial actions as appropriate. The report should articulate progress toward goals and highlight key achievements and problem areas that require senior management intervention.
The quarterly reports shall reflect key elements of the Annual Work Plan, and address at least the following points:

- Activities completed under each planned intervention

- Activities to be undertaken in the following quarter

- Outputs accomplished and results realized in the quarter

- Achievements of the quarter (and cumulative to date)

- Progress in achieving contract deliverables

- Aggregate outputs accomplished and results realized since activity inception

- Discussion and proposal of solutions to issues or problems that are affecting the delivery or timing of interventions, or the achievement of results of this activity

- Electronic and hard copies of all reports, success stories, and other relevant Documents prepared during the quarter (to be submitted as Attachments).

Each quarterly report must be a stand-alone document and shall summarize all activity since the beginning of the activity. Quarterly reports shall be submitted to the USAID AOR on the same day as the quarterly financial report.

b) *Financial Reports*

The recipient shall prepare and submit to the AOR the estimated accrual report every quarter from the anniversary date and as directed by the AOR to include:

- Total estimated cost of the award

- Total amount obligated

- Total amount invoiced

- Total amount expended but not yet invoiced

- Remaining unexpended funds

The recipient shall prepare and submit to USAID other financial reports as may be required under the agreement.

c) *Annual Reports*

The Annual Report shall reflect the structure of the annual work plan. Annual is defined according to the U.S. Government's fiscal year: October 1st to September 30th. The report must:

1. Describe overall performance against targets during the fiscal year, and why targets were not achieved or why they were exceeded. Discuss problems and challenges and how they may affect out-year planning.

2. Provide illustrative activities to demonstrate whether goals are being achieved, in the context of the overall goals of the activity.

3. Identify prospects for achieving longer term impact where applicable.

4. Discuss critical gender and women's empowerment activities and/or dynamics over the year. What gender factors were critical to achievement of results in the year? How were these gender factors addressed? What accomplishments were achieved during the year?

5. Discuss status of environmental compliance (if relevant) and actions to be taken in the subsequent year to assure compliance.

6. Discuss partnerships established and collaborative efforts with stakeholders including civil society, private sector, GoDR and other development partners.

7. Discuss sector analytical work, evaluations and assessments over the year and how recommendations are being used to improve activity performance.

8. Discuss status of supporting documents for information reported in the year. Supporting documents must be easily accessible, verifiable and time-specific. Supporting documents must correspond with data collection methods in the activity's PMP and are subject to audit.

The Annual Report shall be submitted to the USAID no later than October 31st of each year.

2. Final Agreement Completion Report

At least 45 calendar days prior to the agreement's completion, the recipient shall prepare and submit one electronic version (as a single MS Word file) of the agreement Completion Report to the AOR which summarizes the accomplishments of this agreement, methods of work used, recommendations regarding unfinished work and/or activity continuation, and the financial status of the agreement. The final Completion Report shall also contain an index of all reports and information products produced under this agreement. Along with the Completion Report, a CD- ROM depository will be submitted, containing all written documents, reports and presentations. The depository shall be organized in a user-friendly system. Once approved by the AOR, the recipient shall submit the final report to:

- the AOR, the Controller's Office and the Agreement Officer; and

- one copy, in electronic (preferred) or paper form (with all final documents) to one of the following:

Online: **http://dec.usaid.gov**

By mail (for pouch delivery):
DEXS Document Submissions M/CIO/KM/DEC
RRB M.01-010
Washington, DC 20523-6100

3. Closeout Plan

The recipient shall develop and submit to the AOR & AO for approval a closeout plan (administration, information, finance, procurement and management) that will include, but will not be limited to, the following:

1. Dates for final delivery of all goods and services for subgrants or subcontracts;

2. A property disposition plan for the recipient and subgrantees or subcontractor(s) in accordance with agreement requirements, which must be approved by the agreement officer;

3. Review of agreement files for audit purposes and final billing to USAID;

4. A schedule to address office leases, bank accounts, utilities, cell phones, personnel notification, outstanding travel and social payments, household shipments, vehicle; phone subscriptions, etc.;

5. Receipt of all final invoices and agreement performance reports;

6. Report on the estimated amount of funds not required for the completion of the agreement;

7. Report on compliance with all local labor laws, tax clearances, and other appropriate compliance matters.

The format and outline of contents of this closeout plan shall be proposed by the recipient no later than 180 calendar days prior to the agreement completion date, and approved by the AOR no later than 150 calendar days prior to the agreement completion date.

