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Latin America and the Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response (LACLEARN)

FY24 ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT (APS) GRANTS UNDER CONTRACT

APS Period: October 1, 2023 – September 29, 2024

Contract No. 7200AA19D00006/7200AA20F00015

Development Professionals, Inc. – Making Cents International (DPI-MCI)

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Acronyms

ADS	Automated Directives System
APS	Annual Program Statement
ASIV IDIQ	Analytical Services IV Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Contract
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CN	Concept Note
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
FAA	Fixed Amount Award
FY	Fiscal Year
GUC	Grant Under Contract
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
LAC/RSD	Latin America and Caribbean Bureau's Office for Regional Sustainable Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFAC	US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control
RFA	Request for Applications
RFCN	Request for Concept Notes
SAM	System for Award Management
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview of USAID LACLEARN Grants Annual Program Statement

The Latin America and the Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response (LACLEARN) Task Order, serving USAID’s Office of Regional Sustainable Development in the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau (LAC/RSD), will contribute to improving USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) work in LAC. The LACLEARN Task Order was issued under the Analytical Services IV (ASIV) Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) Contract, which provides a variety of assessment, planning, design, research, training, and rapid response services to USAID. LACLEARN’s main objectives are:

- Research and analysis on key DRG issues, including citizen security/violence prevention programming, and
- A platform for rapid response to transition environments, including grants.

This Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Annual Program Statement (APS) is issued to support a variety of awards to assess and implement LACLEARN activities and outlines the process for the funding grants to support DRG in LAC from October 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

1.2 Overview of the Grants Program

The LACLEARN Grants Under Contract (GUCs) Program is intended to support LACLEARN’s objectives with complementary work in the LAC region. The grants funded through this program will provide **support for rapid response**, including **short-term DRG programming**, through local organizations to **promote inclusion, participation, citizen-responsive approaches, and transparency and accountability** in transition environments. Grants may also be used to **pilot innovative DRG technical approaches, implement research, disseminate learnings, and other related learning and analysis objectives**. Ultimately, LACLEARN supports peaceful democratic societies by strengthening civil society and respect for human rights, facilitating dialogue, and supporting effective democratic governance. The specific technical themes and approaches are listed in Section 3 below.

These grants may include work by civil society organizations or may include partnerships with universities or research organizations. LACLEARN may utilize GUCs with both US and non-US organizations to implement activities (see eligibility in Section 4).

LACLEARN will administer the grants in accordance with the guidance found in ADS 302.3.4.13, ADS 302.3.5.6, ADS 303, ADS 308, 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 700, Federal Acquisition Regulation 52.203-16, and other US Government regulations and guidance.

1.3 Purpose of the Annual Program Statement

The purpose of the APS is to:

- Describe the program objectives and the types of activities for which concept notes and applications will be considered.
- Describe the process and requirements for submitting concept notes and applications.
- Explain the criteria for evaluating both concept notes and applications.

Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of LACLEARN, nor does it commit LACLEARN to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a concept note or application. LACLEARN reserves the right to award one, several, or no grants based on the applications submitted in response to this APS or in response to any Request for Applications (RFAs) and/or Request for Concept Notes (RFCNs) issued under this APS.

1.4 Grant Value and Duration

The total anticipated funding available for this APS is USD1,000,000. Individual applications from **US NGOs** will be considered for grants in value between USD25,000 and USD100,000. Individual applications from **non-US NGOs** will be considered for grants in value between USD25,000 and USD250,000. Non-US organizations are defined as being officially registered as a legal entity in the country of proposed operations and working in compliance with all applicable local laws and statutes.

The final amount awarded will be determined by LACLEARN during application evaluation, based on the quality and scope of the applications received.

Considerations:

- Non-US organizations will receive funding in local currency converted from USD budgets. US-registered organizations will receive funds in US dollars.
- Grants will be awarded for a period of performance between 3 and 9 months in duration so long as the grant is completed no later than June 30, 2024.
- Most grants will be issued only once, but in exceptional cases LACLEARN may choose to extend grants with additional funds.
- No-cost extensions up to June 30, 2024 will be considered and may be issued for well-performing grantees that have a balance of funds.

LACLEARN will begin to accept applications on October 1, 2023 and will continue to accept concept notes or applications until March 31, 2024. Concept Notes received under the FY 2023 APS September 30, 2023 may be reviewed and awarded under this FY2024 APS. Please note this is the final APS of LACLEARN's period of performance, which ends on September 29, 2024; therefore, the period for accepting concept notes or applications is relatively abbreviated.

Grant types:

LACLEARN, in consultation with USAID, will determine the type of award to be issued under this APS.

It is expected that the grants to be awarded will include Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs), Simplified Grants, and Standard Grants. A combination of grant types may also be used (called a "hybrid" grant, for example an FAA with an In-Kind component) if it is in the best interest of the project, and if determined as the most suitable type of award. For FAAs with an in-kind component, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.313 and ADS 303.3.25(d), LACLEARN will ensure that if equipment is acquired under any grant award, that it is used for its intended purpose. The disposition and transfer of title of equipment will be stated in the grant terms and conditions. LACLEARN will evaluate prospective grantees to ensure that: 1) grantees facilities have appropriate conditions to accommodate the equipment, if any; and 2) grantees have appropriate systems for the control and use of equipment.

Awards that exceed the Simplified Acquisition Threshold are not anticipated; however, if any activities are projected to exceed that threshold, then a Standard Grant will be considered, subject to the approval

requirements described herein. Standard Grants have no financial ceiling and can be used for grant activities where milestones cannot be developed. Standard Grants may include advances, if necessary, have payments on a reimbursement basis, and may include equipment and indirect costs (if properly documented).

