

## Minority Serving Institution Request for Application ((MSI-RFA) - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Question 1: Country and Geographic Eligibility

#### Question 1a: What countries can I propose research in for this RFA?

You can propose in any of the countries listed in the table below:

Regions	Countries
<b>Africa</b>	Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia
<b>Asia</b>	Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pacific Islands, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Vietnam
<b>Europe and Eurasia</b>	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Eastern and Southern Caribbean, Ecuador, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru
<b>Middle East</b>	Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza

#### Question 1b: What technical sectors of interest will be funded during the MSI-RFA round?

LASER PULSE will fund applications from all of the [USAID target sectors](#), except global health - see table below:

Agriculture and food security	Democracy, human rights and governance
Economic growth and trade	Education
Environment, energy, and infrastructure	Gender equality and women's empowerment
Humanitarian assistance	Innovation, Technology and Research Infrastructure

Nutrition	Water and sanitation
Climate change	Working in Crises and Conflict
Global Health*	

\*Only certain activities that fall under global health (<https://www.usaid.gov/global-health>) are eligible. Applicants interested in applying for a global health-related research project under this RFA are asked to first contact Pamela McClure ([awardsmanager@laserpulse.org](mailto:awardsmanager@laserpulse.org)) to determine if the proposed work falls within the scope of this RFA.

## Question 2: Eligibility and Leadership

### Question 2a: What institutions are eligible to submit an Application for this call?

Only academic researchers based at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in the United States are eligible to submit an Application. Minority Serving Institutions are defined by the US Department of Education as institutions of higher education enrolling populations with significant percentages of undergraduate minority students, or that serve certain populations of minority students under various programs created by Congress. They include:

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) - Founded before 1964
2. Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)
3. Alaska Native Serving Institutions (ANSI)
4. Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (NHSI)
5. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander (AANAPI)
6. Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI)
7. Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)

### Question 2b: Can an individual researcher submit an Application?

An individual researcher can submit an Application but he/she **must** be an employee at Minority Serving Institution (MSI) in the United States in order to serve as the lead researcher or Principal Investigator (PI). Note: The lead researcher coordinating the research team and submitting the Application will be considered the PI by LASER PULSE. Additionally, the PI **must** partner with a development practitioner institution such as a non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society, the private sector, and/or local government entity as their translation partner. PIs will be required to provide a Letter of Commitment/(s) from the translation partner institution when submitting an Application.

### Question 2c: How do I find a translation partner to meet the institutional eligibility requirement?

It is up to the university lead researcher/Principal Investigator (PI) to find a translation partner. We encourage you to use your existing networks to identify a translation partner and/or consult the LASER PULSE network for practitioners that are registered as LASER PULSE members at [this link](#) (or go to <https://laserpulse.org/network/>). You must be a registered member to access the search functions.

### Question 2d: Are in-country/local Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) required to partner on the Application?



In-country/local HEI institutions are **not** required to partner on the Application, they can partner as needed by the lead MSI institution. As stated in the RFA in section 3.1, there are only two requirements, listed below:

1. Only academic researchers based at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in the United States are eligible to submit an Application.
2. The MSI researchers **must** collaborate with a development practitioner (e.g., an NGO, civil society, the private sector, or a local government entity) to serve as their translation partner

**Question 2e: Can I be a PI or Co-PI in more than one Application? Can a collaborator be included in more than one Application?**

You can only submit one Application as a Principal Investigator (PI) or lead researcher but can collaborate on as many Applications as you would like as Co-PI and/or collaborator.

**Question 2f: Can we include students in a proposed research project?**

Yes, students can be included in a research project and can be members of the research team.

**Question 3: Collaborators**

**Question 3a: Do Applicants for this RFA need a partner at an in-country university?**

See FAQ-2d above.

**Question 3b: Will LASER PULSE initiate connections between applicants with researchers in other countries, or in the US if they need such a partner?**

[LASER PULSE Network \(https://laserpulse.org/network/\)](https://laserpulse.org/network/) is a searchable database that researchers can use to connect with potential partners (researchers and practitioners). One must be registered to access the search functions (Please refer to FAQ-2c).

**Question 3c: Is there a requirement for inter-departmental collaboration? Otherwise, should a single department per institution propose a collaboration with a research translation partner?**

We encourage inter-departmental or multidisciplinary collaboration within an institution and across institutions but it is not a requirement. However, each Application should have only one PI.

**Question 3d: Do we need a letter of commitment from all Co-PIs/partner institutions?**

LASER PULSE only requires a letter of commitment from a translation partner and does not require a letter of commitment from any additional partner(s). A template is provided as part of the RFA package.

**Question 4: Addressing Gender**

**Question 4a: The research activities in my Application will impact men, women, and the youth equally. How do I address the crosscutting theme of gender?**

All Applications are required to address the relationship between the proposed research activities and gender. Prior to developing the Application, please review the gender analysis guidelines in Appendix 3. Applications should clearly reflect that the research team is fully aware of the gender considerations that are relevant for the sectoral focus, and specifically those that have shaped the proposed research study.

**Question 4b: Is gender analysis going to be scored?**

Gender mainstreaming is an integral part of USAID/LASER PULSE funded Applications. Thus, it is included in the evaluation criteria in Section 4.1.2 under the Broader Impact criteria.

