



TRANSFORMATIONAL FUNDING: ROUND 1

Frequently Asked Questions

USEFUL RESOURCES

Please read the full Request for Applications before applying ([link](#)).

Please view the eligibility presentation for WiDEF Round 1 applicants ([link](#)).

Please note: Lebanon and the territories of Gaza and West Bank are now eligible to apply.

WiDEF received over 1000 questions through email inquiries and the three question and answer sessions that were held in March. These have been compiled to share with potential applicants.

ELIGIBILITY

Question: Could you please clarify if Lebanon and Palestine are eligible to apply for this proposal?

Answer: Lebanon as well as West Bank/Gaza territories are eligible. There are special provisions that any shortlisted proposals will need to follow. Please email learnmore@wedef.global for specific information.

Question: Do our programs have to have a domestic violence component? I read this in the FAQs: “Entities must have or be able to adopt gender-based violence mitigation policies for all digital inclusion activities.”

Answer: Programs must be able to adequately and responsibly address any gender-based violence or backlash that results from program.

Question: In terms of eligibility, what if a local organization hasn't reached the capacity to run such a portfolio?

Answer: Organizations that are challenged in terms of financial and staffing capacity are strongly encouraged to partner with another organization that has such experience to maximize their eligibility and program success.



Question: Can a registered trust which does not have an NGO status apply for this funding?

Answer: For profit organizations are eligible to apply as long as they meet the eligibility criteria and USAID Local entity criteria.

Question: can a non-local SME prime? That was unclear. Thanks, in advance.

Answer: No.

Question: We noticed that on the RFA, you mentioned *that Large enterprises as defined by USAID (above 249 employees), University or academic organizations, Government, government-owned agencies (or appointed government agencies), UN agencies and multilateral organizations, Non-governmental organizations (NGOS) that are not local entities by USAID definition are not eligible to apply for funding as the lead organization but can be a member of the consortium.* However, the form doesn't provide an option to indicate that we are a consortium or to list the consortium members. Could you please advise on how to proceed in this regard?

Answer: As a consortium, only the prime organization is eligible to apply. Consortium members should be considered "partners" to the program and can be listed in the program description section of the RFA form. Consortia are not a requirement for awards.

Question: Are NGOs SMEs?

Answer: WiDEF is treating both for-profits/SMEs and NGOs the same. Both are eligible as long as the criteria for local entity is met and the organization has 249 employees or fewer.

Question: Do we need to put the previous credentials/portfolio which are relevant with the core area focus or project topic?

Answer: No, although you are welcome to add supplemental information to your application.

Question: Some interventions we have implemented in Covid period but discontinued, can we implement it again show it as evidence-based intervention done in past.

Answer: Yes, as long as the eligibility criteria is met.

WIDEF

Question: Is there a particular format for submitting the application? Is a video format encouraged and if yes, what production levels are expected? :)

Answer: Please submit your application here ([link](#)). Video is not required.

Question: Can we use AI tools to assist drafting or refining answers?

Answer: Yes.

Question: We work with very marginalized groups requiring extra safety for LGBTQI+ programming. Can USAID help keep our participants safe?

Answer: Please review USAID's LGBTQI+ Inclusive Development Policy ([link](#)). WiDEF is committed to supporting and working with all LGBTQI+ persons in our development programs safely and effectively.

Question: Seeing that Care International is already a member of the consortium, can a local organization that is eligible partner with the local CARE office?

Answer: No, CARE participation is not allowed.

Question: Would previous experience of the operations and management team be considered for newly registered organizations?

Answer: Yes.

Question: For the Round 1 India is not eligible, but can Indian orgs be part of the consortium in the eligible countries?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Do we need to send a letter of interest with the application?

Answer: No.

Question: if an organization that got legally registered in December 2023 is eligible to apply?

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Answer: Yes.

Question: In our country, there's a rule that if we received the fund we should have a governmental partner, is that okay?

Answer: Yes, as long as government partners do not receive funding.