2.0 Eligible Locations

This APS targets countries in the LAC region, in alignment with USAID’s approved project countries for LACLEARN. Most grant activities will take place in a single country, although some may be regional/multi-country in nature. LACLEARN will accept proposals from countries with USAID Missions (presence countries) and countries without USAID Missions (non-presence countries). Below are the regions and countries eligible:

1. **Mexico**
2. **Central America:** Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama.
3. **South America:** Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela.
4. **Caribbean:** Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

Only applications proposing activities in the countries above are eligible for consideration under this APS. Proposals may include researchers working remotely from other locations or support activities taking place in third country locations, but the work must be targeting DRG in the above-listed countries. Some of the eligible countries listed above may require additional time for grant approvals due to special US Government notification requirements for assistance funding.

In addition to this FY2024 APS, future LACLEARN RFAs or RFCNs may be issued at a later date to respond to transition environments or unique program needs in a specific country or region.

3.0 Eligible Activities

3.1 Technical Themes

Eligible activities must fall within one or more of the DRG technical themes below, and must implement in one of the technical approaches sets as listed in Section 3.2:

Eligible Technical Themes	
Theme 1: Citizen Security and Crime and Violence Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prevention of gender-based violence ○ Innovative citizen security, criminal governance, and community youth violence interventions. ○ Evidence-based interventions to improve learning on security as it relates to economic, environmental, and social outcomes, including migration in LAC. ○ People-centered justice, ensuring services cater to all citizens, including those requiring reintegration assistance. ○ Justice and security sector interventions which foster an enabling environment for community violence prevention. <p>Above includes violence against specific cohorts such as indigenous people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people, and people from other marginalized populations.</p>
Theme 2: Democratic backsliding and authoritarian resurgence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New approaches to strengthen citizen commitment to democracy in the region. ○ Innovative strategies in working with local partners to prevent or reverse democratic backsliding in LAC. ○ Innovative interventions to build citizen resilience to disinformation and misinformation. ○ Innovative strategies to understand the impact of digital authoritarianism on journalism, independent media outlets, and elections, considering both preventive and responsive stance
Theme 3: Accountable, transparent, and effective governance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effective, evidence-based approaches to reduce national and transnational corruption and promote transparency in LAC. ○ Bottom-up accountability and transparency interventions seeking to reduce corruption through the actions of the citizenry, civil society, media, and the private sector.. ○ Innovative strategies to raise awareness and increase accountability for meaningful and sustainable outcomes and highlight open justice methodologies and insights from people-centered justice programming.

Theme 4: Innovations in monitoring, evaluation, and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Innovative measurement strategies (e.g., rubrics) and technologies (e.g., big data, remote and digital tools) to (1) track program performance and (2) gauge illicit, hard-to-observe, or underreported activities (e.g., corruption, GBV, migration, and gang membership—including the role of children or women). ○ Relevant learning and adaptation approaches to citizen security, democratic norms, and accountable governance, to evaluate relevant policies and programs in LAC.
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3.2 Eligible Technical Approaches

The eligible technical approaches are divided into two broad sets below.

Approach Set 1: Learning, dissemination of new knowledge, or the testing of new ideas.

Innovation, research, and the testing of new DRG ideas will be prioritized over routine programming. Activities considered under this approach include:

- Activities that fill knowledge gaps through conflict-sensitive and gender and social inclusion-informed analytical work, assessments, research, and special studies.
- Research or pilot programs which answer questions not currently addressed by existing research will be prioritized.

Learning and research should be practical with clear and explicit recommendations that facilitate local-level ownership and operationalization. Below are some illustrative examples of research gaps that organizations may consider. The work is not limited to the examples below; any topic from the technical sectors of focus will be considered if it addresses issues not well covered by other research or programming.

Illustrative Examples of Research Questions	
Citizen Security and Crime and Violence Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the effectiveness of crime and/or violence prevention strategies for increased citizen security? What are the effects of place-based strategies on citizen security? What are the gender and social inclusion implications of these effects? ○ What works to change the entrenched cultural values among community members that allow gender-based violence to occur? What are the key factors that prevent sexual violence? ○ What tangible impacts have people-centered justice initiatives had on reintegrating marginalized populations into society?

Illustrative Examples of Research Questions	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can increased civic engagement of youth, women, indigenous people, LGBTQI+ people, and people from other marginalized groups contribute to DRG objectives? ○ What are the most effective strategies for differentiated youth violence prevention? What is the accuracy of risk and/or needs diagnostic tools for children and youth? How effective are trauma-sensitive approaches in youth violence prevention?
Democratic Backsliding and Authoritarian Resurgence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What approaches are best suited to strengthen citizen commitment to democracy in the region? ○ What is the extent and nature of mis/disinformation? What approaches have demonstrated effectiveness in mitigating mis/disinformation to either the general public or specific audiences? ○ What strategies and frameworks can be developed for the defense and support of political prisoners and their families? ○ What strategies are best suited to build citizen and independent media outlets’ resilience to dis/misinformation? ○ How does digital authoritarianism intersect with democratic backsliding, and what strategies can be employed to counteract its influence?
Accountable, Transparent, and Effective Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are bottom-up accountability and transparency interventions seeking to reduce corruption through the actions of the citizenry, civil society, media, and the private sector effective, scalable, and sustainable in LAC? ○ What non-judicial routes to accountability could be leveraged to strengthen these interventions? ○ What are the benefits and challenges of open justice methodologies, and how can they be implemented effectively? ○ Does psychosocial support and trauma counseling among youth populations change democratic attitudes and civic participation?
Innovations in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What key strengths and shortcomings exist in local institutions’ ability and capacity to collect and analyze and disseminate data relevant to citizen security, democratic norms, and accountable governance, and to evaluate relevant policies and programs in LAC?