4. Short-Term Consultant Reports, Technical Briefs and Reports, Special and External Reports

Upon completion of the services of each short-term consultant, the recipient shall submit a report to the AOR summarizing the activities, accomplishments and recommendations of the consultant. This can be either in written or verbal form as determined by the AOR. In addition, the recipient shall provide copies of all technical reports including analyses, policy recommendations, comparative studies, etc. to the AOR as these are developed.
The recipient shall fulfill all requests from the AOR regarding Agency, congressional, or presidential inquiries. As necessary, programs will illustrate the outcome result of any/all activities. As applicable, any special reporting requirements will be communicated to the recipient well in advance.
As requested, the recipient will regularly report progress and metrics to key stakeholders, implementing partners, media houses, private sector, civil society, and communities. External reports that USAID/DR may request from the recipient include:

- Annual work plans with key activity activities and substantive performance indicators

- Program performance reports (quarterly and annual)

- Financial management and audit reports

- Performance management system strategy and M&E plans

- Long-term activity implementation strategy

5. Management Review

The recipient must prepare for and participate in a joint annual management review of this activity's progress that will be conducted by the AOR(s) with USAID/DR, other donors or partners to be selected by USAID (e.g. the World Bank, IDB, etc.), and activity staff. This will assess the overall direction of the activity, examine the achievement of yearly work plan objectives, and resolve any major management or implementation issues. The review meeting will make recommendations for appropriate changes and broaden its participation to include other strategic stakeholders, partners, and implementing partner(s).

6. Annual Work Plans

The program will be guided by the Program Description, which will provide an overall activity 'map' that indicates broad activities, expected outcomes, and budget along the five year timeline. Annual work plans (AWP) are developed yearly and include proposed activities for the given year, time-frame, implementation of activities, an itemized and detailed budget, review of the previous year's accomplishments (if applicable), problems and challenges encountered in achieving specified results, proposed annual outputs, and progress towards achieving results. The AWPs must also describe a plan and timeline for internal monitoring and evaluation that takes into account the PMP. The AWPs will be developed in country by the recipient and in cooperation with USAID/DR and the MOE. Annual Work Plans must not deviate from the cooperative agreement requirements. All activities planned through this process must be in accordance with the cooperative agreement Program Description and consistent with the approved budget for the agreement.

7. Data, technical materials, and other information produced in the execution of USAID funded activities

The recipient shall provide data, technical materials, and other relevant materials produced in the execution of this cooperative agreement. This includes pedagogical materials and other technical inputs developed to support early grade reading outcomes and other agreement objectives, as well as data and information needed for reporting under the relevant foreign assistance objectives, areas and elements.

Pedagogical Materials and Technical Inputs
The recipient is required to provide pedagogical materials and other technical inputs developed to support early grade reading outcomes and other agreement objectives. Examples of technical inputs to be provided to USAID include scripted lesson plans, supplementary readers, assessment instruments, observation tools, training guides, workshop reports, radio programs, assessment tools, sampling frames, photographs, videos, and other recordings. The recipient will transmit technical materials to the relevant TOCOR (if applicable) and/or AOR/COR, and submit them to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (https://dec.usaid.gov/).

Data for Reporting Under Foreign Assistance Objectives
The recipient is required to provide datasets and codebooks that include data on student learning outcomes and information needed to estimate the number of unique pupils benefiting from program activities over the life of the program. Implementing partners may be responsible, in collaboration with USAID, for obtaining country level memoranda of understanding that allow for the sharing of the datasets and other data with USAID, as well as public access to the data through the partner organization, where possible.