Question: We already have an active USAID/US Government funded project. Can we still apply for this?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Is it mandatory to have been funded by USAID during pilot phase so that you can apply for this scale up grant opportunity?

Answer: No.

Question: Are there a certain amount of years and organization has to be in existence to be eligible?

Answer: No, however, the organization needs to have had a successful pilot that they are ready to scale.

Question: If an application in round 1 is not given consideration, can one apply in the subsequent rounds? Likewise, if successful, can the organization apply again in the next rounds or automatically qualifies for recurring grants?

Answer: Organizations may apply to more than one WiDEF funding opportunity regardless of round 1 participation. WiDEF will not issue recurring grants.

Question: Are the additional countries we wish to implement in required to be countries where USAID operates?

Answer: Yes

Question: There is an org of Ukrainian refugees working from Poland to conduct digital inclusion work in Ukraine and neighboring countries. They are working to close a temporary "digital divide" caused by war and hope to re-connect thousands of women since conflict widens the GDD. Would they be eligible even

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though these are not necessarily our prime participation base? We haven't talked about humanitarian response. Do you know of other programs I should point them to given your connects?

Answer: WiDEF is intended to bring systemically unconnected and under connected online and connected to information services and opportunities in low- and middle-income countries. For Ukraine-specific digital inclusion support, these resources may provide better opportunities for funding: Digital Invest RFA (open until April 15 – [link](#)) and USAID's Development Innovation Ventures program ([link](#)).

DEFINITIONS

Question: How does WiDEF define the Gender Digital Divide?

Answer: WiDEF employs the USAID definition “The digital divide is the distinction between those who have Internet and/ or mobile access and are able to make use of digital communications services, and those who are excluded from these services. The gender digital divide reflects the inequalities between men and women in terms of digital technology access and use.”

Question: What does proven solution mean exactly?

Answer: A proven solution demonstrates rigorous evidence that the solution has yielded practical and concrete results informed by thorough assessment and research methods.

Question: You mentioned a focus on getting women, girls and marginalized communities online. Could you clarify what marginalized communities look like? And for SMEs that don't only focus on women but focus on marginalized communities broadly like refugees, what would successful eligibility look like?

Answer: WiDEF recognizes that marginalization can take many forms. Generally, youth, disabled, indigenous, LGBTQI+, and rural communities are included in the WiDEF definition.

Question: Can you share more info on how you define "Exhibit economic viability and scalability?" Specifically, "economic viability", does this entail a social enterprise model?

Answer: Economic viability and sustainability are context specific to the application and may take many forms. The critical factor is the longevity and success of the program long-term.

Question: How does WiDEF define "meaningful access" to digital technology, particularly smartphones and the internet?

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Answer: WiDEF follows the United Nations definition as “a level of connectivity that allows users to have a safe, satisfying, enriching and productive online experience at an affordable cost” ([link](#)).

Question: What is a “prime” organization?

Answer: Per USAID, the Prime Recipient is an organization receiving direct financial assistance (a grant or Cooperative Agreement) to carry out an activity or program.

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Question: What is meant by “scaling”?

Answer: Scale depends on context. Please visit USAID’s Pathways to Scale for more information ([link](#)).

SCOPE

Question: Can the proposal include initiatives that target digital inclusion for men as well, or is the focus strictly on women and marginalized populations? What percentage of men is targeted, particularly within the marginalized populations?

Answer: WiDEF is focused on women, girls, and marginalized populations, which may include men. Those must be the primary participants.

Question: *Preference will be given to women-led organizations proposing feminist, gender transformational solutions and entities with a demonstrated track record of supporting gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized populations. For non-women-led organizations, what chances are there to be awarded?*

Answer: All eligible organizations will be given fair and comprehensive reviews. WiDEF is particularly interested in hearing from women-led organizations, but this is not a requirement for funding.

Question: Can applicants propose solutions that address multiple core priority areas simultaneously, or is the focus expected to be on two specific areas?

Answer: All applications must focus on at least 2 priority areas as well as commit to generating and sharing data and insights. Additional priority areas are welcome.