Approach Set 2: Targeted and timely human rights and democracy programming to support DRG in countries experiencing political crisis or emerging from authoritarianism or conflict.

During times of peaceful political transition or in crises, this APS will support work that addresses urgent DRG needs. LACLEARN will consider short-term interventions which deliver immediate and quick impact DRG programming that address a changing need or respond to or mitigate a crisis. Activities under Approach Set 2 generally address an urgent, short term need or bridge a programming gap while longer-term USAID capacity and programming is prepared.

These can be implemented preventatively or as a rapid response in a variety of contexts such as:

- Stable, transitioning contexts where changing socio-political situations open new opportunities for high impact DRG programming.
- Preparedness for rapid response in areas where democracy or human rights are fragile.
- Rapid DRG response to address acute needs in emerging crises or continuing crises.
- DRG activities where USAID lacks sufficient presence to address immediate needs.

Illustrative Activities for Approach Set 2

- Supporting democratic processes (must be neutral and non-partisan).
- Supporting a DRG need recently identified by USAID or requested from the host government.
- Training or advising human rights or violence prevention actors in crisis or fragile contexts.
- Providing assistance to government actors in support of democratic good governance.
- Raising awareness of specific human rights abuses.
- Providing human rights rapid response support programming (awareness, advocacy, or crisis related case management) in a survivor-centric and gender-sensitive and inclusive approach.
- Responding to particular needs of media and civil society to participate in and respond to crisis environments, such as through targeted training, provision of limited technical expertise, and/or facilitating dialogues and engagement with local or national authorities.

Proposals should demonstrate an existing gap in programming or support to the proposed need and should work to avoid overlap or duplication with existing programming from other organizations. LACLEARN will prioritize applications whose activities complement or leverage US Government country support priorities.

LACLEARN seeks to provide responsive programming tailored to local contexts and local needs. Therefore, LACLEARN strongly recommends all interested applicants inquire with LACLEARN about the fit and eligibility of their envisioned activities before submitting a concept note (see Section 5.3 below for details about how to contact LACLEARN).

Construction, large equipment purchases, routine service delivery, and delivery of food or goods will not be funded under LACLEARN. Humanitarian emergency response programming which does not address a DRG-related need is not eligible in this APS. Likewise, this program will generally not fund continuation of existing programming.

3.3 Gender Integration in Grants

Applicants must include gender and social inclusion considerations in all proposals. LACLEARN includes broad gender and social inclusion-related requirements in solicitations and will provide in response to concept notes gender and social inclusion-focused feedback. All applicants must specifically address and integrate gender and social inclusion into their proposed projects' technical design, implementation plan, and monitoring and evaluation strategies. Organizations that are women-owned and/or women-operated and demonstrate experience in addressing gender within programming, as well as include a gender or social inclusion component to their proposed program, will be prioritized for award. Social inclusion may include work with specific populations experiencing marginalization, including LGBTQI+, indigenous, immigrant, rural, disabled, or other peoples.

In addition to the applicant's current organizational capacity related to gender and social inclusion, LACLEARN may provide gender and social inclusion technical expertise to supplement applicant's project design throughout the proposal review process and following grant award. LACLEARN's gender and social inclusion technical experts will actively engage awardees in implementation and evaluation of the project. Grant performance indicators will include gender-disaggregated data elements at the minimum and will be reviewed by LACLEARN's monitoring and evaluation experts. It is important to note that the presence of women in proposed activities does not in and of itself address gender considerations. Data analysis is to be conducted using a gender lens, if possible, and reports should include any notable gender differences, challenges and resolutions, as well as unexpected consequences and results.

4.0 Applicant Eligibility

To apply for and to be eligible to receive a grant under LACLEARN, applicants must:

- Be a civil society, educational, research, or other organization working in DRG-related areas or with relevant research expertise.
- Be officially registered as a legal entity and working in compliance with all applicable local laws and statutes. If an applicant is not legally registered, the applicant can show proof of effort to secure registration, exemption from registration, or show cause and justify why such registration would be harmful, with supporting documentation, as applicable.
- Have demonstrated ability to manage grant funds (i.e., evidence of financial accounting systems and procedures, maintenance of accurate, detailed records of all expenses, and have designated financial management personnel).
- Be able to demonstrate through current or recent projects strong technical expertise in the sector(s) of the proposed activities.
- Hold a bank account in the name of the organization.
- Be able to acquire a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
- Not be a party barred from receiving US Government funding.

Other considerations:

- Applications from not-for-profit and for-profit organizations are welcomed. No fee or profit is allowed in grants under LACLEARN.
- Religious and non-religious organizations are welcome to apply for funding. No grant funding may be used for any religious or political purposes.

- Neutrality, impartiality, and do-no-harm must be central to the proposed activity. Grant activities should serve the interests of marginalized, underrepresented populations and/or people living in vulnerable situations regardless of group or affiliation.
- Partnerships between organizations are allowed if all entities in the partnership fit the applicant eligibility criteria herein. There must be one organization leading the activities (Lead applicant). Lead applicants must demonstrate they will retain management of the activities and are using partner organizations only in supporting and/or advisory roles. LACLEARN will not issue a grant to an organization that is sharing the management of the award across several entities. Only the lead applicant will be awarded the grant in full.

LACLEARN will rely on the basic requirements listed above as well as any audit or performance reports or other information that helps verify an applicant’s past performance on similar projects when applicable. Applicants unable to demonstrate good past performance will not be funded.

