Digital Square Fact-Finding Questions

RFA #2020-060: Digital Health Applied Leadership Program (DHALP)

Thank you all for your thoughtful questions.

Please note that the DHALP design has (intentionally) not been fully 'baked', providing opportunity for the organization or consortium selected to contribute to the final design for Phase 1. Originally, the plan was to offer a blend of in-person and online workshops and courses. The onset of the pandemic created a need to pivot from this plan to a fully virtual/online delivery of the Program, as well as to reflect the current funding available.

1. Please confirm that for-profit organizations are eligible for this opportunity.

   ○ *Answer: For-profit organizations are eligible to apply for this opportunity.*

2. Please clarify that our cost proposals should be for phase 1 only.

   ○ *Answer: As stated on page. 14, a detailed cost proposal is required for Phase 1. However, a high-level budget is required to accompany the high-level concept note and estimated timeline for Phase 2.*

3. Would the past performance for individuals (staff, consultant and contractual) be counted for the BMC's performance?

   ○ *Answer: The reference to BMC is unclear, but yes individual past performance will be counted.*

4. How much the award quality or certification counts for the evaluation?

   ○ *Answer: The RfA evaluation criteria is on page. 17-18 of the RfA. We cannot elaborate any further than already stated in the RfA.*

5. The SOW and deliverables include managing subawards to course developers including TechChange. Please clarify if our budget submission should include funds for TechChange or if funding is already provided to that organization through a different mechanism.

   ○ *Answer: Yes, your budget submission should include provisions for TechChange to facilitate course delivery. Please estimate $75,000 for delivery of the online virtual workshop for 30-40 learners.*

6. Kindly confirm if African countries from other regions (e.g. North Africa) can be part of a consortium responding to the DHALP RfP?

   ○ *Answer: Yes, African countries from other regions can be members of a responding consortium.*

7. With reference to the scheme on page. 4 (Figure 1 - Year 1 of the Digital Health Applied Leadership Program), are applicants responding to RFA_2020_060_DHALP required to have undertaken the National Digital Health Coordinator's course?

   ○ *Answer: No, that is not a requirement.*

8. Is there a preferred ratio for French speaking to English speaking learners that will be recruited on the program? (reference Page 6, Overview section, bullet point 3 and 4)

   ○ *Answer: No, however the DHALP is designed for teams of learners from Ministries of Health to be enrolled together on the program; we would therefore hope to see groups of 3-4 (or more) MOH officials from each country enrolled on the DHALP. The selected organization/consortium will need to work with partners (Ministry, WHO and others) to promote this approach.*

9. "Applicant will manage subawards with the course developers, including TechChange for the course "Digital Health: Planning National Systems"." Are the funds for TechChange subaward included in the USD $1 million for phase 1? (Page 6, Overview section, bullet point 7)

   ○ *Answer: See response to question 5.*

10. Are the learners expected to pay fees for attending phase 1 of the DHALP?

    ○ *Answer: No, learners will not pay fees for Phase 1. The successful applicant will outline a cost structure and facilitate Phase 1 learner participation with awarded funds.*

11. In the Overview (Page 6, bullet 6) 4 online courses are indicated, while the Overall commitment time for learners (Page 6, bullet 3) refers to 3 online courses. Kindly confirm the number of online courses in the DHALP.

    ○ *Answer: Please see answer to question 22. It should say 1 virtual workshop and 3 online courses.*

12. Is there an alumni network of participants from previous digital health training workshops that can be made available on request?

    ○ *Answer: No.*

13. Can non-African institutions/organizations serve as sub-partners on the consortium to a prime African-based organization applying on DHALP?

    ○ *Answer: Yes, non-African institutions/organizations may serve as sub-partners to a prime Africa-based organization.*

14. I gather that all the course content you will provide and that you are looking for an entity to facilitate your course amongst an audience in Africa compliantly and transparently. Is this correct? If so, do you see the need for more than one "tutor" or "professor" to teach each course online (for example, do you expect an assistant to support the live course as well) and could the same individual facilitate all the modules?

    ○ *Answer: Applicants should indicate how they intend to support learners as they progress through the program. Although three of the four online curricula have already been selected,*

it will be up to the selected organization/consortium to demonstrate how they plan to provide academic support for learners (in addition to any tuition built into the courses) throughout courses/the program overall.

