Appendix F to Chapter 7—Use of Collaborative Assistance Method for Title XII Activities

1. Introduction

This appendix provides a detailed description of the collaborative assistance method of contracting. This is a specialized contracting system which may be used for contracting with educational institutions eligible under, and for activities authorized under, Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, under the circumstances described in AIDAR 715.613-71.

2. Purpose

The collaborative assistance system is designed to:

(a) Increase the joint implementation authority and responsibility of the contractor and the LDC;

(b) Encourage more effective collaboration between all participating parties (USAID, host country, and contractor) at important stages, including the design stage of a technical assistance project.

3. Policy

The collaborative assistance approach represents an alternative method for long-term technical assistance which involves professional collaboration with eligible Title XII institutions and LDC counterparts for a problem-solving type activity to develop new institutional forms and capabilities, to devise operating systems and policies, and to conduct joint research and development—including training. In such an activity, the difficulty in defining, in advance, precise and objectively verifiable contractor inputs and long-term project content as a basis for payment usually requires a flexible approach to project design, contracting, and project implementation. Such flexibility is also essential to the collaborative style which is responsive to LDC desires in problem areas of great complexity and varying uncertainty. Other types of technical assistance, which are usually shorter in term are amenable to more precise definition in advance, or involve closely defined and relatively standardized services, or are otherwise more analogous to commodity resource transfers, may be suitable for other contracting methods, e.g., certain forms of institution building, on-the-job training, resource surveys, etc. The collaborative assistance method is an approved method for providing technical assistance when used in accordance with the circumstances outlined above, and with the guidelines set forth in paragraph 4, below.

4. Implementation Procedures

(a) *Introduction.* This paragraph 4, provides background information, guidelines and procedures to effect the implementation of the policy set forth in paragraph 3 of this appendix.

(b) *Conditions and practices.* In order for this policy to work effectively even when the proposed activity fits the criteria described under Policy, there must also be:

(1) Acceptance of the notion that the host country, in consultation with the contractor, is in the best position to make tactical, day-to-day decisions on project inputs within agreed-upon limitations and output expectations;

(2) Sufficient trust and respect between the Agency and the contractor to allow this flexible implementation authority;

(3) A direct-hire project monitor with appropriate background to be knowledgeable of progress and to assist in an advisory and facilitative capacity, both during and between periodic reviews. In addition, the following important conditions must be met:

(i) Adequate preproject communication between, and identification of assistance required by, the host government and USAID;

(ii) Full joint planning and improved project design ("Joint" as used herein refers to the primary parties, i.e., the collaborating institutions, as well as the host government and USAID. In some instances, it can also include other donors.);

(iii) Careful contractor selection, i.e., matching of the contractor's technical and managerial capabilities to the anticipated requirements of the overseas activity;

(iv) Establishment of relationships between host country, USAID and contractor staff to include host country leadership, flexible implementation authority, and effective management by the contractor;

(v) Improved joint project evaluation, feedback, and replanning; and

(vi) Simplified administrative procedures and greater reliance on in-country logistical support.

(c) *Project Stages and Contractor Involvement.* In the long-term technical assistance projects as described above, there are four discrete but sometimes overlapping decision stages which take place—with the principal contractor usually involved in the last three.

(1) *Problem analysis and project identification.* After the host government has indicated a desire for U.S. collaboration on a particular problem and the USAID field mission has determined that the proposed activity is consistent with its program goals and priorities, considerable effort is usually necessary to refine further the project purpose and type of assistance required and provide a basis for contractor selection. This is a crucial step and is focused on results sought—on what the prospective contractor is expected to produce in relation to resources to be used and to project purpose. It should result in a clear understanding of what the LDC wants, and an overall plan which includes agreement on specific objectives or outputs, acceptable types of activities and inputs and an initial budget—resulting in project documentation. At this step, USAID makes decisions it cannot delegate on what it will support and at what cost. If needed to supplement its direct-hire expertise, USAID can use outside consultants for analysis and advice but retains the ultimate decision for itself in collaboration with, but independent of, the requesting host government. (Normally, the proposed contractor for project definition and subsequent implementation should not have been involved in the problem analysis and project identification stage as a consultant to either the host country government, host institution, or USAID. If a potential contractor has been so involved, particular care must be taken to prevent actual or apparent organizational conflicts of interest in the procurement that follows. This could require at a minimum, a careful assessment and complete documentation of reasons for selection.)