The following will NOT be considered for funding:

- Concept notes from individuals.
- Concept notes from UN or Public International Organizations.
- Government entities.
- Concept notes from organizations that appear on the List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-procurement Programs, U.N. 1267 list, or have an active restriction or exclusion on the System for Award Management (SAM) list.
- Concept notes from organizations that advocate, promote, or engage in illegal activities or anti-democratic activities.
- Concept notes from any entity affiliated with USAID or the implementing organizations of LACLEARN (Development Professionals Inc., Making Cents International, NORC and ARD/Tetra Tech), including these organizations’ officers, directors, employees, or their family members.
- Concept notes proposing scaling existing interventions that do not address the purpose of the grants program.
- Concept notes proposing politically-aligned activities or activities in support of a specific political party.
- Concept notes with any infrastructure or construction activities.
- Programs that primarily serve to promote the visibility of an organization.

5.0 Application and Submission Requirements

5.1 Application Overview

This APS is soliciting concept notes from the date of issuance (October 1, 2023) through the close date (September 29, 2024). Concept notes may be submitted at any time during this open period. Consideration and review of concept notes will start at predetermined evaluation phase dates listed below:

- Evaluation Phase Closing Deadline: February 28, 2024 at 11:59 PM (EST).

LACLEARN reserves the right to consider and review concepts and applications at other times as dictated by program needs or as instructed by USAID. Concept notes received by the March 31, 2024 closing date will be reviewed for responsiveness to the technical themes and approaches outlined in this APS and the

application format. No funding will be provided to organizations to cover labor or costs of submitting Concept Notes or Applications under this APS.

Only written applications will be evaluated. Applications should respond directly to the terms, conditions, specifications and clauses of this APS. Applications that do not meet the requirements of this APS will not be considered for award.

Applications under this APS follows this general process, with details listed in Section 5.3:

0. LACLEARN APS released.
1. Interested organizations contact LACLEARN to inquire about the fit of their proposed activity.
2. Applicants submit Concept Notes
3. LACLEARN reviews Concept Notes, notifies declined applicants.
4. LACLEARN shares feedback on selected Concept Notes along with full application format.
5. Applicants complete full application.
6. LACLEARN reviews applications, notifies declined applicants.
7. LACLEARN completes final capacity assessment due diligence and notifies selected applicants.
8. Pre-award documentation submitted.
9. Grant awarded.
10. Grantee begins implementation.

The above APS application and selection process is for general guidance only. The specific details and requirements are listed in the following sections. In rare crisis response contexts, abbreviated processes may be considered in consultation with USAID.

5.2 Application Review Process

This APS will use a two-stage review process. In the first stage, LACLEARN will receive a concept note (CN) with its corresponding summary budget information from applicants. After reviewing these CNs, the Grants Evaluation Committee will select the best CNs and conduct a co-creation session with the successful applicant.

CN Format: CNs must be submitted to LACgrants@developmentpi.com using the template provided in Annex A. Applicants must follow the instructions in the template and present all the required information to have their concepts considered for review. CNs without all the required information will be marked non-compliant during initial screening and will not be considered further. If a CN is selected for further consideration, LACLEARN will invite the applicant to submit a full application, which will include the full application format.

Full Application Format: The full application format will be provided only to applicants who are selected for the second stage of evaluation. An overview of the full application’s general content and process is detailed below. During the full application stage, applicants will need to develop full proposals with budgets, log frames (if applicable), workplans, and monitoring and evaluation plans.

A key element in the evaluation of the applicant’s capacity will be their ability to plan and develop a technical approach / strategy, workplan or log frame, and a realistic and cost-conscious budget. When preparing final budgets, applicants will be required to:

- Budget separate tasks using a standard line-item budget format (template will be provided).
- Combine tasks into natural groupings that relate to periodic payments.

- Budget for any needed capacity-building support.

5.3 Specific Application Process and Instructions

- 1) Check Eligibility and Fit:** Interested organizations should contact LACLEARN via email at LACgrants@developmentpi.com with a short statement stating the nature of the proposed activity and the organization’s intention to apply prior to submitting a concept note. This will help the organization determine if they meet the minimum requirements (see Section 4.0) and offer the opportunity for LACLEARN to provide feedback on eligibility of activities that the organization would like to propose. Contacting LACLEARN prior to submitting a concept note is strongly recommended but not required for consideration.
- 2) Submission of CNs:** Interested organizations will develop a CN to briefly describe the need, proposed activity, and organizational capacity to implement the proposed activity.
 - a) The CN template is in Annex A. It is a relatively short three (3) pages, plus additional certifications and an organizational profile, capacity statement or annual report.
 - b) CNs can be submitted any time before March 31, 2024. Pre-scheduled CN reviews are planned for February 28, 2024, and August 29, 2024 (See Section 5.1). Additional CN reviews may occur at the discretion of LACLEARN in consultation with USAID.
 - c) CNs should be submitted to LACgrants@developmentpi.com.
- 3) Evaluation of CNs:** Once a concept note is submitted:
 - a) The Grants Manager will confirm receipt and will screen for completeness and that the application meets the minimum criteria. This includes:
 - i) Organizational eligibility;
 - ii) Proposed activity eligibility;
 - iii) Completeness of application and accompanying documentation and certifications;
 - iv) Budget completeness and eligibility; and
 - v) Compliance and overall consistency with USAID policies in ADS 303.
 - b) Once compliant responses are determined, LACLEARN’s Grants Evaluation Committee will review and assess each CN programmatically and technically.
 - c) Concepts will be scored based on criteria outlined in the APS (see Annex C). A scoring sheet will be used by reviewers to rate CNs on a scale of 0 – 100 points.
 - d) CNs which demonstrate the best fit against the evaluation criteria will be invited to submit a full application. (Depending on competition and funding available, semi-finalists are usually those who score at least 70 points on the evaluation criteria listed in Annex C.)
 - e) Highly rated applicants may be invited to make a virtual oral presentation of their concepts to the Grants Evaluation Committee.
 - f) Applicants not selected for funding will be informed by the Grants Manager.
- 4) Invitation to Revise Design and Prepare a Full Application:** Only applicants with concepts which are selected as high promise and high potential (Semi-finalists) will be sent a Request for a full Application (RFA).
 - a) LACLEARN will send semi-finalists an RFA including the application template package.
 - b) Applicants invited to the full application stage will be provided feedback and may be asked additional questions about their proposed activities. During this stage, applicants can provide more information on their proposal so LACLEARN may better understand the proposed activity.