Question: What types of evidence are considered credible for demonstrating the success of existing solutions?

Answer: Applications need to demonstrate credible evidence that the solution:

1. Drives digital inclusion for women through meaningful access to and use of accessible digital technology, particularly smartphones and the internet.
2. Significantly closes the gender digital divide in their context.
3. Is economically sustainable and scalable.

WiDEF

Question: I want to make a clarification if the WiDEF fund can be used for construction. e.g. hub centers? I would appreciate your reply.

Answer: No, major construction is not an acceptable expense.

Question: If a solution has been successfully implemented in another country, can a different team unrelated to the original project adopt it as a pilot project in our own country under the scope of this grant?

Answer: Yes.

Question: In situations where direct pilot evidence for a specific digital solution (such as an app) is lacking, but there is considerable evidence of the effectiveness of similar solutions within our target demographic, would this indirect evidence be considered sufficient for the grant's criteria?

Answer: Potentially. We invite applications in these cases where evidence is compelling.

Question: What level of detail is expected in the commitment to generating data and insights? Are there specific methodologies or tools preferred by WiDEF?

Answer: Each awarded application will work with WiDEF on a monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan that will include both universal WiDEF and per-project indicators and data collection/sharing strategies.

Question: Can you clarify the role of partnerships and collaborations in the evaluation of grant applications, particularly in terms of leveraging resources and expertise to maximize impact?

Answer: We encourage thoughtful partnerships with other originations that can strengthen the adoption and success of WiDEF Round 1 projects. This is not a requirement.

Question: WiDEF received many questions asking about funding programs that focus on health, agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship, and other development and professional sectors. WiDEF welcomes such applications that (1.) drives digital inclusion for women through meaningful access to and use of accessible digital technology, particularly smartphones and the internet, (2.) Significantly closes the gender digital divide in their context, and (3.) Is economically sustainable and scalable. Applications that focus only on customer acquisition are not eligible.

WIDEF

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Question: What if we have an existing programmed for women that only addresses one of the core areas, however we would like to integrate another core area of WiDEF - this would require us to redesign the programmed, would we still be eligible to apply? Or would this be regarded as piloting?

Answer: Potentially. We invite applications in these cases where evidence is compelling.

Question: Can a successfully established program merge with a non-piloted program?

Answer: Potentially. We invite applications in these cases where evidence is compelling.

Question: How many applications per country will WIDEF support?

Answer: There is no set limit.

Question: Should there be a minimum number of direct beneficiaries

Answer: No.

Question: How many awards will WIDEF fund?

Answer: WiDEF is aiming to fund 10 organizations.

Question: If a project is delayed or dropped due to local issues beyond reasonable control of proposers, how does WIDEF address that situation? e.g. if local laws on foreign funding change?

Answer: This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The organization needs to communicate in advance on the expected delays or as soon as they confirm there will be a delay.

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Question: Do you have preference on type applications to support? i.e. do you prefer a multi-country application?

Answer: No, as long as the priority areas and eligibility criteria are fulfilled. This RFA is broad to encourage diversity of program types and locations.

Question: We understand that pilot is not allowed but can there be a research component, as one of the main components?

Answer: Yes, as long as the main focus is on RFA objectives, priority areas and criteria.

Question: Does “Evidence-based” restrict to previous area of project implementation only, or can we replicate it to other areas too?

Answer: WiDEF encourages replication.

Question: Does this project apply to deaf children in schools? or is adult only?

Question: Does the applicant have to be targeting women/girls as part of their primary business model or can they be looking to expand their penetration for uptake by women/girls to go digital?

Answer: Both are potentially viable models.

Question: Beyond cash grants, do we get support from WiDEF in any way?

Answer: Yes, organizations can also request technical assistance.

Question: Is scalability of the proposed solution a key criterion for the proposal?

Answer: Yes.

Question: If working across multiple countries, do the partners also have to be local entities?

Answer: No, however, organizations that are sub-awardees and not local entities can only receive less than 50% of the funding.