Within 90 days of the completion of data collection, the recipient will transmit requested data to USAID. The transmittal shall be according to the following specifications:

- Datasets should be complete, clean, and final and include any derived or secondary variables used to calculate indicator values provided in assessment reports.
- Datasets will include all variables included in the initial data collection, with the exception of any data that must be edited or cleaned to protect the privacy and anonymity of students, teachers, or administrators represented in the data.
- If variables are edited or removed in order to protect the privacy and anonymity of research subjects, steps should be taken to ensure that sufficient information is retained to allow analyses that require grouping students by school, or track schools/students across datasets if appropriate.
- Data must be transmitted along with relevant supporting materials and instruments. This includes questionnaires and other instruments, codebook, data dictionary, information on sample design, setup and weights, assessment reports, PMP's or other materials that describe the structure of the assessment and/or program, and any other information a researcher may need when working with the data.
- Learning Assessment data can be transmitted in formats including Stata, SPSS, SAS, R, or an open and machine readable format. Supporting documents can be transmitted in MS Office or an open and machine readable format.
- The recipient will provide information on the number of pupils benefiting from the program, disaggregated by sex and grade for each year that the program is active.
- Datasets will be delivered through email, addressed to the relevant AOR. The recipient may also be directed by USAID to submit data and related documents to a third party site (eg: https://sartdatacollection.org).
- All prerequisites to providing the complete, cleaned datasets must be completed by the implementing partner prior to the provision of the dataset to USAID, such as review and approval by operating units and host country governments, as appropriate.

8. **Foreign Tax Reports:** Standard report will be issued for each Fiscal Year and delivered prior to April 16th of each year.

9. **Success Stories:** Each fiscal quarter, the Recipient will provide one success story (Telling Our Story) from its program. Success stories should be no more than one page and follow USAID standard Telling Our Story guidance (See Annex 1-15). Success stories can either be in written format or media. Please attach as an annex to the Quarterly Performance Progress Reports.

10. **Security Reporting:** As part of the overall security requirements, the Recipient shall report any security threats and/or incidents verbally/by telephone, immediately to the following USAID/DR representatives:

    -   Agreement Officer (AO); and
    -   Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).

    Subsequently, a written report shall be submitted in accordance with approved procedures. The Recipient shall develop a list of specific steps to track any potential/identified threats, which will be part of its overall security system. All sub-awardees will be required by the Recipient to report any threats/incidents to the Recipient, who will immediately afterward notify the above listed USAID/Dominican Republic representatives.

11. **Communications Plan:** The Recipient shall submit a Communications Plan, which complies with the Branding and Marking Regulations (See ADS Chapter 320, Branding and Marking) and meets the specifications of USAID/Dominican Republic CLIMA Project addressing:

- Dissemination of identified activity messages to targeted audiences in the Dominican Republic routinely and consistently; and
- Use of selected outreach tools and opportunities – for example, program launches, media events, *telling our Story* database – to communicate new or noteworthy program success. Such activities shall be in line with the specified advance planning schedule and in coordination with the U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo's Public Affairs Office through the AOR and USAID Outreach Coordinator.

 <u>*Outreach:*</u> Please note that the apparent successful applicant will be requested to submit a marking and branding plan and a budget for outreach. Items included but not limited to: Publications, banners, videos, photographers and sign interpreters. Please note that a sign interpreter is required for all meeting with over 50 participants.

[END OF SECTION VI]

SECTION VII - AGENCY CONTACTS

Agreement Officer

Ms. Charis Nastoff
Agreement Officer
E-mail: cnastoff@usaid.gov

Primary point of contact:

Mr. Eyole Luma
Agreement Specialist
Te: 809-368-7709
E-Mail: Eluma@usaid.gov

Secondary point of contact:

Mr. Omar Trigo
Acquisition & Assistance Specialist
Tel.: 809-368-7709
E-mail: otrigo@usaid.gov

Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR)
TBD

[END OF SECTION VII]

SECTION VIII - OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

[END OF SECTION VIII]

ATTACHMENTS

1. ATTACHMENT A – USAID BRANDING STRATEGY & MARKING PLAN (TEMPLATES)
    Electronic version is uploaded as a separate MS Word (.docx) file in http://www.grants.gov/

2. ATTACHMENT B – List of Schools

[END OF ATTACHMENTS]