Invitation to Tender

Global Learning Partner for the Local Impact Leader with Associates Award

OVERVIEW

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is seeking an organization to co-design and implement a Learning Agenda for its Local Impact Leader with Associates (LWA) award with USAID. This agenda will be developed through co-creation processes with AKF and is envisioned to be iterative and refined over the course of Local Impact’s implementation. The overarching goal of the Learning Partner will be to co-design and deliver an agenda that will provide impactful, actionable evidence that can be readily distilled into lessons learned and feedback mechanisms for multiple stakeholders and audiences including, but not limited to, community representatives in Asia and Africa, AKF and its sister agencies within the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and USAID Missions and Bureaus. It is expected that the assignment will start in Q1 2020 and may extend (based upon annual reviews) for up to five years.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK AND AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

Founded and guided by His Highness the Aga Khan, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) brings together a number of development agencies, institutions, and programs that work primarily in the poorest parts of Asia and Africa. A central feature of the AKDN’s approach to development is to design and implement strategies in which its different agencies participate in particular settings to help those in need achieve a level of self-reliance and improve quality of life. While each agency pursues its own mandate, all of them work together within the overarching framework of the Aga Khan Development Network so that their different pursuits can interact and reinforce one another.

One of the specialized agencies of the AKDN is the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), which brings together human, financial, and technical resources to address some of the challenges faced by the poorest and most marginalized communities in the world. Special emphasis is placed on investing in human potential, expanding opportunity and improving overall quality of life, especially for women and girls.
AKF works in an integrated way in primarily in six areas: Agriculture and Food Security; Economic Inclusion; Education; Early Childhood Development; Health and Nutrition; and Civil Society. The Foundation is largely a field-based organization with program units located in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, and Uganda—with resource mobilization offices in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States and headquarters based in Geneva, Switzerland.

LOCAL IMPACT OVERVIEW

Working together through a co-created, co-funded, and community-centered agreement, AKF and USAID will implement Local Impact, a multiyear, multi-sector, multi-country partnership to achieve transformational development outcomes. Local Impact is a Leader with Associates (LWA) award that will work with communities to:

1. Catalyze inclusive economic growth and ensure basic livelihoods;
2. Enhance infrastructure and access to basic services with a focus on clean energy;
3. Enhance the capacity of citizens and local institutions; and
4. Promote pluralism and social cohesion.

Under Local Impact, AKF and USAID will engage locally, regionally, and globally and align on shared priorities. Once priorities are identified, AKF and USAID will begin identifying and defining the problem and co-creating the solutions with key stakeholders including local communities, the private sector, local governments, and other donors and relevant partners. Through the co-creation process, AKF will utilize human-centered design tools and processes such as design research (including existing studies, reports, and data) and prototyping and testing solutions directly with users. Through this process, Local Impact will mobilize communities, tap into existing productive efforts at the grassroots level, scale programming on the ground, address drivers of unproductive social behavior, and draw out the entrepreneurial spirit and strengths of civil society and the private sector. AKF has a historical presence and deep understanding of the social and economic dynamics within the communities in which we work.

Before moving to scale, AKF and USAID will work with the target audience to ensure the solutions work. By piloting, testing, and iterating, AKF and USAID will learn quicker and fail faster, in the way that enterprises iterate solutions to problems that emerge for faster scaling. By learning what doesn’t work through testing and piloting, the result is far more likely to be sustainable and achieve the intended goals. For the pilot, testing, and iteration phase, AKF, USAID, and relevant stakeholders—together—can either propose an Associate Award with funding clearly identified from a Mission, or they can call on a pilot pool under the Leader Award to test the solution.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Envisioned as a global partnership that spans multiple geographies in Asia and Africa, Phase 1 of Local Impact is focused on Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, and
Tajikistan. In each of these countries, AKDN is already making substantial, long-term investments in local systems and institutions that promote a path to self-reliance and resilience. AKF will work with the Global Learning Partner to identify local learning partners in each region or county.

**LEARNING AGENDA**

AKF is committed to capturing and sharing both the process of developing and implementing Local Impact and its Associate Awards as well as their emerging outcomes. The Local Impact Learning Agenda will be built around key themes and principles from USAID’s Learning Lab, and will leverage the best practices of Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE). UFE promotes the idea of understanding the purpose and intended use of collected data when designing evaluation strategies. With this approach in mind, the Global Learning Partner, AKF, and USAID will co-design data collection initiatives that will deliver impactful, actionable evidence that can be readily distilled into lessons learned and shared with a broader audience. The Learning Agenda will be premised on generation of actionable evidence that has utility and is tailored to our target audience. The Global Learning Partner should plan to involve local learning partners, communities, and local organizations in the learning agenda development and activities so that they are part of the process of deciding what data is collected, why is important and how it can be used by all relevant stakeholders.

