



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



PRO-WASH
Practices, Research and Operations
in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



SCALE
Strengthening Capacity in Agriculture
Livelihoods and Environment

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

PRO-WASH & SCALE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

APPLIED RESEARCH AWARD

RFA: SC-PWS-ARA-RFA-2023-01

Subject: Ex-post evaluation of the sustainability of select cross-sectoral interventions

Date RFA Issued: November 1, 2023

End of Question Period: December 1, 2023, 5:00 PM ET

Due Date for Applications: January 15, 2024, 5:00 PM ET

Award Ceiling: USD \$200,000 per Applied Research Award

Issued by: Save the Children Federation, Inc. / PRO-WASH & SCALE



Save the Children.

Disclaimer: This request for applications was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the PRO-WASH & SCALE Award and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

CONTENTS

Acronyms	iii
Introduction from the PRO-WASH & SCALE Managing Director	iv
A. Authority and Introduction.....	1
B. Specific Programmatic Guidance.....	1
B1. Background and Focus Areas.....	1
B2. Objective.....	3
B3. Focus Areas.....	4
B4. Type and Number of Awards.....	6
B5. Award Timeline.....	6
B6. Anticipated Deliverables.....	6
B9. Payment.....	7
B10. Funding Availability	8
B11. Authorized Geographic Code.....	8
C. Applicant Eligibility	8
D. Authorization for Research Activities	9
E. Selection Process and Timeline	9
E1. Selection Process: Overview.....	9
E2. Technical Review Committee	10
E3. Timeline for Issuing RFA and Selecting Applications	10
E4. Amendments to RFA.....	10
E5. Questions	10
F. Research Application Evaluation Criteria	10
F2. Non-Scored Requirements.....	12
F3. Appendices.....	13
F4. Budget Preparation.....	14
F6. How to Submit the Application.....	14
G. PRO-WASH & SCALE Award Branding and Marking Guidelines	15
H. Intellectual Property	15
I. Other Applicable USAID Regulations	15
J. Attachments	15

ACRONYMS

BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CFW	Cash-for-work
CPM	USAID Feed the Future Community Production and Marketing Activity
DEC	USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse
DFAP	Development food assistance program
DFSA	Development food security activity
FFP	USAID's Office of Food for Peace (now BHA)
FSN	Food security and nutrition
FtF	Feed the Future
HEI	Higher education institution
IDEAL	Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning Activity
IP	Implementing partner
IRB	Institutional review board
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NICRA	Negotiated indirect cost rate agreement
NRM	Natural resource management
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
PRO-WASH & SCALE	Practice, Research, and Operations in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene and Strengthening Capacity in Agriculture, Livelihoods, and Environment
R&I	Refine and Implement
RFA	Request for applications
RFSA	Resilience food security activity
SAM	System for Award Management
SPIR	Strengthen PSNP4 Institutions and Resilience
TRAIN	Targeted Response for Agriculture, Income, and Nutrition
TRC	Technical Review Committee
UEI	Unique Entity Identification Number
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollars
WALA	Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WRM	Water resources management

INTRODUCTION FROM THE PRO-WASH & SCALE MANAGING DIRECTOR

November 1, 2023

Dear prospective research applicants,

The Practice, Research, and Operations in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene and Strengthening Capacity in Agriculture, Livelihoods, and Environment (PRO-WASH & SCALE) Award is excited to release this request for applications (RFA). The goal of the RFA is to solicit applications to explore sustainability in the domains of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), agriculture, natural resource management (NRM), water resources management (WRM), livelihoods, markets, and cash-for-work (CFW), vouchers-for-work, and food-for-work interventions on closed USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)-funded development or resilience food security activities (DFSAs/RFSAs) or development food assistance programs (DFAPs). This includes legacy Food for Peace (FFP) programs, as the programs that fall under this RFA were mostly wholly funded by FFP.

The successful applicant will have the opportunity to generate robust evidence around under-studied thematic areas. The results from the sustainability review will expand the evidence base of interventions and approaches that foster lasting outcomes and contribute to the improved design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of programming by BHA implementing partners (IPs). This RFA is designed to require minimal resources for application; the successful applicant will work with our PRO-WASH & SCALE team post-award to refine evaluation questions, finalize research design, and draft a research management plan, amongst other activities.