Normally, there will need to be some mutual interaction between the overall planning stage outlined here and the detailed planning and design work which follows in the next phase. There will usually be some overlap, with preliminary decisions in this stage providing a basis for selection of implementing agents for stage (2) which in turn proceeds through some preliminary planning to guide completion of stage (1) as a basis for long-term contracting.

(2) *Project definition.* At this stage, having selected the implementing agent, the U.S. and LDC organizations which will be collaborating in carrying out the project are encouraged to work out, to their mutual 3/8satisfaction, the particulars of what to do and how to do it (i.e., detailed project design) within the context of LDC leadership and responsibility and the general agreements and budget reached in stage (1). The emphasis here is on the technical approach to be utilized and the scheduling and management of project inputs. This may involve a short-term reconnaissance and/or an extensive period of detailed joint planning and feeling out of what is feasible during a preliminary operating phase of the project, possibly lasting as much as a year or more. This stage recognizes the importance, for the problem-solving or ground breaking types of technical assistance, of involving the U.S. and LDC implementing organizations together as soon as the detailed design work begins. USAID's role here is to facilitate, not direct, the joint planning, assure consistency with prior agreements or concur in changes, affirm that the implementing parties have agreed on a reasonable project design, and prepare or cause to be prepared the documentation required for stage (3), including any amendments that might be required to the project documentation. If and when a decision is made by the host government and USAID to proceed into the operating phase with the same contractor, the U.S. intermediary should be treated as a cooperating partner in the negotiation of the subsequent long-term operating agreement(s) with the host government, host institution and USAID.

(3) *Implementation.* The results of the approach outlined in the stage above should include, in addition to a better understanding and more meaningful commitment by all parties, the following specific products:

(i) A jointly developed life-of-project design which reflects the commitment of all parties and includes clear statements of purpose, principal outputs, eligible types of activity and expenditure limits, critical assumptions, and major progress indicators;

(ii) A workplan and input schedule for the first two years or at least as long as the expenditure period for the next obligation of project funds;

(iii) Provisions for any administrative support, special services or other inputs by the host country, contractor, and/or USAID; and

(iv) A plan for periodic joint evaluation and review or progress and subsequent workplans, normally annually, with the participation of all parties.

Appropriate elements of these agreements and understandings are now embodied in a contract for project implementation, as described in paragraph (d)(3)(i) of the section on Contracting Implications. This contract allows the U.S. intermediary to apply its judgment, reflecting close collaboration with its LDC colleagues, in adjusting the flow of USAID-financed inputs and in making other operational decisions with a minimum of requirements for prior USAID approvals or contract amendments as long as the contractor stays within the bounds of the approved overall plan and budget. In this phase, USAID will give technical assistance contractors the authority and responsibility for using their specialized expertise to the fullest extent in the scheduling and managing of project inputs.

(4) *Monitoring, joint evaluation and replanning.* With increased flexibility and responsibility for implementation placed with the technical assistance contractor, the host government, and/or institutional collaborator, improved and timely progress reporting and periodic, joint, and structured reviews of results and evolving plans are imperative as a basis for monitoring and evaluating contractor performance, revalidating or adjusting project design, and for determining future funding levels and commitments.

Both the contractor's annual report and the joint review should be structured within the framework of purpose, outputs, performance indicators, etc., originally established in the project indentification phase—as modified by detailed project design—and reflected in the Project Agreement and other pertinent documentation. The field review will normally serve as the occasion for discussing changes in or additions to previously agreed-to workplans as well as proposing changes in purpose, types of activities authorized and budgets which require contract amendment. Obviously, the appropriate host government, host institution, and senior contractor officials should be thoroughly involved in the process, which will have to be adapted to the conditions within specific projects and countries. An important USAID responsibility is to assure that there is appropriate host country participation in developing and improving project plans prior to new obligations of funds. The special requirements and responsibilities of the various parties shall also be reflected in the project agreement and contract terms and in guidelines on the content of annual reports, evaluation procedures, etc.