WiDEF

Question: What if we have an existing program for women that only addresses one of the core areas, however we would like to integrate another core area of WiDEF - this would require us to redesign the program, would we still be eligible to apply? Or would this be regarded as piloting?

Answer: This would likely not fulfill the eligibility criteria. WiDEF encourages partnerships with other organizations to fulfill the commitment to the priority areas.

Question: Should the intervention be nationwide or within a specific region?

Answer: This is at the discretion and scope of the application.

Question: Our organization focus is STEM and SRH in schools in rural areas targeting girls aged 10-19. Do you support STEM awareness?

Answer: Yes, as long as the organization meets the eligibility criteria of the RFA.

Question: Does the program need to be complete within 12 months?

Answer: The funding and program windows are between 18-24 months.

Question: Are programs in the US allowed?

Answer: No.

Question: Should the beneficiaries of the project entirely women?

Answer: WiDEF recognizes that some men and non-binary people are also penalized by the digital divide. The majority of participants for any WiDEF program must be women, girls, and those with marginal status in their communities.

Question: Is there any preference or support for youth-led organizations?

Answer: No, they will be given equal opportunity as other applications.

Question: Does WiDEF also provide mentorship or guidance during the implementation phase?

Answer: WiDEF will offer different forms of technical assistance as requested.

Question: How autonomous will the proposers be during the implementation once their grant is approved?

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Answer: Awarded projects will work closely with WiDEF consortium members, including quarterly reporting and ongoing technical assistance support.

Question: Are there specific regions within countries where USAID operates that WiDEF prioritizes for funding?

Answer: 50% of the funding will be awarded to local entities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Question: Can a project support the refugee community as we have very many in Uganda?

Answer: Yes

Question: Would we be eligible to apply if we have an established program that addresses only one core area, but we partner with another origination that addresses a second core area of WiDEF - would we be eligible?

Answer: Yes

Question: It seems like USAID is the main donor contributing to the fund since their administrative procedures and regulations seem to apply. If that is the case, it would be helpful to know if there is an independent entity that will be responsible for decisions on grant recipients?

Answer: An externally led selection panel will be responsible for reviewing applications and making award and funding recommendations.

Question: Will you share the scoring criteria?

Answer: The rubric will not be shared; however, the selection panel will use the questions in the RFA specifically to evaluate projects.

PRIMING AND PARTNERING

Question: Can WiDEF Round 1 local entity awardees sub-grant to other organizations?

Answer: Local entities may apply for subawards under this RFA with further sub-grantees of any type such as other local entities, regional organizations, locally established partners and non-local entities. However, local entities may not sub-grant more than 50% of the award to any type of non-local entity

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(i.e. US, European or locally established partners). Local entities may not sub-grant more than 50% of the award to any type of non-local entity.

Question: Can WIDEF connect us to partners in countries?

Answer: No, please use other networks to identify potential partners.

Question: Can the UN be a sub-awardee?

Answer: No, UN Agencies and government entities are not eligible to receive funding, but they may be non-paid partners.

Question: How many proposals can we prime on?

Answer: One.

Question: How many proposals can we be subs on?

Answer: Local entities may be the prime on one proposal. They may be a sub-awardee to any number of other proposals.

Question: Is applying as a consortium / with partner organization compulsory? Or can we apply independently?

Answer: You may apply as a local entity. A consortium is not a requirement.

Question: Since organizations can apply to work in multiple countries, how does this work with the local entity rule?

Answer: The individual organization must fulfill USAID local entity criteria in each case. The organization can also make one application and implement the program in an additional country in which they are allowed to operate.

Question: If the Organization is fully registered by the relevant authorities in the country does the organization have to be registered again with other authorities different from those responsible for NGO's registration inside the country?

WiDEF

Answer: This is dependent on the rules of the country. The organization is eligible as long as they meet the requirements of the country they operate in.

Question: Two local NGOs are local entities as per USAID criteria, but are part of our international federation. Will they be accounted for as 2 different organizations, therefore both being organizations, therefore both being able to apply as prime, or will they be considered as one organization?