We look forward to receiving your applications and to working with you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Titus

PRO-WASH & SCALE Managing Director

A. Authority and Introduction

The purpose of this RFA is to solicit applications to address knowledge gaps related to the sustainability of select cross-sectoral interventions implemented by BHA-funded development food assistance programs (DFAPs), resilience (RFSAs),¹ or development (DFSAs)² food security activities that have since closed. For simplicity, this RFA will refer to these as RFSAs. The study will provide actionable recommendations for future IPs in the domains of WASH, agriculture, NRM, WRM, livelihoods, markets, and CFW, vouchers-for-work, and food-for-work activities, contributing to PRO-WASH & SCALE's aim of strengthening the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of key sector-specific interventions (see [section B3](#)). Under this RFA, Save the Children Federation, Inc. (Save the Children) will fund one award at up to \$200,000 USD for a study period of up to 16 months.

Resourcing for this sub-award is provided by the USAID/BHA-funded PRO-WASH & SCALE Award. PRO-WASH & SCALE is a four-year award that aims to strengthen the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of key sector-specific interventions. This work focuses on food and nutrition security activities in emergency, early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience settings. PRO-WASH & SCALE works with IPs to enhance the impact, sustainability, and scalability of BHA-funded WASH, integrated WRM, agriculture, NRM, and livelihood activities. The PRO-WASH & SCALE Award is designed based on work carried out under two independent awards, reports from these previous activities are available on the [Food Security and Nutrition \(FSN\) Network](#). This applied research will generate evidence on the sustainability of such interventions, directly contributing to the Award's aims.

This RFA describes the objectives of the PRO-WASH & SCALE applied research, explains key technical areas of focus, lists qualifications of applying organizations, lists criteria for evaluating applications, and provides information on funding, application format, and other relevant details. To be considered for this applied research sub-award, all applicants must submit the full application as outlined in [section F6](#) by **January 15, 2024**.

B. Specific Programmatic Guidance

B1. Background and Focus Areas

USAID defines sustainability as “the ability of a local system, network, or institutions to produce desired outcomes over time. Programs contribute to sustainability when they strengthen a system’s ability to produce valued results and to be both resilient and adaptive in the face of changing circumstances.”³ BHA’s monitoring and evaluation guidance, which RFA implementers are required to follow, describes that: “Sustainability is achieved when outcomes and impacts (and sometimes interventions) are maintained or expanded after an activity withdraws its resources through the exit process.”⁴

Sustainability of WASH, agriculture, NRM, WRM, livelihoods, markets, and CFW, vouchers-for-work, and food-for-work activities (herein referred to as “key areas”) have been identified as a challenge by stakeholders across many RFSAs. This challenge is not unique to these activities as multiple

¹ [USAID/BHA Resilience Food Security Activity](#)

² Development food security activities were the previous iterations of the Food for Peace development activities that aimed to reduce food insecurity among vulnerable populations for the long-term and help build resilience in communities facing chronic poverty and recurrent crises such as drought.

³ [ADS Chapter 201 Program Cycle Operational Policy](#)

⁴ [USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance Technical Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Resilience Food Security Activities](#)

interconnected and dynamic factors such as financial, institutional, environmental, technical, and social factors impact sustainability.

While this remains a challenge, few ex-post evaluations have been conducted to unpack longer term drivers and barriers to sustainability. Therefore, our current understanding of the sustainability of interventions in the key areas post-activity completion is limited. It is important to understand why/how interventions are or are not sustained to generate guidance for future activities. Understanding the dimensions of sustainability is critical to PRO-WASH & SCALE's work of supporting partners to strengthen the design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of key sector-specific interventions. The research should advance the understanding of sustainability in multi-sectoral programming and provide insights into activity quality, cost-effectiveness, and persistence of activity models and approaches. Understanding the linkages between different sectors (how market systems development contributes to WASH and vice versa, for example) is also valuable to future RFSA's in terms of sequencing and layering interventions. This research will also build on sustainability research undertaken by Tufts University.

As noted above, few research activities have examined the sustainability of interventions. To our knowledge, to date, following the 2015 *Sustaining Development: A Synthesis of Results from a Four-Country Study of Sustainability and Exit Strategies among Development Food Assistance Projects*⁵ report, only one additional ex-post evaluation of a DFSA has been published. This evaluation from 2019 was of the Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement⁶ (WALA) activity in Southern Malawi, which operated from 2009-2014.

Additional insights on post-program sustainability have come from the USAID Water Team's Water Communications and Knowledge Management project, which conducted six independent ex-post evaluations⁷ to understand the long-term impact of its WASH interventions. The evaluations informed future USAID investments by assessing sustained activity results years after activity closure. While findings are relevant for IPs, programs funded by BHA, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), and FFP were excluded from this review.