Standard checking on services actually delivered as a basis for reimbursement will be continued including appropriate audit of expenditures.

(d) *Contracting implications.* The principal elements of change in present contracting practices, as detailed below, are earlier selection and involvement of the prime contractor, contracting by major stages of project design and operations, minimizing the need for precontract negotiations and contract amendments and USAID approvals, and providing technical assistance contractors with the authority and responsibility needed to manage implementation within the approved program bounds.

(1) *Selection.* The early involvement of the contractor in the definition stage of a long-term technical assistance project, after USAID decides what it wants to undertake in stage (1), does not alter the Agency's responsibility to select its contractors carefully and in full compliance with appropriate contracting regulations and selection procedures. What is required here is that contractor selection be carried out at an earlier stage than has sometimes been the Agency practice in the past or with other types of contracts and in anticipation that the contractor, assuming adequate performance, will participate in all subsequent phases until final completion.

(2) *Contracting stages.* In contracting, the initial design stage should be separated from the longer term implementation stage without any USAID commitment to undertake the second until it has exercised its independent judgment based on the product of the first plus any outside expert appraisal it and the host country want to use.

The long-term implementation stage itself may be further subdivided into contract periods which permit time between predetermined events for analysis, determination of new project requirements, and evaluation of performance prior to initiating the next phase by contract amendment/extension. If, for any reason, such an examination does not appear to warrant project continuation, then termination of the project and/or contract would be the next step.

(3) *Flexible implementation authority.* While good project design will eliminate or diminish many operational problems, the very nature of long-term technical assistance requires flexible implementation within agreed purposes, ultimate outputs, types of activity and available financing. With these key variables for USAID management control established, contracts should be written so as to minimize the need for amendments and USAID approval of changes in input particulars. This can be facilitated, both for the USAID, host country, institution, and the contractor by:

(i) *Retention of operational plan in contract and removal of workplan.* The contract narrative will contain the life-of-the-project Operational Plan, consistent with the project design as developed in stage (2) and reflected in the project documentation (and subsequent amendments thereto). The Operational Plan includes a statement of the purpose to be achieved, the outputs to be produced by

the contractor and the types of activities to be undertaken, the more significant indicators of progress, a general description of the type of inputs that are authorized and intended to be provided during the life of the project, and the overall budget.

In order to allow adjustments at the implementation level without going through the contract amendment process, the detailed but short-term workplan containing specific descriptions and scheduling of all inputs such as numbers and types of staff, participants, commodities, etc., and specific activities, will not be a part of the contract. It is a working document to be modified in the field when the situation demands. The latest version will be available as a supporting document to justify proposed new obligation levels. Normally, the workplan and derived budget will cover a rolling two year period, i.e., each year another yearly increment is added after review and approval.

(ii) *Budget flexibility.* To support this implementation flexibility, contract budget or fiscal controls will be shifted from fixed line items for each input category to program categories, permitting the technical assistance contractor to adjust amounts and timing to achieve previously approved types of activity. This same type of flexibility should apply to any local currency supplied for project operations and/or contractor staff support. While an essential corollary to eliminating the workplan from the contract, this is not a unique procedure under cost reimbursement type contracts when the contractor has demonstrated adequate management capability.

(iii) *Negotiation of advance understandings.* To permit university and international research center contractors to manage their activities in accordance with their own policies and procedures and thereby sharpen their management responsibility while achieving substantial savings in time and reduced documentation, USAID may negotiate advance understandings with its technical assistance contractors on dollar costs and administrative procedures that would be included by reference in its subsequent contracts. Upon receipt of a request from the contractor that their policies be reviewed and approved for usage in their contract in lieu of the standard terms and conditions, OP/PS/OCC, USAID/W will initiate negotiations of such policies in an expeditious manner. The approved policies will be used in all relevant relations involving the Agency and respective contractors in lieu of traditional contract standard provisions, whenever this may be appropriate. This does not apply to local currency costs and host government procedures which must be negotiated in each case.