- c) LACLEARN staff may request a meeting with semi-finalists. This may be a conversation, or may be a fuller workshop to co-develop details such as:
 - i) The technical approach;
 - ii) The scope, research question, or target population;
 - iii) The budget;
 - iv) Contextual challenges;
 - v) Protection of subjects, gender and social inclusion integration and other protection issues;
 - vi) Activity objective adjustments; and
 - vii) Monitoring & evaluation indicators or methodologies.
- d) LACLEARN may request supplemental supporting documentation or may conduct additional due diligence as needed.

5) Submission of Full Applications: Organizations will submit the full application, including all required accompanying documentation.

- a) Applicant organizations will complete their applications. This should usually be completed within a maximum of 30 days from invitation to submit application. However, timing may vary depending on the number of revisions needed, urgency of need, and guidance from USAID. In rapid response contexts, the ability to design quickly will be considered a strong plus.

6) Evaluation of Full Applications

- a) The Grants Manager will confirm receipt and will screen for completeness and to ensure the applications meet the minimum criteria. This includes:
 - i) Completeness of application and accompanying documentation and certifications;
 - ii) Budget completeness and eligibility; and
 - iii) Compliance and overall consistency with USAID policies in ADS 303.
- b) Grants Evaluation Committee will only evaluate compliant applications using evaluation criteria (see Annex C). The Grants Evaluation Committee will conduct additional interviews, request supplementary materials, contact references or partners, engage other USAID or external experts, and gather any other information necessary to fully evaluate the application.
- c) The Grants Manager will conduct a Pre-Award Evaluation for each nominated organization and complete the Grant Award Due Diligence Checklist to ensure they have sufficient capacity and are able to receive and administer USAID funds. Checklist includes:
 - (1) Legal Registration Status;
 - (2) Taxpayer Identification Number (US organizations only)
 - (3) Unique Entity Identifier verification;
 - (4) SAM check; and US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) check.
- d) The due diligence process may take up to three weeks, depending on a variety of factors, such as the proposal’s technical complexity and the applicant’s registration status in SAM.gov.

7) Organizational Capacity Assessment (as required): Building on organizational capacity documentation provided in the application, LACLEARN will perform final organizational assessment activities using a detailed assessment tool. LACLEARN team members may interview key personnel from applicant organizations and assess each organization based upon documented policies, procedures, and program audits or reports for soundness of financial and program implementation management systems and operational practices.

8) Pre-Award Stage: Applications are selected to proceed to pre-award stage or designated for non-selection. This final consideration is made in collaboration with USAID.

- a) LACLEARN will provide final feedback on the application, applicant revises/makes changes as needed.
- b) LACLEARN will confer with USAID for review, feedback, and concurrence from USAID country or regional missions or other US Government stakeholders as relevant. Any concerns will be raised with the applicant. This may add up to several weeks to the approval process. Any application not approved by USAID will not be awarded.
- c) In some circumstances, the proposal may be shortlisted but temporarily put on hold due to contextual factors such as local elections, conflict or war, or natural disasters.
- d) Applicants proceed to award stage.

6.0 Grant Approval and Award

6.1 Award Stage

An award will be made only after LACLEARN makes a positive determination that the applicant possesses, or has the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence to carry out the grant activity and will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided. LACLEARN must be fully satisfied that the applicant has the capacity to adequately perform in accordance with the principles established by USAID.

- 9) Award Phase:** LACLEARN will work with the applicant to establish the grant in accordance with USAID policies.
- a) The Grants Manager will prepare grantee approval request packages and submit them to USAID for approval.
 - b) Upon approval from USAID, LACLEARN will notify the selected organizations and award grants to the newly selected grantees.
 - c) LACLEARN may decide to provide additional capacity building support to nominated organizations and issue a conditional grant if approved by USAID.

6.2 Implementation Stage

- 10) Startup and Implementation Phase:** The applicant will begin the project implementation.
- a) LACLEARN will hold a Post-Award Orientation session for new grantees.
 - b) Depending on the project's nature, LACLEARN may request a project startup workshop in collaboration with LACLEARN technical staff, USAID Mission staff, and/or other key stakeholders.
 - c) Awardee will implement the project, including monitoring and evaluation.
 - d) LACLEARN may collaborate in the dissemination of learning or publication and communication plans.
 - e) LACLEARN will monitor implementation, deliverables, and grant close-out.

7.0 Deliverables

Grantees will be required to provide both financial and technical deliverables throughout the length of the program. Grantees must comply with the following reporting requirements.

7.1 Financial Status Reports

Grantees will submit finance reports on a quarterly basis. Reports are due 20 days after the close of the calendar quarter. Shorter grants may have modified reporting schedules, and specific reporting deadlines will be agreed in the pre-award stage. These reports are not required for Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs). Grantees with FAAs must follow the deliverables and payment schedule in their agreements.

