

USAID supports research intended to discover and develop solutions to specific development challenges. Research evidence can be used to inform policy, the strategic direction of programs, and overcome barriers to implementation in developing country settings. USAID's Scientific Research Policy provides guiding principles and outlines standards for conducting and managing USAID-funded research. Those standards and principles have been consolidated below for your use in the development of requests for applications (RFAs) or requests for proposals (RFPs) for new research activities.

Background Information of the Research Investigators:

- Research capacity of the prospective implementer, including access to required facilities;
- Research background and qualifications of the project director, key staff and implementation team;
- Previous publications and other scholarly work;
- Previous research conducted in developing country settings.

Utility of Research Activity for USAID:

- How will this research contribute to the overall goals of the award?
- How can this intervention be replicated and brought to scale if it proves successful?
- What is the previous research reported in the literature and how would the proposed research contribute to new knowledge?
- What are the costs of an intervention and what level of investment is required to implement at scale in developing countries?
- What is the study methodology?
- What are the plans for data sharing, knowledge transfer, host-country investigator capacity development, and knowledge management?

The Structure and Content of the Research Plan:

- Abstract
- Study objectives, questions to be answered or hypotheses to be tested
- Rationale and significance of the study
- Concise review of previous work in the scholarly or gray literature with full citations
- Methodology section that includes study design, population, sample size and statistical power, subject selection, data collection and measurement methods, possible limitations
- Statistical analyses planned
- Strategies for data management and dissemination to the public
- Project management, personnel roles and responsibilities, data handling
- Ethical considerations (protections of human subjects and/or animals)
- Budget and timeline

- Persons responsible for the research and their roles, and
- Partners (local and international).
- Discussion of community and/or stakeholder involvement in the research planning
- Discussion of how the research results will be disseminated and utilized, including plans for new technologies developed and tested, good manufacturing process certifications, and host country governments, patents registered, etc.

Questions Addressing Quality Standards for USAID

Does the proposed research:

- Pose a significant, important question that can be investigated empirically and that will contribute to the knowledge base?
- Link to theory or conceptual underpinnings?
- Explain why the methods selected best address the research questions of interest?
- Is your proposed research based on clear chains of inferential reasoning supported and justified by the relevant literature?
- Provide the necessary information to reproduce or replicate the study?
- Have a transparent study design, methods, and procedures?
- Have an independent, balanced and objective approach?
- Provide sufficient description of the sample, the intervention, and comparison groups?
- Use appropriate and reliable conceptualization and measurement of variables?
- Consider alternative explanations for findings?
- Assess the possible impact of systematic bias?
- Plan to submit research to the peer-review process?
- Adhere to quality standards of reporting?