In a similar vein, the 2020 ex-post evaluation of USAID's Feed the Future (FtF) Community Production and Marketing (CPM) Activity, implemented in Uganda between 2013 and 2018, offers some compelling insights on the sustainability of agricultural interventions. While relevant to many IPs, this evaluation focused solely on a FtF program and on value chains that typically are not supported within BHA, OFDA, and FFP, limiting the applicability of the findings.

PRO-WASH & SCALE does not advise that ex-post studies such as this be used as accountability mechanisms as their time-lagged nature is ill-suited for this purpose. Rather, ex-post studies provide valuable insights and a comprehensive view of the persistence of an activity's outcome(s) and are ideal for fostering a culture of learning and improvement. By using ex-post studies as learning tools, organizations encourage open discussions about what programming is most likely to foster long-term sustainability of outcomes. PRO-WASH & SCALE encourages partners to embrace this perspective and to view it as a tool for learning and adaptation.

⁵ [Effective Sustainability and Exit Strategies for USAID FFP Development Food Assistance Projects | Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project \(FANTA\) \(fantaproject.org\)](#)

⁶ [Long-Term Impact Evaluation of the Malawi Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement Program](#)

⁷ [USAID'S Impact: Ex-Post Evaluation Series](#)

B2. Objective

The objective of this RFA is to identify lessons and best practices related to the sustainability of select interventions 2-5 years post-activity close-out to inform future RFSA design and implementation. The selected partner will look at a subset of technical interventions that relate to the key areas.

Through a mix of impact evaluation methods, qualitative methods, and other approaches (as proposed by the selected partner and discussed with PRO-WASH & SCALE), the research will explore and respond to the following questions:

- Individual/Household Level: To what extent did the knowledge, attitudes, practices, and technologies introduced and/or promoted by the RFSA continue, if intended, after the Activity ended? To which extent did they scale up/expand? What factors contributed to either status?
- Individual/Household/Organizational Level: Did the interventions result in any unintended consequences (both positive and negative)?
- Organizational Level: What is the level of continuation, functionality, and role of community-based institutions, services providers, and/or businesses that were developed or strengthened by the closed RFSA? Have these organizations continued to implement the intended action(s)? If not, why not? If so, what is the quality, level of demand, and degree of community satisfaction with the goods and/or services?
- Organizational Level: Based on the findings to the questions above, what are considerations to the design, sequencing, or handover/transition of interventions to promote continuation of the practices/services beyond the life of the RFSA.
- Organizational Level: (If applicable) Did the maintenance and ownership of assets created via CFW/food-for-work/cash-for-assets continue after the conclusion of the RFSA (and for how long)? How are assets maintained and governed? What is the level of community satisfaction with the assets and their associated governance structures?
- Household/Organizational Level: How well did communities absorb the effects of shocks and stresses (if relevant) and adapt their strategies to maintain their food and nutrition security? Did capacities that were strengthened by the closed RFSA help households manage and/or recover from these shocks and stresses?

B3. Focus Areas

Selection of Country, Activity, and Interventions of Focus

Applicants must focus their applied research on one RFSAs that has been closed out for at least two years (but no more than five years) as of January 15, 2024. To ensure applicability of findings to future IPs, the research must focus on a country in which there are current RFSAs or future RFSAs are anticipated.

Given this criteria, countries/activities that may be considered are:

Table 1. Country, Activity, and Dates of Implementation

Country	Location	Activity Name	Dates of Implementation
Ethiopia	Amhara and Oromia regions of Ethiopia	Strengthen PSNP4 Institutions and Resilience (SPIR) Development Food Security Activity (DFSA)	2016-2021
	Amhara	Targeted Response for Agriculture, Income, and Nutrition (TRAIN)	
	Oromia	DFSA1	
Madagascar	44 communes in Andrefana Atsinanana, Vatovavy Fitovinany, and Atsimo Andrefana regions	Fararano Development Food Security Activity	2014-2019
	Two geographic areas in southern Madagascar: Central Highlands (Amaron'i Mania and Haute Matsiatra) and the South (Atsimo Andrefana)	ASOTRY Development Food Assistance Project	2014-2019
Zimbabwe	Four districts located across Matabeleland North (Tsholotsho) and South (Bulilima, Mangwe, and Gwanda)	Amalima Development Food Assistance Project	2014-2020
	66 wards in six districts of Manicaland and Masvingo provinces	ENSURE Development Food Assistance Project	2013-2020

Additional information on each activity can be found on the FSN Network at this [link](#). Additional documents that may be of use to applicants can be found on the [USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse \(DEC\)](#) and online.