Grantees must fully cooperate with audits, by sharing grant documentation, making time for interviews, and providing office space if required. Depending on grant size and duration, LACLEARN will work with the grantee to implement a compliance spot check mid-way and at the completion of each grant.

7.2 Technical Reports

Technical reports must be submitted together with financial reports. Reports are due 20 days after the close of the calendar quarter. Shorter grants may have modified reporting schedules, and specific reporting deadlines will be agreed in the pre-award stage.

Technical reports include statements of the performance status against the planned milestones, activities, timeline, and performance indicators. The successes reported on activities should be documented, and reasons for failure should be provided.

For Approach Set 1 (research or analysis projects), programmatic reporting requirements may include research deliverables in lieu of or in addition to programmatic reports.

For Approach Set 2 (DRG Rapid Response Implementation), technical progress reports will summarize advancement towards and achievement of grant milestones and final results according to the log frame.

More detailed required reports contents will be provided at the award negotiation stage.

Technical reports are not required for FAAs. Grantees with FAAs must follow the deliverables and payment schedule in their agreements.

7.3 Final Reports

Within thirty (30) calendar days of completion of grant performance, the grantee shall submit to LACLEARN a final report in English describing the financial status at close out and detailed summary of technical achievement. In addition to the content of the periodic reports, the final report shall include a detailed description of the grantee's total activities and results, any lessons learned, final products produced, and transition / dissemination plan / recommended action items for stakeholders.

In the case of research and analysis projects, a final report, final workshop/seminar or similar may be negotiated in lieu of a programmatic report, but a financial report will still be needed. This will be decided in the pre-award stage.

More detailed required reports contents will be provided at the award negotiation stage and incorporated into the grant agreement.

8.0 Authority and Terms of The Grant Agreement

8.1 Governing Regulations

LACLEARN will execute and administer grants on behalf of USAID. Under this APS, USAID retains the right—at all times—to terminate, in whole or in part, any grant issued under LACLEARN. Grant awards will be compliant with regulations included in the LACLEARN Task Order:

1. USAID shall have substantial involvement in the establishment of selection criteria and shall approve the selection of grant recipients. Unless otherwise directed by the cognizant Contracting Officer, the Contracting Officer’s Representative shall have authority to approve the grant recipient selection.
2. The Contractor is not authorized to execute or administer Cooperative Agreements on USAID's behalf.
3. Requirements which apply to USAID-executed grants shall also apply to grants signed by LACLEARN.
4. It is anticipated that the approved amount of such grants to US organizations shall not exceed the Simplified Acquisition Threshold. In addition, per ADS 303.3.6.5(b).2, if deemed necessary, grants may be awarded non-competitively for local, non-US organizations.
5. USAID retains the ability to terminate the grant activities unilaterally in extraordinary circumstances.

The following requirements apply to any grant to be awarded under LACLEARN:

- 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.
- 2 CFR 700 USAID Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.
- ADS Chapter 303 - 303.3.21a(2)(c). Standard Provisions for a Non-US Non-Governmental Organizations.

LACLEARN is required to ensure that all organizations receiving USAID grant funds comply with the guidance found in these regulations, as applicable to the respective terms and conditions of their grant awards. LACLEARN will ensure environmental soundness and compliance in design and implementation of all activities as required by 22 CFR 216.

8.2 LACLEARN Responsibilities

As the grantor, LACLEARN shall be responsible for the following:

- Providing post-award approvals, instructions, and guidance.
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework with appropriate indicators for the specific grant program. The framework will have provisions for development of appropriate data collection and management tools, training of personnel to gather, process, and analyze data and generation of reports using the selected indicators.
- Monitoring the grantees’ performance and progress.
- Ensuring that the grantees monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes of their own activities using the output and outcome indicators and baseline data negotiated into the grant agreement.
- Monitoring timely submission of reports and ensure that these reports track accomplishments and output and outcome data.
- When appropriate to the type of grant issued, reviewing grantees’ financial management programs, including the appropriate segregation of funds.

- Providing guidance and follow-up on presentation of timely grantee vouchers.
- When appropriate to the type of grant issued, obtaining financial reports and reviewing for compliance with grant financial plan and budget, activities, and work plan.
- Maintaining all grant pre-award and post-award files in good order.
- Ensuring that the grantees understand they must maintain their financial and program reports in good order and retain such reports for three years after final payment.
- Performing timely close-out of all expired grants.

8.3 Grantee Responsibilities

All organizations receiving funding under this grants program must comply with the following:

- Maintaining clear and organized accounting records, documentation, and data that reveal the use of resources received and spent.
- Gathering, processing, and analyzing data on all activities carried out in the project and generating relevant monitoring and evaluation reports on selected indicators.
- Employing monitoring and evaluation reports to identify lessons learned which will be used to adjust program design and implementation approaches to increase efficiency and effectiveness of implementation efforts.
- Developing detailed budgeting for the resources received and used (implemented activities will be monitored to determine possible changes in the budget).
- Following USAID rules for goods, purchased services, and restricted/non-eligible suppliers.
- Meeting the reporting and deliverable requirements as specified in the grant agreement.

Annex A: Grants Program Concept Note Template

USAID Latin America and Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response (LACLEARN)

INSTRUCTIONS: All Concept Notes to this APS must be submitted in English using this template. It is strongly recommended to email LACLEARN with your proposed activities before drafting this Concept Note.

Provide the information below in the format as presented in this form, typed in 11-point font, in English. The completed form shall be approximately five (5) pages, including this cover page and should not exceed the page limits as indicated throughout this template.