15. Would a private university then based in Africa be an eligible partner?

   ○ *Answer: Yes, if the university meets all the capabilities implicit within the evaluation criteria on pages. 17 and 18*

16. How detailed do you expect the financial budget to be beyond the temple you have reflected in the proposal?

   ○ *Answer: Please refer to Section V, C (Required Elements) on p.15, which describes the level of detail and file format of the cost proposal required in addition to the summary budget. Applicants may use their own budget formats, however, the cost categories should reproduce those in the summary budget table, as relevant to the anticipated costs. For example, a consultant line of "0" need not be included if no consultants are required to support the applicant's technical approach.*

17. Do you have a template to complete and submit or you simply expect a word document to respond to your components in the application?

   ○ *Answer: No template is available. Narrative documents may be submitted as either Word or pdf files. The cost application must be submitted as an unlocked Excel file.*

18. How long (or short) would you like the application to be?

   ○ *Answer: We have no specification for length of the application for Phase 1. The Phase 2, high-level concept note should be limited to two pages.*

19. Does the use of the WHO academy and ITU Academy mean that alternative platforms such as those the respondents have ownership of cannot be used? This question is based on the rationale that the underlying tech respondents currently use are what our subject matter experts and class coaches are most familiar with - and we know and can measure their effectiveness.

   ○ *Answer: The DHALP will not be using the WHO Academy and ITU Academy platforms to deliver the program. The virtual workshop will be delivered via the TechChange platform. Discussions will take place with the selected organization or consortium as to which platform could be used to deliver the three self-paced online courses, two of which are currently under development with the World Bank.*

   ○ To be clear, the total learner base is only 30-40 learners from anglo+franco speaking African countries for Phase 1?

      i. *Answer: Yes, this is correct. See also the response to question 41 bullet point 1.*

20. Are the sub-awards to TechChange included in the $1M amount that is the cap for budget considerations or separate?

   ○ *Answer: See answer to Question 5.*

21. Is the TOC and MERL plan intended to be developed for the proposal or part of the grant?

○ *Answer: the full Theory of Change and MERL plan will be developed as part of the grant. However, you should describe your MERL plan as you have conceived to date.*

22. Currently we understand the existing courses and content that form a part of Phase 1 to refer to;

    Course 1:
    30 hour facilitated virtual course on Digital Health, developed for WHO by TechChange, with support from USAID (currently available in English and to be translated into French)
    Course 2:
    Self-serve/ self-paced access to foundational WHO AFRO and ITU materials from their workshop series Digital Health: Planning National Systems (managed by TechChange)
    Course 3:
    A self-paced online Health Data Science course supported by learning facilitators and online tutors

    A 2-day leadership, reflection, and goal-setting workshop for all learners. This will come at the end of the program and close with a graduation ceremony and reception.

    Is this understanding accurate and can the existing content that has to be delivered for Phase 1 be confirmed?

    o *Answer: Apologies for the confusion around the courses. Below is a clarification and correction which we hope resolves the question. This update is also provided in the* RfA Modification.
      The virtual workshop, three online courses, final graduation/leadership workshop, and additional resources selected for Phase 1 are as follows:

      1. **Facilitated synchronous virtual workshop on Digital Health, developed for WHO by TechChange, with support from USAID.** *This content builds on training provided at the WHO AFRO and ITU Lesotho and Benin workshops, with enhancements from the global community to create a virtual, ~30-hour course currently available in English. This workshop will be available in early 2021. The French version is targeted to be available by summer 2021.*
      2. **A self-paced online Health Data Science course** *supported by learning facilitators and online tutors (equivalent to approximately 20 hours of study).*
      3. **A self-paced online Health Informatics course** *supported by learning facilitators and online tutors (equivalent to approximately 20 hours of study).*
         i. *These two online, self-paced courses already selected will be available as open-source courses on the World Bank platform.*
      4. **Additional online course (e.g. specialized electives, leadership development courses, etc.) to be determined by the DHALP host institution and/or consortium through a consultation process with the target audience.** *Applicants may propose a course based on the applicant's current understanding of learner needs and priorities. The course must be an existing course that already complies with WHO normative guidance or will require only minor adaptations that can be completed within the budget constraints. It must also have a pedagogical rationale for inclusion in the Program.*
      5. **A 2-day leadership, reflection, and goal-setting workshop** *for all learners. This will come at the end of the program and close with a graduation ceremony and reception.*
      6. **Additional Resources: Self-serve access to foundational WHO AFRO and ITU materials from their workshop series "Digital Health: Planning National Systems".** *WHO and ITU are creating self-paced online learning courses based on*

the inaugural delivery of digital health learning content at the 2018 Lesotho and Benin workshops. This content will be open source and available for anyone to access. The DHALP host institution and/or consortium should think critically about how these materials can support DHALP learners.