Answer: WiDEF suggests that one country local entity serve as the prime and other entities function as a sub-awardees implementing the program in other eligible countries.

Question: What is a local entity, and can an organization apply that does not fit all local entity criteria?

Answer: Organizations need to fit the following USAID Local Entity criteria ([link](#)) with no exceptions.

Question: Do applicants need to list sub-grantees as part of the proposal to manage a specific priority area in the proposal?

Answer: WiDEF would like to see a list of potential sub-awardees for illustrative purposes at this phase. Shortlisted applications will need to finalize a list of sub-awardees during the Due Diligence phase.

BUDGET

Question: It appears that the budget should be presented on a cost basis including the actual salaries of the staff of the proposed team, etc. (assuming we are applying as a lead). Please confirm.

Answer: Please estimate costs as accurately as possible. For initial submission, WiDEF only expects high level budgets; shortlisted proposals will be required to create a more detailed budget of actual costs.

Question: In terms of presenting indirect costs, is there (i) a percent amount over which we cannot exceed and (ii) do we need to show supporting documentation to back up these indirect costs? Please explain.

Answer: Please do not exceed established IRC rates that have been established for your organization or follow with 10% indirect cost recover rate offered by USAID ([link](#)). Supporting documents are not required at this stage but financial statements will be required.

Question: Where is the budget template appendix b?

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Answer: The template is in the Request for Applications on the last page in Appendix B. You may use this template or one similar of your own creation. Please only specify high-level budgets across the categories listed. Proposals may submit the budget in XLS or PDF form.

Question: Is the cost of managing sub-grantees within an applicant's budgeted amount or can the sub-grantees be financed outside the applicants' budget?

Answer: Both options are allowable depending on the organization capacity.

Question: While reviewing the application guidelines, I noticed that a budget is required to be submitted in a specific format. However, there is no mention of the currency in which the budget should be presented. Could you please provide clarification on whether the budget should be in any specific currency?

Answer: US Dollars

Question: For the new and small local NGO's what is the advisable budget range during preparation of budget? Is there any criteria or limit to the budget amount that can be applied as per the organization's income and expenses? If so, please let us know the specific eligibility criteria.

Answer: Given the diversity of organizations applying, WiDEF recommends each organization use their best judgment depending on program scope of work and operational capacities.

Question: During budget preparation is it allowed to include some expenses like buying of tools and gadgets which will be used during teaching sessions?

Answer: Any hardware or devices need to follow Bureau of Industry and Security regulations ([link](#)). If your proposal is shortlisted, WiDEF will request a list of all items and their sourcing in order to uphold US Government procurement rules, which include the *Federal Acquisition Regulation: Prohibition on Contracting With Entities Using Certain Telecommunications and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment* ([link](#)).

Question Is there an operational budget min in order to apply?

Answer: No.



Question: Is the grant reimbursement based or will it be provided upfront?

Answer: Payments for grants will follow a mix of advances & reimbursements.

Question: Is the funding level per organization going to be based on previous financial capabilities e.g. average of the last 3 years?

Answer: Many factors will affect funding levels, including the capacity and past operational performance of the local entity.

Question: Are there restrictions to how the funds are used for programs?

Answer: Funds are to be used strictly for activities approved in the scope of work and budget

Question: How concerning is it while submitting a proposal, some parts of the estimated budget are to be determined in the future? And will WIDEF help the submitting organization to round some of the expenses required?

Answer: Budgets are based on estimates by definition. However, an implementation plan with a clear staffing structure and procurement plan (if applicable) will be required if the application advances to the due diligence phase.

Question: Any suggested ratio in terms of purchasing of hardware and otherwise?

Answer: No. This depends on the scope of work and project activities.

Question: Is there a matching fund requirement?

Answer: No.

Question: if our local partners apply in consortium - could they apply for more than the 1.5M?

Answer: No.