Applicants must justify their selection of the activity, taking into consideration:

- Existing understanding of and experience in the context they are proposing to undertake the work.
- How examination of this activity will shed light on the research questions and objectives outlined in [section B2](#).
- The likelihood of the proposed RFSA yielding relevant insights related to sustainability of food and nutrition security practice, policy, or products.
- PRO-WASH & SCALE will not be able to facilitate introductions to previous implementing staff. The selected partner will need to rely on publicly available data and reports for information gathering. The selected partner may engage with USAID Mission staff depending on their availability, but PRO-WASH & SCALE cannot guarantee this.

Other logistical factors as noted below:

- Applicants must specify and justify the technical interventions in key areas they propose to examine through this research.
- The exact number and nature of the technical areas of focus will be determined based on several factors including the interventions that were included in the now-closed RFSA, the availability of historical data and opportunity to collect additional data, and the feasibility of examining a given number of interventions within the allocated budget and timeframe.
- Examination of cross-sectoral program interventions, such as the application of market-based approaches to WASH or the management of water resources for agricultural production, is encouraged.

The exact research methodology will depend on the activity being evaluated, but is expected to include the following:

- Facilitated co-creation process post-award with the selected applicant and PRO-WASH & SCALE.
 - Co-creation will include a series of meetings with the selected partner on refining the research questions, research design, methodology and sampling strategy, data collection plan, ethics/institutional review board (IRB) approval process, research management plan, and dissemination planning.
 - This will also include determining the sustainability framework for the study.
- Desk review considering published material and unpublished reports or other documents where available.
 - This should focus primarily on the selected country, including from other USAID investments in-country and available documentation from the selected activity while also drawing from the broader evidence from other USAID implementing countries.
- All proposed data collection and analysis will be disaggregated by sex and age. Further disaggregation (e.g., by disability or ethnic group) is strongly encouraged.

B4. Type and Number of Awards

Save the Children (Prime on the PRO-WASH & SCALE Award) plans to award one Fixed Amount sub-award under this Applied Research Award RFA. It is anticipated that the Applied Research Award solicited through this RFA will be issued on or about August 2024. PRO-WASH & SCALE reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Save the Children, or USAID, nor does it commit Save the Children or USAID to pay for the costs incurred in the submission of an application. Save the Children and USAID reserve the right to reject any or all submissions received and to negotiate separately with an applicant, if such action is in the best interest of Save the Children and the PRO-WASH & SCALE

B5. Award Timeline

The duration of the Applied Research Award under this RFA is a maximum of 16 months from the date of the award. This 16-month award timeline includes five phases:

1. Research design finalization and preparation.
2. Data collection and analysis.
3. Document completion and submission.
4. Review and finalization of research products and reports with PRO-WASH & SCALE.
5. Research dissemination.

While the award is envisioned for up to 16 months, please note that study preparation, data collection, and preparing the research products should not exceed 12 months. The remaining 4 months should be dedicated to research product dissemination and socialization.

The grantee should expect to work closely with PRO-WASH & SCALE staff on Phase 1, which will include the following steps:

1. Review of closed activity and context deep-dive
2. Research questions and evaluation readiness
3. Research design (methodology including sustainability framework, sampling strategy, data collection plan, and identifying technical risks)
4. Ethics & IRB approval process
5. Research management plan

B6. Anticipated Deliverables

Reporting Requirements

The type, number, content, etc. of milestones submitted and the timeline for submission shall be based on the successful applicant's proposed deliverables outlined in the application. At a minimum, every recipient will be required to submit or participate in:

- Final Certifications (template to be provided): final one-page form certifying completion of the activity and associated deliverables as outlined in the agreement, including confirmation that all data sets have been shared with Save the Children.
- All the deliverables for each sub-award milestone as outlined in the signed sub-award agreement which will include but not be limited to:
 - Roles and responsibilities document between PRO-WASH & SCALE and the grantee.