23. Is there a maximum indirect cost allocation?

    ○ *Answer: There is no maximum indirect cost allocation. As noted in Section V, D (Special Note on Indirect Costs) on page.16, indirect costs included in your budget must be validated by a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with the US Government or three years of audited financials to PATH to validate the use of this rate. If you do not have a NICRA and do not feel confident of your organization's ability to demonstrate an indirect cost rate with the audited financials, please direct charge overhead expenses.*

24. Academic class coaches facilitate conversations and ensure subject matter experts are alerted to matters more complex than the coaches are familiar. Does this fit the description of coaches in the RFA?

    ○ *Answer: It is anticipated that academic support will be provided for the virtual workshop and the three self-paced online courses to ensure learners are able to apply their learning to their day-to-day practice, as well as provide motivation to complete each of the online components. Coaches are there to support learners' personal and professional development, support review of learners' goals (and progress against these) and to help promote team building. Applicants may wish to suggest what kind of coaching program they would offer that is complementary to the academic support for learners and will provide this additional professional development for the learners.*

25. What is the scope of the content that can be considered as additional content that is still to be developed by the successful respondent? Phrased differently, the RFA talks of existing courses, but the description of the materials seems that only 1 is defined, does this imply the respondent should propose or set a plan on how to decide what the additional courses would be?

    ○ *Answer: Only one course is undefined, listed as #4 on page 8. This section is being modified to clarify each course. Please see the explanation in response to question 22.*

26. Would you say that this initiative is based on a desire to improve the capacity of digital health leaders to advance the goals of their country's health systems or to improve their individual capacity around digital health leadership? If the answer is both then will the design of the program relate directly to the initiatives of individual countries?

    ○ *Answer: The purpose of the DHALP is to do both (see the RFA pages 2, 3, and 11). The aim is to have teams of learners enrolled from several Ministries on the program. Learners will be expected to agree on digital health priorities with their supervisors/managers before starting the program, and to use both the learning and coaching as opportunities to apply their knowledge to these priorities. Optional learning through webinars or peer-to-peer engagement may be offered by the selected organization/consortium to further support application of learning to specific country priorities.*

27. "Phase 1 will be an 18-month period of delivering already-developed online courses and workshops…"

    ○ Does this mean the courses, content and workshops are ready for dissemination and that a consortium supporting Phase 1 would only be involved with disseminating existing

content? If so, can we have access to pre-existing content in advance of the proposal submission?

- i. *Answer: The virtual workshop outline is listed as Appendix 1 to the RfA. Online courses 2 and 3 are under discussion. Given progress on the course, the applicant may have an opportunity to provide input.*

○ Can the content be changed based on feedback from a preliminary analysis of learner needs prior to implementation?

- i. *Answer: Unfortunately, not in this phase. For Phase 1 there is no additional budget for this analysis; moreover there has been an extensive consultation process with the target learner audience (in at least 30 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia) countries leading up to the release of this RfA. It may be an option for Phase 2 should additional funding become available.*

○ Can you provide specifics on the criteria for change and how extensive that change can be?

- i. *Answer: The virtual online workshop and two of the three online courses have already been selected (informed by feedback from the consultation); the selected organization/consortium will agree, in consultation with WHO and Digital Square, the focus for the fourth online course. Applicants are free to propose how they will deliver the academic and coaching support to learners. Outside of the current funding, applicants may also wish to indicate any optional learning opportunities, e.g. through webinars, they are able to offer learners.*

28. Based on Diagram on page 5:

○ What are the criteria for grouping learners together in teams? (Proximity, systems maturity, etc.?)

- i. *Answer: The Applicant should determine this based on its vision for what will be most effective and beneficial to the learners.*

○ The Digital Health Networks in the diagram - are these pre-existing or newly created or both?

- i. *Answer: May include both pre-existing and new networks. Existing digital health networks include the Global Digital Health Network, country health informatics associations, and networks outside the region. New networks may be leveraged during Phase 1 of the DHALP as well.*

29. Based on the following: "When learners enroll in the program, during the orientation they will work with their team and/or their manager to agree on a team-based practical challenge or project that they will work on during the program and the goals that they intend to accomplish by the end of the program."

Will this "challenge" be based on programs/initiatives that actually exist in these countries or on something else? If based on something that exists how to ensure the teams that are created have like-minded goals based ideally on similar initiatives in each country?