To ensure consistent leverage of developed tools and processes, AKF seeks a Global Learning Partner which can employ a broad array of contextually relevant engagement and utilization approaches, to include: (1) collaborative analysis and interpretation processes; (2) reflection processes; (3) co-design workshops and processes; (4) engagement and communication products that are tailored to resonate with target audiences.

The approach to learning will be iterative, dynamic, and continuous. Learning will be closely linked to USAID’s principles of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) and adaptive management, ensuring ongoing learning throughout Local Impact’s implementation.

To achieve this, AKF anticipates deploying creative approaches to utilizing evaluators and learning partners effectively within and throughout implementation.

The Global Learning Partner will, together with relevant AKF stakeholders, collaboratively design MERL processes that provide a platform for measuring outcomes across a range of dimensions. They include: (i) Journey to Self-Reliance metrics (www.usaid.gov/selfreliance); (ii) AKF global core indicators; (iii) and AKDN QoL core indicators (www.akdn.org/about-us/quality-life-unit).
GLOBAL LEARNING PARTNER FOR LOCAL IMPACT

GLOBAL LEARNING PARTNER SCOPE OF WORK

The Global Learning Partner’s scope of work should include, but is not limited to:

LEARNING AGENDA

- Co-creating a Learning Agenda which outlines global learning questions, activities, and products which align with AKF’s mission and global learning agenda and USAID’s Journey to Self-Reliance metrics;
- Organizing and leading learning events with AKF, communities, and partners;
- Developing a measuring framework that can help Local Impact to evaluate the impact of the Human-Centered Design (HCD) process on project outcomes in order to understand the real-life benefits that can be gained through the application of innovation processes such as HCD;
- Generating evidence of the impacts of the HCD process by measuring aspects such as:
  - changes in working culture (factors such as motivation, team collaboration and alignment, engagement and trust)
  - changes in the project outcomes (improved quality of choices, reduce risk and cost of failure)
  - changes in capacities (changes in capacity for collective action and problem solving, increased access to networks and pooled resources)
  - changes in mindsets (increased value of diversity and pluralism as drivers leading to better innovation outcomes; encourages learning mindset and action orientation)

MONITORING, EVALUATION, RESEARCH, & LEARNING (MERL) AND COLLABORATION, LEARNING AND ADAPTING (CLA)

- Evaluating the set of existing metrics with the AKF and QOL indicators, J2SR indicators, USAID reports on the 'F' indicators, and DevResults indicators and determine how these frameworks fit together and how data collection can be harmonized to meet various stakeholder needs;
- Managing evaluation and learning components globally in close consultation with the Local Impact Lead and team;
- Supporting design of monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL) activities under the Leader and each Associate Award;
- Designing and carrying out relevant targeted assessments and studies taking into consideration that local learning partners may be able to support locally with the assessments, studies and research;
- Ensuring a systematic application of CLA approaches (www.usaidlearninglab.org/node/14633) throughout the program to leverage the benefits of adaptive management which provides a mechanism of rapid feedback loops, course correction, and project improvement;
GLOBAL LEARNING PARTNER FOR LOCAL IMPACT

CAPACITY BUILDING

- Outlining a MERL training and capacity building plan for AKF, AKF partners, and the local learning partners in close consultation with AKF field-based management for the Leader and Associate Awards; and
- Working closely with local learning partners to move the Learning Agenda and MERL activities forward and generate lessons learned and a constant feedback loop for continued program improvement.

As the Learning Agenda design will be both co-created and iterative, the Global Learning Partner’s scope of work is subject to adaptation in consultation with AKF. International travel will likely be required to deliver on the responsibilities articulated above including travel to Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic as well as other AKF focus countries as noted above.

The Global Learning Partner is not responsible for the following:

- Standard M&E activities (for example data collection, project monitoring) under the Leader and each Associate Award, but will provide guidance and support to local teams during implementation (AKF’s role)
- Selecting the local learning partners (AKF’s role)
- Local data collection (AKF or local learning partners’ role)
- Engage with local ethical review bodies/Institutional Review Bodies (AKF or local learning partners’ role)
- Generate outputs/deliverables that local learning partners have the capacity to generate (AKF or local learning partners’ role)

GLOBAL LEARNING PARTNER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The proposed roles and responsibilities of the Global Learning Partner to support AKF in the management of the Learning Agenda are summarized below.