1. Cover Page

1.1. Project Title:

1.2. Project Approach Type (See APS Section 3.2):

Set 1, Research & Analysis
 Set 2, Rapid Response Programming

1.3. Organization Info:

Name of Organization:	
Organization’s Address:	
Contact Person Name:	
CONTACT PERSON	
Position or Title:	
Phone:	
WhatsApp/Skype (optional):	
Email:	
Preferred contact method:	

Please describe your organization (Check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> International Non-governmental (NGO) <input type="checkbox"/> National Non-governmental (NGO) <input type="checkbox"/> Faith-based organization <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit company	<input type="checkbox"/> University / Thinktank <input type="checkbox"/> People with disabilities-led * <input type="checkbox"/> Women-led ** <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
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- * To be considered a people with disabilities-led organization, the majority of your organization’s leadership staff must be people with disabilities.
- ** To be considered a women-led organization, the majority of your organization’s leadership staff must be women.

1.4. Brief Purpose / Mandate of Organization (Limit one (1) page):

1.5. Funding Requested and Period of Performance:

Total Funding Requested (in USD):
Proposed Start Date:

Project Duration (months):
Proposed End Date:

2. Background and Needs Statement

Provide a brief justification for why this project is needed. What is the gap or need that this project addresses? What assessment or evidence demonstrates that this is a need? Is this information not known or not researched before? Links to relevant assessments or attached annexed assessments are welcome. (Limit one (1) page)

3. Proposed Activities and Approach

Provide a brief summary of the proposed project, including a methodological or technical overview (e.g., what is the intended technical approach, how is the approach informed by evidence or practice-based knowledge, who the intended participants will be, etc.) Applicants should also highlight gender-informed approaches and principles to protect research subjects, particularly relevant vulnerable populations (i.e., “do no harm”). (See “Check Eligibility and Fit” in Section 5.3). (Limit one (1) page)

4. Organizational Capacity in Proposed Sectors and Approaches

Provide a brief description of your organization, including background and experience in the proposed sector and technical approach. The narrative may describe your organization’s relevant previous and current projects, as well as technical staff expertise or proven technical approaches. (Limit one (1) page). Applicants should also attach their most recent annual report, organizational profile, similar research reports from the organization, or technical capacity statements and resume, as available).

5. Summary Budget (in USD)

Provide a summary budget estimate of the total amount of funding required to implement the proposed grant activity (Use table provided below). The estimate must tie directly to the proposed technical approach and offer efficiency in costs. Concept Notes will be evaluated on general budget reasonableness; if the Concept Note is selected to proceed to the full application stage, then a full line-item budget will be required with the application. Applicants may provide additional written justification/context to inform LACLEARN’s review of the proposed budget and its assumptions.

Summary Budget Categories	Amount (US\$)	Description
Direct labor (salaries, wages)		
Travel and Per Diem		
Equipment and Supplies		

Program Activities		
Other Direct Costs (examples: rent, utilities, communications)		
Total	US\$	

Key Budget Assumptions, Context, and Justification:

CN Annexes: (Annual Report, Organizational profile, Similar Research reports, Technical Capacity Statement and Resume)

Annex B: Certifications

1. Authorized Individuals

The recipient represents that the following people are authorized to negotiate on its behalf with LACLEARN and to bind the recipient in connection with this application or grant:

Name	Title	Telephone No.	Email

2. Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)

If the recipient is a US organization, or a foreign organization which has income effectively connected with the conduct of activities in the US or has an office or a place of business or a fiscal paying agent in the US, please indicate the recipient’s TIN:

TIN: _____

3. SAM Registration / Unique Entity Identifier

What is a Unique Entity Identifier?

The UEI is a 12-character unique number assigned to all entities (public and private companies, individuals, institutions, or organizations) who must register to do business with the federal government in SAM. UEIs are required in accordance with 2 CFR Part 25, and the transition from DUNS to UEI has resulted in the UEI being issued by the Federal Government in [Sam.gov](https://sam.gov) or more information on obtaining a UEI please visit: <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

Part I – Certifications and Assurances

1. Assurance of Compliance with Laws and Regulations Governing Non- Discrimination in

Federally Assisted Programs

Note: This certification applies to all US organizations and Non-US organizations if any part of the program will be undertaken in the United States.

(a) The recipient hereby assures that no person in the United States will, on the bases set forth below, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity receiving financial assistance from USAID, and that with respect to the Cooperative Agreement for which application is being made, it will comply with the requirements of:

- (1) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub. L. 88-352, 42 U.S.C. 2000- d), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance;
- (2) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicap in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance;
- (3) The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (Pub. L. 95-478), which prohibits discrimination based on age in the delivery of services and benefits supported with Federal funds;
- (4) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance (whether or not the programs or activities are offered or sponsored by an educational institution); and
- (5) USAID regulations implementing the above nondiscrimination laws, set forth in Chapter II of Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(b) If the recipient is an institution of higher education, the Assurances given herein extend to admission practices and to all other practices relating to the treatment of students or clients of the institution, or relating to the opportunity to participate in the provision of services or other benefits to such individuals and must be applicable to the entire institution unless the recipient establishes to the satisfaction of the USAID Administrator that the institution's practices in designated parts or programs of the institution will in no way affect its practices in the program of the institution for which financial assistance is sought, or the beneficiaries of, or participants in, such programs.

2. Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers for Covered Countries and Individuals (ADS 206)

USAID reserves the right to terminate this Agreement, to demand a refund or take other appropriate measures if the Grantee is found to have been convicted of a narcotics offense or to have been engaged in drug trafficking as defined in 22 CFR Part 140. The undersigned must review USAID ADS 206 to determine if any certifications are required for Key Individuals or Covered Participants.