- Bi-weekly call notes or short report include a description of progress and plans for the next two weeks. Justification must be provided for any deviations from the original research plan.
- Inception report detailing the proposed strategy, updated work plan, and literature review.
- Drafted research tools and study protocols as part of co-creation.
- Final research tools and study protocols that are co-created with PRO-WASH & SCALE and that consider USAID and partner input.
- Submissions (if relevant) for (IRB approval and/or submission to Save the Children's ethical review board).
- Draft final comprehensive presentation (slide deck).
- Final comprehensive presentation (slide deck) that incorporates feedback from stakeholders including PRO-WASH, BHA, and IPs.
- A learning brief that shares key results and recommendations from this study.
 - Learning brief should include high resolution photos.
- We recommend that all photos should not be smaller than 1024 x 768 pixels in size. A final external online webinar (approximately 60 – 90 minutes) and summary presentation slide deck for USAID partners and stakeholders.

Before deliverables can be disseminated or considered final, and grantees are issued final payment, all final deliverables must be approved by PRO-WASH & SCALE for technical content and soundness as well as readability, proofreading and editing, graphic design, usability, accessibility and 508 compliance, and proper branding and marking (according to the PRO-WASH & SCALE Award Branding and Marking Guidelines). It is expected that the deliverables will be submitted in a high-quality format and require minimal, if any, editing by technical staff. Grantees without in-house editing and graphic design staff are encouraged to budget these costs in their application. PRO-WASH & SCALE reviewers will expect high quality products that are ready for immediate dissemination.

All resources, including final reports and deliverables generated through PRO-WASH & SCALE funding will be shared on the FSN Network and USAID's DEC. Raw data sets will be uploaded to the Data Development Library. As per 2CFR 200.315, USAID also reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for federal purposes, and to authorize others to do so.

B9. Payment

Fixed amount payments will be scheduled in the award as milestone payments and will be collaboratively established and based on the organization's work plan. This depends on the selected applicant's negotiated budget amount, the agreed upon amount for each milestone, the definition of each milestone, and the successful completion of the deliverable(s) associated with each milestone. Advances are not available on this award, milestone payments can be spaced out, so organization budget does not impede successful award implementation.

Payment shall be issued for properly invoiced amounts within 30 days of receiving completed deliverables agreed upon in the grant agreement. The payment currency shall be United States dollars (USD).

B10. Funding Availability

Final funding levels for this award will depend on content, relevance, quality, and needs with a ceiling of USD \$200,000 (subject to availability of funds). Acceptance of an application under this RFA does not constitute an award nor does it guarantee that the application (if awarded) will be funded at the full dollar amount requested.

B11. Authorized Geographic Code

The Authorized Geographic Code for commodities and services other than restricted commodities and transportation, engineering, and construction services is Geographic Code 935 (any area or country but excluding prohibited sources). The sub-recipient shall give first preference to Geographic Code 937 (United States, the cooperating/recipient country [even if it is an advanced developing country], and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, and excluding prohibited sources). Whenever Geographic Code 935 is used, the sub-recipient must document its files to demonstrate that:

1. The project requires non-restricted commodities or services (other than transportation, construction, and engineering services) of a type that are not produced in and available for purchase in Geographic Code 937; or
2. It is necessary to permit procurement from Geographic Code 935 to meet the emergency needs of the affected populations; or
3. It is more efficient and/or necessary to achieve the project's objectives.

C. Applicant Eligibility

PRO-WASH & SCALE will not accept applications from individuals. All applicants must be legally recognized organizational entities under applicable law. Applicants must comply with all applicable Unique Entity Identification Number (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements. Applicants are not required to have a UEI at the time of application but must have a UEI number at the time of the award. Applicants must have completed all required steps (if any) with the host government to legally operate their program.

Applicants must have an organizational presence in the country where they are proposing to undertake research and/or partner with an organization in that country. Preference will be given to researchers with research institutions and higher education institutions (HEIs) in developing countries as defined by USAID's [ADS Reference 310maa | Document | U.S. Agency for International Development \(usaid.gov\)](#).

Organizations are welcome to propose collaborative efforts, but each application must identify one organization that will be the lead/prime recipient of funding and be responsible for program requirements. The lead/prime organization will be responsible for coordinating efforts with other partners. All collaborative efforts must be clearly identified and described in the application. Lead Applicants or collaborating organization(s) must be legally recognized organizational entities under applicable laws of the implementing country. Applicants are permitted to submit only one research application in response to this RFA.