○ *Answer: Yes, the challenge will be based on an existing program or initiative in country. One goal of the program is to encourage institutional capacity strengthening by enrolling teams from the same ministry. The challenge is up to the individual team of learners and their manager. It is up to the Applicant to decide the approach to forming teams.*

30. "At the country level, over the duration of the Program, teams of learners will have the opportunity to co-create and execute a digital initiative, such as strengthening a national health data governance policy, a health financing strategy, or digital health workforce development initiative." Does this mean actual initiatives will be created and, pending appropriate in-country approval, implemented at the country level?

    ○ *Answer: Yes, this is possible.*

31. "Additionally, we request that the Applicant provide a high-level concept note for the work described under Phase 2". Can we assume that the details of Phase 2 would be based on a large part on the outcomes related to Phase 1?

    ○ *Answer: Yes.*

32. "The aspiration for DHALP is to become a global program adapted for needs in different regions, so potentially regional hubs will emerge to run the DHALP in other regions (for example, in Asia)." If the proposed consortium already has a regional presence in conducting health worker and leadership training will they also have the authority to localize pre-existing content provided during Phase 1?

    ○ *Answer: Please refer to page 8 of the RfA which states "Applicants may propose a course based on the applicant's current understanding of learner needs and priorities. The course must be an existing course that already complies with WHO normative guidance or will require only minor adaptations that can be completed within the budget constraints." It must also have a pedagogical rationale for inclusion in the Program.*

33. Based on the following: "This RfA requests that Applicants respond in detail to Phase 1 delivering DHALP as an online 18-month program, including". References to workshops are made throughout - are these designed as virtual workshops or possible face-to-face workshops based on changes in the pandemic situation?

    ○ *Answer: see page 3 of the RfA, " Phase 1 will be an 18-month period of delivering already-developed online courses and workshops" (other than the course designated as TBD) and page 5 of the RfA: "Depending on the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and international travel restrictions, the approach in subsequent phases may evolve over time to include in-person core courses, interactions, and workshops. In addition to existing courses, new content also may be added in response to learner demand and global trends in digital transformation of health systems."*

34. "Support for French-speaking learners from Guinea, DRC, and potentially 1-2 other countries who have expressed interest". Should we assume that French speakers will only be teamed with other French speakers?

    ○ *Answer: Yes.*

35. "The delivery of four online courses, completed in partnership with WHO, USAID, TechChange, World Bank, and others." Does this contradict the earlier statement that the course material already exists? Is it possible to make a more conclusive statement regarding the level of consortium involvement in course development?

    Answer: Please see the response to question 22.

36. The virtual workshop, courses, and materials selected for Phase 1 are as follows: "A self-paced online Health Data Science course supported by learning facilitators and online tutors "

    ○ Should we assume that this course already exists?

       i. *Answer: This is currently under discussion with the World Bank which is leading the development of this course. WHO and other digital health experts will be providing advice during the design phase of this course, which is expected to be available by Q2 2021.*

   ○ What if during the development of the competency framework, the QA framework , content standardization and tests and certification it is determined that some of the existing content is not fit for purpose will there be a process for evaluating and implementing recommended changes?

       i. *Answer: See the RfA p. 8 which requests the Applicant to create these processes. Any content adaptations, changes etc. can be done in Phase 2. The only changes to content in Phase 1 will be to include gender and health if feasible and translation into French, as stated in the RfA.*

37. Learner Recruitment

   ○ Can the selection criteria exclude political appointments (I.e. those that are more likely to transfer out of their positions or be displaced by a change in government)?

       i. *Answer: It is up to the applicant to define the criteria for selection, although the final decision as to who is selected for enrollment on the DHALP will be up to the Ministry of Health. The top of page. 10 of the RfA states "The applicant must describe their learner recruitment approach and selection criteria and ensure that it is a fair, unbiased process."*

   ○ "Given annual government work-planning, some thought must be given to how governments would incorporate the DHALP into existing activities, as well as how to ensure government buy-in and continuity beyond Phase 1's 18-month duration." Can/should course material and team formation reflect ongoing government programs?

       i. *Answer: The DHALP is intended to be a global program with teams of learners enrolled from multiple countries. The purpose of the Program is to promote consistency of approach to digital health capacity building and standardization of terminology. Learners will agree on digital health priorities with their managers before enrolling on the program and will have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to those priorities throughout the duration of the DHALP.*

38. The MERL workstream will define M&E indicators and measures of success of the DHALP, which will likely require defining the M&E indicators and measures of success of the learners". Will there not be any need to define measures related to the improvement of digital health systems in individual countries?