If there are COVERED PARTICIPANTS: USAID reserves the right to terminate assistance to or take other appropriate measures with respect to, any participant approved by USAID who is found to have been

convicted of a narcotics offense or to have been engaged in drug trafficking as defined in 22 CFR Part 140.

3. Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing

(1) The undersigned represents, to the best of its knowledge, that:

Except as otherwise disclosed to the Agreement Officer in writing and included with this application, the applicant did not, within the previous three years, knowingly engage in transactions with, or provide material support or resources to, any individual or entity who was, at the time, subject to sanctions administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) within the US Department of Treasury pursuant to the Global Terrorism Sanctions Regulations (31 CFR Part 594), and the Foreign Terrorist Organizations Sanctions Regulations (31 CFR Part 597), or sanctions established by the United Nations Security Council, collectively, “US or UN sanctions.” Note: USAID intends to retain the information disclosed to the Agreement Officer pursuant to this paragraph in any award file and use it in determining whether to provide the applicant with an assistance award. USAID will not make such information available publicly unless required by law.

(2) The representation in paragraph (1) does not apply to:

- a. Transactions entered into or material support and resources provided pursuant to an OFAC license;
- b. The furnishing of USAID funds, or USAID-financed commodities or other assistance, to the ultimate beneficiaries of USAID-funded humanitarian or development assistance, such as the recipients of food, non-food items, medical care, micro-enterprise loans or shelter, unless the applicant knew or had reason to believe that one or more of these beneficiaries was subject to US or UN terrorism-related sanctions; or
- c. The procurement of goods and/or services by the Recipient acquired in the ordinary course of business through contract or purchase, such as utilities, rents, office supplies, or gasoline, unless the applicant knew, or had reason to believe, that a vendor or supplier of such goods and services was subject to US or UN sanctions.

This certification includes express terms and conditions of the award, and any violation of it will be grounds for unilateral termination of the agreement by USAID. This certification does not preclude any other remedy available to USAID.

(3) For purpose of this certification:

- a. “Material support and resources” means currency or monetary instruments or financial securities, financial services, lodging, training, expert advice, or assistance, safehouses, false documentation or identification, communications equipment, facilities, weapons, lethal substances, explosives, personnel, transportation, and other physical assets, except medicine or religious materials.
 - i. “Training” means instruction or teaching designed to impart a specific skill, as opposed to general knowledge.
 - ii. “Expert advice or assistance” means advice or assistance derived from scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge.
- b. “Entity” means a partnership, association, corporation, or other organization, group, or subgroup.

Certification of Recipient

I, _____ (Name) _____, as a legally authorized representative of _____ (Organization) do hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this organization's management and other employees responsible for their implementation are aware of the requirements placed on the organization by OMB Circulars, and Federal and USAID regulations with respect to the management of, among other things, personnel policies (including salaries), travel, indirect costs, and procurement under this agreement and I further certify that the organization is in compliance with those requirements and other applicable US laws and regulations.

I, we, understand that a false, or intentionally misleading certification could be the cause for possible actions ranging from being found non-eligible for this award, termination of award, or suspension or debarment of this organization in accordance with the ADS 303 Standard Provision for Non-US Nongovernmental Organizations (for in-kind, standard, and simplified grants) entitled "Award Termination and Suspension" and the ADS 303 Standard Provision for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations entitled "Debarment and Suspension."

By signing below the recipient provides certifications and assurances for:

- (1) the Assurance of Compliance with Laws and Regulations Governing Non-Discrimination in Federally Assisted Programs,
- (2) the Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers for Covered Countries and Individuals (ADS 206),
- (3) the Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing Implementing Executive Order 13224, and

These certifications and assurances are given in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining any and all Federal grants, loans, contracts, property, discounts, or other Federal financial assistance extended after the date hereof to the recipient by the Agency, including installment payments after such date on account of applications for Federal financial assistance which was approved before such date. The recipient recognizes and agrees that such Federal financial assistance will be extended in reliance on the representations and agreements made in these assurances, and that the United States will have the right to seek judicial enforcement of these assurances. These assurances are binding on the recipient, its successors, transferees, and assignees, and the person or persons whose signatures appear below are authorized to sign these assurances on behalf of the recipient.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date of Application _____

Name of Applying Organization _____

Project Title _____

Person Applying Printed Name and Title _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Annex C: Evaluation Criteria Table

Evaluation Stage 1 Concept Note Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for announcements under this APS may include one or more of the considerations listed in the sections below. Individual Calls for Proposals may provide additional contextualized evaluation criteria relevant to the specific solicitation.

Section	Evaluation Criteria	Possible Score	Actual Score
1.0	Proposed Activity / Project / Research Technical Quality. Criteria will be based on proposal type, but may include one or more of the following considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technically Robust Approach / Design Rationale for potential impact and sustainability 	30	
2.0	Integration of Cross-Cutting Themes including gender and social inclusion, human rights- including protection and do no harm principles. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender and social inclusion and organizational capacity demonstrated in concept note. Proposed programming actively promotes gender equality. Do no harm principles integrated into proposal? Approach assures relevant human rights and protection for vulnerable populations 	15	
3.0	Proposed activity’s alignment to LACLEARN Objectives (Section 3.2)	15	
4.0	Needs statement / demonstrated importance of the proposed work. May include one or more of the following considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed research/work is not implemented by other actors. There is a demonstrated, urgent need for the proposed research/work 	15	
5.0	Organizational Capacity. May include one or more of the following considerations:	25	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence of sectoral or technical experience and capacity required to undertake proposed activities. ● Evidence of organizational soundness and sustainability; systems and policies in place for planning and management of projects, and financial and human resources management; evidence of financial soundness ● Past performance on similar grant-funded projects or activities 		
Total		100	