The following are not eligible to apply for grants under this RFA:

- Members of the PRO-WASH & SCALE consortium: Save the Children and Mercy Corps
- Individuals and/or sole proprietorships
- Government entities, including ministries
- Multilateral organizations

- Firms operating as commercial companies or other organizations (including non-profit and non-governmental organizations) that are wholly or partially owned by foreign governments or agencies

In their cost applications, organizations should indicate whether they have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with any U.S. government agency. Organizations or institutions that do not have a NICRA are eligible for grants under this RFA either by using a de-minimis indirect cost rate (if requirements of 2 CFR 200.414(f) are met) or by direct charging all costs using a documented cost allocation methodology. All proposed costs must be reasonable, allocable, and allowable in accordance with applicable cost principles.

Applications by for-profit organizations cannot include profit in the proposed budget. Profit is prohibited per 2 CFR 700.13.

D. Authorization for Research Activities

Where applicable, applicants must comply with (IRB requirements of their own institutions and any national-level IRBs in the country(s) where the research will be conducted, as well as approval by Save the Children's internal ethics review committee. These reviews should be factored into the research plan with the aim of being completed within the first four months of the award.

Applicants must fully adapt applied research activities to be completed in complex environments. Applicants must demonstrate in the research approach and methodology section of the application how they will account for any travel-related restrictions related to disease outbreaks, natural disasters, or security situations, and propose potential mitigation strategies for carrying out this work within the given timeline. Award recipients will be expected to follow all health and safety regulations in their target country(s) of research.

E. Selection Process and Timeline

E1. Selection Process: Overview

The full application package includes a narrative research application (Attachment 1), research activity schedule (Attachment 2), detailed budget (Attachment 3), budget narrative (Attachment 4), and past performance information (Attachment 5). Applications will be evaluated using the technical and financial criteria set forth in [section F](#). Applications will be ranked based on the combined scores on their technical and financial components.

After evaluation and ranking of the applications, a letter will be sent to the highest scoring applicants requesting clarifications to their application. A follow-up call will be scheduled to allow for discussion between the applicant and PRO-WASH & SCALE staff. Applicants will be given time to adjust their application if needed before resubmitting to PRO-WASH & SCALE. At this time, an award will be recommended to BHA for approval.

All applicants recommended to BHA will be required to complete a standard pre-award assessment to confirm programmatic and administrative/financial capacity to meet all applicable USAID rules and regulations before the award is issued. This assessment requests information regarding relevant financial policies and systems, recent financial audits, programmatic experience with the project's target population, and the organization's capacity to follow USAID-stipulated award conditions. Any identified compliance risks will be incorporated into the capacity and action plan in the sub-award agreement.

PRO-WASH & SCALE reserves the right to determine the resulting level of funding for the award(s).

E2. Technical Review Committee

PRO-WASH & SCALE will establish a Technical Review Committee (TRC) for this RFA. Collectively, these technical experts will provide academic, professional, and implementation experience relevant to the specific research application. The TRC will make the final shortlist selection of successful applicants who will receive an issue letter and be invited to a clarification call. Applicants will then submit a final response to the issue letter and make any other relevant revisions to their application. The TRC will recommend one applicant to USAID for final approval.

Applicants are encouraged to use plain language in their submissions as not all readers will have deep technical knowledge of the research topic.

E3. Timeline for Issuing RFA and Selecting Applications

- This PRO-WASH & SCALE Applied Research Award RFA is open from the date of issue.
- Submissions are due by January 15, 2024, 5:00 PM ET. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.
- The full selection process, including review of applications, final negotiations with top- ranked applicants, and final selection is expected to take five to six months.
- The research must be conducted, finalized, and disseminated by the applicant within the 16-month award timeline. This ensures PRO-WASH & SCALE can further disseminate learnings after the award period.

E4. Amendments to RFA

This Applied Research Award RFA may be amended at any time and will be posted on the [FSN Network](#). PRO-WASH & SCALE, Save the Children, and/or USAID reserve the right to cancel this RFA at any time.

E5. Questions

The point of contact for this RFA is Beatrice Scheuermann, Small Grants Advisor (PWS_Research@savechildren.org). Questions on this RFA may be submitted to Scheuermann in writing no later than December 1, 2023, 5:00 PM ET with *PRO-WASH & SCALE Applied Research Award RFA and the name of the Lead Applicant* as the subject line. Answers to questions will be posted by December 8, 2023, 5:00 PM ET on the [PRO-WASH & SCALE Applied Research Award](#) page on the FSN Network.

F. Research Application Evaluation Criteria

The maximum points possible between the technical and financial criteria is 100 points.

