

Frequently Asked Questions on the FY2014 Proposal Guidance: McGovern-Dole Program and Food for Progress Program

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Existing Programs

1) Will other organizations (other than incumbent) be seriously considered for existing programs? Is it worthwhile for other organizations to go through the resource-intensive exercise of preparing a good proposal to apply for existing programs? (McGovern Dole)

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) will evaluate all proposals equally and is looking for the best proposal that incorporates the McGovern Dole Program's literacy objectives. Through its solicitation, FAS has made applicants aware that they may be competing against an incumbent in a particular country or region. The proposal selection process is competitive, and the incumbent organization must compete for additional funding with other organizations which submit proposals. While the incumbent organization may have a competitive advantage in some areas of evaluation, it could fall short in other evaluation areas such as results and the graduation plan. Each organization will have to weigh its strengths and proposed projects against the evaluation factors to determine if it would be competitive.

2) If a proposal is submitted for an existing program, does it have to cover all the schools covered under the existing program? (McGovern Dole)

Yes, to the extent possible. Proposals are encouraged to build on and expand the foundation of existing programs (and therefore target the same regions and schools.)

3) Does the proposal you approve need to include all the schools/regions as the current project, or would you approve two or more proposals, each one covering some of these schools? (McGovern Dole)

It's possible that we would approve more than one proposal, as long as the total schools/regions would be covered. The final award decision will be determined by the evaluation of each proposal and whether funding is available to support more than one proposal.

4) Are applicants required to target the same age group as incumbent programs have done? (E.g. if an existing program targeted pre-school to 4th grade and a new program targeted 1st to 6th grades, would this be a disadvantage for the new program applying for funding?) (McGovern Dole)

The McGovern Dole Program's objective is to establish long-lasting, self-sustaining school feeding programs. Maintaining consistency in the operation and targeting of the feeding operation often contributes to this objective. Changes in targeted age groups will be considered only if they demonstrate careful consideration of how the changes can build on and deliver additional results. The evaluation of a proposal would be negatively affected if changes in targeted age groups are not tied to additional results or would diminish the likelihood of a graduated program.

5) If applying for follow-on funding, are you requiring Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) to restrict their proposed projects to priority areas?

Priority areas are weighted heavily. If a PVO is proposing to work in non-priority areas, then they must make the case strongly that the project will help to meet U.S. government strategic goals, and will graduate to being sustainable.

6) Are existing projects open for competition? (Food for Progress)

The solicitation process involves a competitive process, and the incumbent organization must compete for additional funding. If the program is ongoing, the PVO applying for funding must demonstrate in their application that additional or replenishment funding is necessary to get the existing program to the stage where it is self- sustaining without further external aid.

7) What are the criteria for selecting a new project in a country with existing programming (McGovern-Dole)?

The McGovern-Dole Program would prefer to fund projects that focus on the same regions and schools as existing/ongoing programs. However, all applicants are encouraged to apply irrespective of the existing program and incumbent organization's experience. We are reopening the competitive process with the intention of funding the best proposal that meets the McGovern-Dole Program's strategic objective of increasing literacy. In the competitive process we will consider the past performance of the existing program, whether the incumbent has made adequate progress in light of operational circumstances, and assess the capabilities of new organizations particularly whether they bring collateral such as strong relationships with key stakeholders and government agencies in country that would help to propel their project to success. The proposals must demonstrate how the project will build on existing projects to get better results.

Proposal Development/Writing

8) Are reports on the current implementing partner public?

Reports are not readily available on the Web site or other public channel. Portions of the reports may be released under a Freedom of Information request. However, FAS could redact portions of the reports that if one of the exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act applies.

9) Does every country have an agricultural attaché or agricultural office?

When a particular country post does not have an agricultural attaché or agricultural office, another country in the vicinity is likely to host the attaché or counselor who manages agricultural affairs on a regional basis. For example, the agricultural office at the post in Nairobi, Kenya has the agricultural and food related issues of Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi under her supervision.