**Question 5: Funding, Indirect Cost Rate and Budget Template****Question 5a: Is there a maximum dollar amount per Application?**

As stated in the RFA: “Research awards for a period of 12 months for up to a maximum of \$150K per Award will be considered. There is an expectation of a 10% cost-share for all Awards. The total anticipated funding available for this RFA is up to a maximum of \$750,000.” **Note:** If you need a waiver for the 10% cost-share, please indicate during the submission of the LOI stage.

**Question 5b: If successful, can the funds be delivered to the translation partner or is it only the PI from the MSI institution?**

Each Award will be issued to the PI from the lead MSI institution. If determined necessary or requested by the lead, Purdue University is able to issue a sub-agreement directly to each partner involved in the research activities.

**Question 5c: What indirect cost rate should we use?**

Purdue University uses a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) for sub-awards for indirect costs (IDC). A request for a higher indirect cost rate must have documented justification, such as an established NICRA. If the project has sub-awards, then indirect costs charged to your sub-awards are limited to be applied only to the first U.S. \$25,000 of costs.

**Question 5d: What procedures should we follow if our institution requires indirect costs other than 10%?**

To request a higher IDC rate, the institution must provide documentation on an established NICRA rate above 10%.

**Question 5e: Is the 10% IDC rate also related to the indirect costs on our project sub-awards (from the host institution)? Does it relate to the IDC rate for the host institution’s direct costs?**

In granting awards to lead institutions, Purdue University allows 10% IDC or the established NICRA rate on MTDC, with IDC on sub-award amounts from the lead to other institutions limited to the first \$25,000 of that sub-award. The IDC rates charged by sub-awardees to the lead institution are negotiated between the lead institution and the sub-awardee institution.

**Question 5f: Do I need to submit the Application through my institution’s official representative with financial authority? Do they need to sign off on the budget?**

Each institution has its own regulations governing budgeting and related financial authorization. From Purdue University’s LASER PULSE perspective, if permitted by the Applicant institution, the signature on the Application budget may be that of the PI. However, the signature on the Application budget must be that of an official institutional representative with financial authority.

**Question 6: Research Translation****Question 6a: How does LASER PULSE define “research translation”?**

LASER PULSE's model of research translation is called Embedded Research Translation (ERT), defined as, “*an iterative co-design process among academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders in which research is intentionally applied to a development challenge*”. (See section 2.2.3 for details)

**Question 6b: Are Applicants required to focus on specific types of translation products? Additionally, is there a specified number of products or a threshold that determines successful research?**

**(i):** Sections 2.2.3 and 3.7 of the RFA states that: translated research should result in a **tangible product** that is a required output of research translation. This could be a tool/device, report or document, multimedia product, or IT platform. This product should contain a **policy brief or recommendation** that leads to changes in legal, constitutional, funding, accountability, feasibility, or implementation mechanisms or a **practice recommendation**. Products could include a new agricultural production or processing method, education curriculum, guidebook, technical manual, training module, and planning tool. Applicants are encouraged to focus on specific types of translation products as outlined in the LASER PULSE research translation overview and training module. For more details, please click [this link](#) (or go to <https://laserpulse.org/course/laser-pulse-introduction-to-embedded-research-translation-training/>).

**Note:** Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, abstracts, and traditional methods-focused posters **are not** considered to be translated products. Products must be tailored to an audience and designed for use by an end-user.

**(ii):** There are no restrictions on how many and/or a specific number of products are required; however, a proposed product (policy, or practice) should align with the scope of the research. In some cases, a single, well-developed product with an audience and communication strategy is sufficient. In others, the project team might need to explore multiple channels at multiple levels with corresponding products for each.

**Question 6c: How do I anticipate what translation and dissemination will look like at the end of the project?**

Planning and budgeting processes for translation and communication start at the beginning (when research activities commence) of a project. You can make much headway before your research has been completed. Work with your local partners to map out stakeholder group/s and figure out who you need to target. Some research on whom your audiences comprise will be beneficial in helping you figure out what their preferences and needs are. You can even engage them directly in your research process and provide updates as your research progresses.

**Question 6d: How do I anticipate the budget for translation and dissemination?**

As you plan and design your research project, please consider what costs will go into implementing your research translation strategy. Do you need a dedicated staff member to manage and implement this process? How many stakeholder workshops will you convene and what types of costs may be required to hold them? Do you need a specialist to work with you on design and content? What experience do your partners have with budgeting for translation and dissemination? What materials do you anticipate producing and how much would those cost to produce, print, and distribute? Does the product that you are planning on have costs associated with it? Do you need to factor in travel to support dissemination? Consider these

questions among your team to make sure you can accurately plan and budget for your translation and dissemination expenses.

**Question 6e: Can one engage more than one translation partner?**

The LASER PULSE requirement is to engage **at least one** translation partner. However, the research team can engage more than one translation partner based on their needs. Please note that we will need a letter of commitment from each translation partner for each submitted Application.

**Question 6f: Would a university count as a translation partner? For instance, if a researcher wants to work with youth on an agro-entrepreneurial curriculum development program?**

University partners are not considered as translation partners. Please see RFA Section 2.2.3 for examples of translation partners.

**Question 7: Required Training**

**Question 7a: Are courses described in the RFA mandatory for all the Applicants? When is the deadline for completing the two training courses?**

There are two required courses: LASER PULSE [Introduction to Embedded Research Translation](#) and [Gender Analysis in Research and Application](#). PI and co-PI(s) identified in the Application must have taken and passed both on-line training before submitting the Application. Other team members are also encouraged to take these training courses as they explain important concepts needed to develop a successful Application.

**Question 7b: Must all research team members take the gender course or only the principal investigator?**

See question 7a above.