   ○ *Answer: Improvement of digital health systems is a desired outcome, and ultimately the outcome of the DHALP is improved health systems enabled by digital health, but this cannot realistically be measured within this budget or the Phase 1 timeframe (see page 11 of the RfA).*

39. For travel budget are we assuming there will not be any face-to-face workshops or meetings?

   ○ *Answer: Yes, this is correct for Phase 1.*

40. How often and depending on what will payments be made? Will payments be received in advance or as start-up or should we budget to activate the process with retrospective payment? Will the quarterly narratives and financial reports inform?

- ○ *Answer: The cadence of payments and the need for advance payments will be determined during award negotiation with the winning applicant on the basis of the proposed technical approach and timeline and the maturity of the applicant's financial systems.*

41. IV. Scope of work and deliverables:

- ○ It is stated that 30-40 learners from sub-Saharan Africa should be enrolled. How many English-speaking and French-speaking learners from 1-2 countries should be accommodated and is this in addition to the 30-40 learners from sub-Saharan Africa?

  - i. *Answer: There is no pre-defined number of English or French-speaking learners. The French-speaking learners are included in the 30-40 person total learners.*

- ○ Will the online courses run concurrently?

  - i. *Answer: No.*

- ○ To support self-paced learning, will an open distance learning mode be supported that learners can start within the maximum time of for example 6 months with any course at any time?

  - i. *Answer: Each course determines its mode of delivery and timeframe. DHALP will not dictate this. However, the time constraint that the DHALP will impose is that it is funded for 18 months, therefore learners are encouraged to complete all courses, workshops, coaching sessions, etc. before the period expires to ensure they can participate in the 2-day final leadership and graduation workshop and earn the Digital Health Leadership Practitioner Certification.*

- ○ Who are the prime recipients and sub-partners?

  - i. *Answer: If a consortium of companies and organizations has formed to apply to this RfA, one member of the consortium must be the prime or lead organization. The prime will have a contractual relationship with PATH and will be responsible for financial and technical deliverables. The other partners will have a contractual relationship with the prime, becoming their sub-partner or sub-contractor.*

42. Workstream 1:

- ○ By when will the final selected course be known to ensure that this is incorporated into the 18 months?

  - i. *Answer: As stated on page. 8 of the RfA, we are requesting the Applicant to select the fourth online course. Please see the updated description in answer to question 22.*

- ○ What will the content be of the self-paced online Health Data Science course?

  - i. *Answer: See response to question 36 first bullet.*

- ○ What are the requirements to be met for the 2-day leadership, reflection, and goal-setting workshop?

  - i. *Answer: Based on the aims of the DHALP we invite applicants to propose what should be included in the workshop. It is also intended to include a commencement ceremony for learners who have completed the DHALP*

- What are the turnaround times to construct the Competency Framework Design and develop a process to select additional courses?

  i. *Answer: the duration of Phase 1, i.e. 18 months.*

43. Workstream 5:

    - By when in the process should the Steering Committee be established? Expected deadlines for the start-up?

      i. *Answer: This is for the Applicant to determine, based on its understanding of the work described in this RfA.*

44. Workstream 6:

    - Are there specific targets, for example the number of webinars per annum?

      i. *Answer: No.*

45. Workstream 7:

    - Are there specific proportions of the budget that should not be exceeded for human and material resources?

      i. *Answer: No. Please allocate resources according to your proposed technical approach.*

    - What are the donor regulations to be compliant to or where can these be obtained?

      i. *Answer: Funding for this work includes a pool of contributions from USAID and private foundations. The successful applicant will be required to comply with provisions outlined in 2CFR200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards and Standard Provisions flowed down from funders as appropriate for your organization's type and location.*

    - Are there criteria against which the Applicant can do a self-assessment on areas for knowledge and institutional support regarding technical assistance from Digital Square?

      i. *Answer: A self-assessment form and guidance will be provided to the winning applicant following selection.*

46. Application requirements - Cost

    - How will it be accommodated when the budget is prepared but there are changes to the exchange rate?

      i. *Answer: A budget ceiling will be established in the award to the selected applicant. The award will allow for a set variance within that ceiling; however, the budget ceiling will not be adjusted due to currency fluctuations.*

47. Application requirements - Technical

    - Where and when can we obtain the donor requirements?

      i. *Answer: Please see the answer to Question 45 second bullet.*

- What to do if the applicants aren't allowed to provide proof of our university's annual revenue?

    i. *Answer: Provision of audited financial statements is a key component of our assessment of the successful applicant's financial controls and health. Annual financial audits will also be a requirement for the winning applicant in accordance with US government funding requirements. If your organization is unable to comply with this request, the application will not be considered.*