Table 2. Research Application Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Description
Problem Statement and Context 10 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant must demonstrate an in depth understanding of the context where they are proposing to work.
Research Objectives and Rationale 10 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected outputs, outcomes, and impact of the research are clearly stated and responsive to the research questions and objectives outlined in this RFA.

Criterion	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected outputs, outcomes, and impact of the research consider multiple sectors, including laying out how CFW/food-for-work /cash-for-assets will be considered (if applicable). Clearly lays out the justification for the selected activity of interest and sub-sectors. Demonstrates that proposed RFSA of focus has a high likelihood of yielding relevant insights related to sustainability of food and nutrition security practice, policy, or products.
Applicants' Background 10 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience working in food and nutrition security in development contexts, including an understanding of sustainability-related interventions and challenges. Relevant experience within the past three years and capacity relevant to the specific research proposed. Demonstrated capacity of Lead Applicant to lead, manage, and execute research or related activities of similar magnitude and scope. <p><i>Applicants are welcome to provide capability statements and organizational profiles as annexes up to five pages). However, this section in the main application must highlight the points above.</i></p>
Research Approach, Methodology and Research Plan 35 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research approach and methodology are clearly and adequately described. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rationale for the selected methodology, including strengths and limitations. Assessed feasibility of the research. Nature of data and information collection methods Data sources. Sampling methodology. Data analysis methods. Methods for validating the final recommendations with IPs and government stakeholders. Ethical considerations including institutional review requirements. The research approach, methodology, and research plan are well reasoned, well organized, and based on sound rationale. Identifies and considers the different and unique needs, abilities, and opportunities of girls, boys, women, and men by including gender equality considerations in the proposed research activities. Describe how the approach to data collection and analysis can be adapted to security conditions, disease outbreak related travel restrictions, and safety precautions for the study teams, partners, and study participants.

Criterion	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility of work plan, specifically regarding time required for each step. • Roles of Lead Applicant, collaborating organization(s), and any partners are clearly defined.
Research Products and Dissemination 10 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated experience developing high quality communication products based on research. • Describe the strategy for working efficiently with IPs, PRO-WASH & SCALE, USAID, and relevant government stakeholders throughout the sub-award to sensitize the research design, findings, and final recommendations.
Quality Assurance 10 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application includes one or more primary investigators, their experience, and fully explains their roles in ensuring technical quality of the research. At a minimum, the applicant is required to include two-page CV(s) for all listed Primary investigators as an annex. • Application describes sufficient processes to ensure quality research implementation, data collection, analysis, and presentation of final product.
Budget and Budget Narrative 10 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget is sufficient for the work proposed and research goals. • Costs described are realistic, reasonable, allocable, and correspond to the technical narrative. • Budget includes staff or consultant time for final product editing, graphic design, and translation into the main language of the country.
Developing Country Preference 5 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application includes partnership with research institutions or HEI headquartered in developing countries as defined by USAID’s list of developing countries.

F2. Non-Scored Requirements

Research applications must comply with the following non-scored requirements:

- Applicants for the Applied Research Award must submit technical and financial applications before January 15, 2025, 5:00 PM ET.
- Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements described in [section C](#).
- As detailed in [section B5](#), the period for data collection and analysis must not exceed 12 months, while all award activities must be completed within 16 months.
- The proposed budget must not exceed USD \$200,000 and demonstrate understanding of project activity accounting and USAID costs principles.
- The Research Application Narrative must follow all the formatting requirements found in Attachment 1: Narrative Research Application Template.
- Applications must be in English.

Applications that do not comply with the above requirements will not be considered for funding.

Applicants should consider the following:

- Logistical implications of conducting this research in a complex setting (e.g., travel, security considerations), including adequate resources needed to ensure data collection to generate findings and recommendations applicable to BHA partners. Applicants should propose potential mitigation strategies for carrying out this work within the given timeline.
- Government and other requirements that may apply to research organizations (e.g., work permits, visas, travel insurance).
- The selected research organization is expected to liaise closely with PRO-WASH & SCALE.
- The outputs of this applied research award include both research and communication outputs. The grantee should be staffed accordingly to ensure that outputs are of high quality.
- Translation, editing, proofreading, and graphic design costs are the responsibility of the grantee. As allowable costs under this award, PRO WASH & SCALE expect that these will be adequately budgeted into the application. Failure to produce high-quality, technically sound, properly formatted, and designed final products will result in rejection of the products by PRO-WASH & SCALE and may result in non-payment of the associated milestone in its entirety and/or repercussions up to termination of the contract for non-performance.
- PRO-WASH & SCALE recognize that gender and social norms deeply impact and influence multi-sectoral interventions and behaviors. Gender and social inclusion are cross cutting issues to be integrated into each step of this research, including the composition of the research team.
- Applications should clearly explain how the research will be carried out to ensure that there are considerations of girls, boys, women, and men rather than only/mostly referring to adults, children, adolescents, families, or communities.
- The research application should also demonstrate how the desk review and/or other methods will explore a deep understanding of relevant gender inequalities experienced by girls, boys, women, and men in the project context as it relates to the specific research questions.