- Guide and support in the selection of evaluation questions and plans under Local Impact. The Global Learning Partner will also take steps to develop and monitor annual research plans.
- Global Learning Partner should leverage data/processes/assets that are presently being used such as the AKF Global Reach System and Awards Information Management System.
- Manage the implementation of research activities and projects. Once AKF approves research projects, the Global Learning Partner will either directly conduct research activities or with AKF and the local learning partner to prepare scopes of work, identify, and contract third-party research consultants, supervise and provide technical support during research fieldwork, and ensure high quality submission of research products.
- Ensure that research consultants work closely with local learning partners and AKDN field colleagues with the goal of building local research capacity (i.e. studies, assessments, evaluations).
Assume leadership for global internal learning strategies and work with AKF to ensure local teams assume leadership over local learning strategies. We anticipate that the internal learning strategies will consist of workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Lead development of external dissemination strategies. The Learning Partner will work with AKF to define, develop, and implement strategies to disseminate research findings, reflections/learnings on monitoring data, lessons learned from implementing/testing new initiatives to key external stakeholders and other audiences.

Facilitating the development of a CLA plan as part of the Leader and Associate Awards, detailing how the learning agenda and activities will address and resource CLA.

In-person or virtual training and mentorship offered to targeted staff and partners.

Identify and prioritize areas of learning that inform strategies and programming.

Guide research, evaluation, and learning efforts to fill knowledge and evidence gaps within prioritized areas.

Support adaptation and innovation through dissemination and application of new knowledge.

Maximize results by fostering collaboration and evidence sharing around common learning needs and opportunities internally and with external stakeholders.

Design and process manage quality assurance processes.

Illustrative Global Learning Partner Deliverables Will Include, But Are Not Limited To:

- Serving as the secretariat for a possible Local Impact MERL Working Group
- Providing guidance, direction and support in developing learning agendas for the Leader and Associate awards
- Drafting and carrying out programmatic learning agenda and plan, which includes, but is not limited to:
  - Articulating annual learning questions and the planned approach to implementing them
  - Drafting annual research plan including dissemination strategy
  - Outlining planned research and suggested assessments and studies
  - Outlining planned events
  - Capacity building
- Producing research products
- Planning and facilitating of learning events
- Contributing to semi-annual and annual Local Impact progress reports and other reports as necessary and identified by AKF and/or USAID
QUALIFICATIONS

AKF anticipates that this consultancy will be carried out by an organization, a team of consultants or a firm. Ideally, the entity will specialize in:

- Learning agenda development;
- Human-centered design, design thinking, systems thinking or other innovative approaches;
- Community engagement and feedback loops;
- Engaging various stakeholders, from government to communities, in data interpretation processes;
- Collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA) approaches;
- Capacity building for monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning;
- Planning, design, and implementation of integrated MERL systems;
- Research methodology as applicable to international development programming;
- Utilization-Focused Evaluation;
- Designing and conducting quantitative and qualitative surveys and assessments, and writing comprehensive reports for a variety of internal and external stakeholders;
- Quantitative and qualitative data analysis;
- Experience working with complex, multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliances;
- Capacity and ability to work in relevant local languages such as Russian, Kyrgyz, Dari, and Tajik;
- Familiarity with and understanding of Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Afghanistan;
- Experience of working with development agencies including donors and implementing partners; and
- Designing dissemination products for multiple audiences.

HOW TO APPLY

This invitation to tender is open to all qualified bidders. The selection of a Global Learning Partner will take place through a competitive process in accordance with AKF applicable procurement rules and procedures. AKF reserves the right to request any additional information that can help clarify aspects of a submission.

Organizations meeting the above criteria are invited to submit their applications in English in electronic form (Word/Excel documents, font not smaller than Times New Roman size 11) and include the following elements:

1. A cover page with contact information for follow up questions;
2. A 5-10 page overview of the consultant team’s approach to the proposed work including any relevant comments and observations on the terms of reference. Suggested areas include: evaluation questions; possible methods/approaches to be used; approaches to managing relationship
with local learning partners and high-level engagement approach with AKF; outline of examples of experiences of learning/utilization processes that will be considered; and an implementation plan;

3. Evidence of institutional capacity of the applicant institution, as reflected in past achievements and publication track record, and key staff proposed to carry out similar tasks;

4. A detailed budget proposal for year 1 and a 5-year overview budget should be submitted as a separate (excel) file and provide a detailed breakdown of costs and overall amount requested only for the first three countries (Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic) not to exceed $350,000 in Year 1; and

5. Other relevant documents such as disclosure of conflicts of interest, consortium structure (in case of consortium submissions), etc.

TENDERS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESS: HUMANRESOURCES.AKFUSA@AKDN.ORG WITH THE SUBJECT LINE “LOCAL IMPACT GLOBAL LEARNING PARTNER APPLICATION” NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 21, 2020.

AKF will review tenders on a rolling basis. Any clarifications related to the required tender documents and the submission process may be sought by emailing Anna.Titulaer@AKDN.org.