Question: Just confirming who would the funding come from? WIDEF/CUSA or USAID. Thanks



Answer: Funds will be coming from CARE on behalf of the WiDEF consortium.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Question: Are there any specific requirements or expectations that your organization has regarding reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of funded projects, and how can I ensure that my proposal incorporates these elements effectively?

Answer: Each awarded application will work with WiDEF on a monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan that will include both universal WiDEF and per-project indicators and data collection/sharing strategies.

Question: How does your organization measure success and impact in the context of funded projects, and what indicators or benchmarks should I prioritize when designing my project monitoring and evaluation framework?

Answer: Each awarded application will work with WiDEF on a monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan that will include both universal WiDEF and per-project indicators and data collection/sharing strategies.

Question: It seems MEL is a huge aspect of this project. Do we need an in-house MEAL staff to be eligible for this funding?

Answer: This is advisable.

Question: Can you please clarify the kind of data WiDEF is looking to collect from this project?

Answer: All applications need to commit to generating data and insight through the collection and responsible use of required sex-disaggregated data, research, and gender analysis (a) to better understand and address social norms and systems that influence gender disparities in technology adoption; (b) as a precursor to inform gender-equitable design of and activities related to digital policies, protocols, platforms, products, and services; and (c) to track and benchmark change.

Question: Does our organization retain the rights to the IP from the data we collect? Can we publish our data externally?



Answer: Yes. USAID welcomes local entity publication of data collected in monitoring and evaluation with the caveat that USAID will need to approve the language when USAID is referenced, or logo used. Since the project is partially funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMFG), the project has also adopted the BMGF “Global Access” policy. “Global Access” is a foundation policy requiring that: (a) the knowledge and information gained from the project be promptly and broadly disseminated; and (b) the Funded Developments be made available and accessible at an affordable price (i) to people most in need within developing countries, or (ii) in support of the U.S. educational system and public libraries, as applicable to the project. For more information and resources on Global Access, see the foundation’s Global Access Statement and Global Access webpage. For additional information for peer-reviewed publications, see the foundation’s Open Access policy ([link](#)).

USAID/USG REGULATIONS

WIDEF received multiple related questions about the Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations.

- For this RFA, please list "APS-OAA-21-00001" under Request of Application Number and "WIDEF R1" for Application Number in Section 6.
- Please have someone with legal signing authority provide signatures in Parts II and III. It is necessary to fill out Part VI, Sections 5, 6, and 8 with approximate values as this will help WIDEF identify the procurement needs of the applicant.
- For specific procurement information, please visit <https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-300/references-chapter/303mab> ([link](#)).

Question: Do all applications need a UEI number?

Answer: Yes, any awarded applications will need a UEI number. If you do not have one, please apply and note that you are in the process of acquiring a UEI. Please apply for a UEI number here ([link](#)).

Question: If applying as a consortium, are only lead organizations required to have Unique Entity Identifier through SAM or co-partner/ partner organization should also have SAM registration?

Answer: The DUNS is no longer valid for federal award identification. Please apply for a UEI number ([link](#)).

Question: What is the contract type i.e. fixed award, cooperative agreement?

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Answer: This will depend on the scope of work and amount to be awarded. Overall, WiDEF is a cooperative agreement with USAID.

Question: Is there an expectation that the local USAID must be involved in the proposed project or activities?

Answer: The local USAID mission will be asked to provide concurrence as is the policy for all USAID projects and at minimum will be updated on the project's implementation, but it is not a requirement for the USAID mission to be involved in the proposed project or activity. However, if USAID mission requests to be involved, it is highly recommended for organizations to accommodate this request.

Question: What is WiDEF's position of ownership of any intellectual property developed (or further developed) using project funding? Is the IP ownership retained by grantees after the close of grant? Is making it open source a requirement?

Answer: The intellectual property rights are retained by the organization or entity that creates the IP, subject to any specific provisions in the award agreement. Organizations are not required to make products/services open source.

WiDEF also received many inquiries about upcoming funding rounds. The scope of these has not yet been determined; please join the mailing list at <http://widedf.global> to stay up to date on all WiDEF announcements.