F3. Appendices

Table 3. Appendices

Appendices	Description
Citations/References	
Principle Investigator(s) CV	
Letter of Support (one page per collaborator)	Non-binding documentation of collaborators' intent, willingness, and ability to commit to conducting research together if the proposed team receives the award.
Capability Statements or Organizational Profiles	These are optional to compliment the Applicant Background section in the narrative.
Past Performance Review	This should include related experience on similar projects.
Writing Samples	Two writing samples are requested that demonstrate the ability to produce digestible, straightforward work accessible to a variety of stakeholders.

F4. Budget Preparation

The activity budget must be submitted using the Detailed Budget Template (Attachment 3) and Budget Narrative Template (Attachment 4). Please follow directions in the workbook when entering numbers.

The budget should include the total cost of implementation for the activity proposed as well as any planned cost share (if any). No cost share is required.

Save the Children will not allow funding for the following categories of items:

- Procurement of commodities listed below:
 - Agricultural commodities
 - Motor vehicles
 - Pharmaceuticals
 - Pesticides
 - Used Equipment
 - US government-owner excess property
 - Fertilizer
 - For this Applied Research Award, condoms and contraceptives are also considered restricted commodities.
- Construction (e.g., alteration or repair, including dredging and excavation of buildings, structures, or other real property and includes, without limitation, improvements, renovation, alteration, and refurbishment.)
 - The term includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures.
- Capital assets as defined in 2CFR200 (e.g., land, buildings, equipment, and intellectual property).

Save the Children may request additional detailed budget information following notification to an applicant that it is under consideration for an award. If necessary, Save the Children may arrange meetings to evaluate specific elements of costs, and examine data to determine the necessity, reasonableness, and allocability of the costs reflected in the budget and their allowability per the applicable USG cost principles.

F6. How to Submit the Application

Research applications shall be submitted electronically and shall include the Narrative Research Application Template (Attachment 1), Research Activity Schedule (Attachment 2), Budget Template (Attachment 3), Budget Narrative Template (Attachment 4), and Past Performance Information Request (Attachment 5).

Please send applications to PWS_Research@savechildren.org.

G. PRO-WASH & SCALE Award Branding and Marking Guidelines

As a condition of receipt of the PRO-WASH & SCALE Applied Research Award, adherence to the PRO-WASH & SCALE Branding and Marking Guidelines is required. The guidelines will be sent to applicants whose applications are selected for further review or at the time of the award.

H. Intellectual Property

Any materials developed under this award relating to intangible property, such as intellectual property or patents, are subject to applicable rules under 2 CFR 200.315, "Intangible Property"⁸. If applicants plan to use intangible property developed previously under non-federal awards, they must clearly identify it and the anticipated use in the project. Applicants must also specify and mark if the application includes any proprietary information.

I. Other Applicable USAID Regulations

As Save the Children is providing a Sub-award under United States law, the Lead Applicant is therefore, subject to the laws and regulations of the United States on sub-awards, including but not limited to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards outlined in the Prime Award, and USAID's Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards (Attachment 2). Where appropriate "USAID" shall mean Save the Children and "recipient" shall mean "Lead Applicant."

Awards to US and non-U.S. organizations will be administered based on the terms and conditions of the award and USAID Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards (Attachment 2).

J. Attachments

Download attachments folder including documents listed below [here](#).

- Attachment 1: Narrative Research Application Template
- Attachment 2: Research Activity Schedule
- Attachment 3: Budget Template
- Attachment 4: Budget Narrative Template
- Attachment 5: Past Performance Information Request
- Attachment 6: USAID Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards

⁸ In 2 CFR 200.315, "The applicant may copyright any work subject to a copyright that was developed under a federal award. The federal government has the right to: (1) obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data under a federal award; and (2) Authorize other to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data for Federal purposes." For more details, see 2 CFR 200.315 and e-CFR 401 "Patents, Trademarks, and Copyrights."