The purpose of the practices listed above is not only to give a qualified contractor the authority to adjust the composition and timing of inputs but to assign to it clear responsibility for managing such resources, as the evolving circumstances require, to achieve the agreed-upon outputs on a cost efficient basis. It should also reduce the delay and paperwork involved in frequent but minor contract amendments, and approvals. For the agency as a whole, both in the Mission and in USAID/W, these have involved a large workload and cost.

(e) *Role of USAID.* Nothing in this appendix is intended to delegate, diminish or otherwise modify USAID's final responsibility for the prudent management of public funds and its own programs. Rather in withdrawing from the day-to-day involvement in and responsibility for the management of adjustment of the flow of inputs during the implementation, the best use of limited agency staff and time can be devoted to protecting the public interest in gaining maximum results from the funds appropriated for technical assistance by:

(1) Seeking optimum identification in terms of LDC priorities and U.S. capabilities;

(2) Mobilizing and selecting the best U.S. professional talent to design and carry out the project;

(3) Monitoring what is happening to assure adequacy of processes, get a feel of results, assure actual delivery of inputs being financed;

(4) Assuring that the attention of USAID's implementation agents and LDC colleagues stay well focused on project purpose and results to be achieved (outputs) and the relation to these of what is being done and actual results;

(5) Providing intermediaries adequate authority and responsibility to adjust inputs promptly and sensitively to the evolving project situations.

Attention to these considerations, and to achievements of the preimplementation conditions prescribed above, should greatly increase the chances for successful project completion and impact on a cost effective basis, which is the final measurement of prudent management.

Attachment to Appendix F—Guidelines for Requests for Expressions of Interest

A. Length and Level of Detail

A Request for Expression of Interest (REI) should include more than just a short letter expressing interest, but should not be in the detail of a technical proposal (RFTP). The REI is not the only source of information that can or should be used for selection, but at least a minimum level of information should be contained in each document. A ten page paper that responds to the selection criteria included in every REI should be sufficient for evaluation purposes. The selection criteria should specify the technical inputs required for successful execution of the project and normally require a response in three general areas:

1. A description of the institution's capability to address the problem described in the REI.

2. Any related experience, whether in the country or region or in the problem area.

3. A demonstrable commitment of the institution to support the project.

The responses should address the capability, experience, and commitment to the particular project.

B. Specific Personnel Information

The response should specify within the areas set out in the selection criteria the following planning and personnel factors.

1. The design team plan and the scope of work for each member.

2. A list of candidates for the design team and their credentials.

3. A list of possible candidates for long-term assignment to the project. (Since there has been no project design, the specific technical assistance slots and technical responsibilities are vague. But it is expected that at least half of the personnel needs can be estimated early in the project. The institution should make its best guess for the team and present to the Agency the persons or types of persons with whom they are likely to contract.)

C. Multiple Institution Submissions

Joint effort on the part of several institutions is encouraged when appropriate. A single institution may submit an expression of interest for part of the project without knowledge of other collaborators or it may submit information in response to A and B of this attachment as part of a suggested collection of institutions. In either case, a proposed plan for cooperation is necessary.

However, such joint efforts must specify the division of responsibilities for the planning and

personnel factors indicated in B of this attachment. Often USAID will identify the need for cooperation and suggest such an effort in the REI. Even if USAID does not suggest collaboration, joint efforts with a description of the cooperation would be an appropriate way to respond to an REI.

(Authority: Section 621 of Public Law. 87-195, 75 Stat. 445, (Section 2381 of Title 22 of the U.S.C.), as amended; E.O. 12163, Sept. 29, 1979, 44 56673; and Title 3 of the CFR, 1979 Comp., p. 435)

Parent topic: SUBCHAPTER H—CLAUSES AND FORMS