- The FAS Web site offers a searchable database of agricultural offices by country: (www.fas.usda.gov/ofso/overseas_post_directory/ovs_directory_search.asp).

- Web links to Overseas Offices:
(www.fas.usda.gov/ofso/overseas_post_directory/fas_office_home_pages.asp)
- A list of Agricultural attaches and counselors with contact email and office location:
(www.fas.usda.gov/ofso/overseas_post_directory/foreign_service_personnel.asp)

10) Previously the Strategic Analysis was limited to five pages. What's the recommended length now?

The Strategic Analysis should be incorporated into the Introduction section which should not exceed 15 pages.

11) Is a separate Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) document required?

Yes. The PMP must be attached to the proposal packet within FAIS as a separate file (usually PDF). The PMP shows definitions of indicators, how the indicator information will be collected and ensures that indicators used in measuring one program are standardized across all programs.

12) The solicitation states that Food for Progress projects are expected to last 3–5 years. Is there a preference for 5 year projects now, marking a shift from previous timelines?

FAS expects that Food for Progress projects will take 3–5 years of implementation. There is no preferred timespan in that range. For example, five year projects are not automatically favored over three year projects. The critical aspect is that the length of the program must be consistent with the expected accomplishments, Food for Progress program's strategic goals, and the circumstances of operation of each project.

13) Given the interval between the date of the award and the date of the project's start, how do you want us to deal with the issue of potential changes in key personnel (i.e., Chief of Party/Country Director)

It is understood that personnel changes can occur. FAS understands that the Chief of Party listed in the proposal may change during the proposal evaluation period and during the negotiation of the grant agreement. The applicant will need to alert FAS and provide a new CV if a change occurs.

14) Is there a press release or public announcement on the Programs' Awards for FY2013?

The announcement of FY 2013 awards has been delayed. The awards will be released during the next few weeks.

15) The Farm Bill has provisions for local/regional purchases of commodities associated with McGovern-Dole programs. Should organizations applying for Program funds include local/regional purchases of commodities?

If FAS receives authorities in the Farm Bill for local and regional purchases by August 2, then applicants could include a provisional activity for local and regional purchase of commodities in the McGovern Dole proposal.

If local and regional procurement is authorized in the Farm Bill, funding would still need to be requested and approved. The funding could be provided through a program that is independent

of the McGovern-Dole program. In that case, FAS would conduct a separate solicitation for proposals under the new program authority.

16) In terms of Monitoring and Evaluation, what would you advise organizations who must report on the approximately 80,000 students in their program purview?

Information on project accomplishments must be reported on a school by school basis.

Regions of Operation

17) Please clarify what portion of funding is reserved for World Food Programme (WFP) projects.

No funds are reserved for any category of applicant. No special weighting is given to proposals from any category of applicant—private voluntary organizations, international organizations, foreign governments or others. Each proposal is reviewed according to, and funding awards are based on its competitive merits according to the evaluation criteria. WFP projects have not received Food for Progress funding recently. Over the past five years, WFP may have received up to 40–50 percent of total funding, while other organizations may have received 50–60 percent of the funding. This long-term historical estimate includes unusual funding spikes such as the FY 2013 funding cycle when several existing WFP projects required funding replenishment. Again, there is no set funding reserved for any type of organization and award decisions are based purely on proposal evaluations, the need to continue existing programs, and other program factors.

18) How were new regions of interest (priority regions) chosen?

The process of choosing priority regions included consultations with overseas agricultural counselors and attaché and country teams within the U.S. embassies. Priorities for the Feed the Future Initiative and country investment plans were also considered.

19) How do you recommend a PVO proceed when they wish to focus their programming in a non-priority region?

Applicants must make a strong analytical case to conduct activities in a non-priority region. The analysis must be based on the programmatic strategic goals (of Food for Progress and/or McGovern-Dole) and justify a project outside of the priority region. Applications for projects in non-priority regions will be evaluated along all other proposals received. Please be aware that few projects in non-priority countries or regions have been funded.

20) Are applications that propose projects in more than one country allowable?

Multi-country proposals are acceptable. To be considered along with proposals in priority countries, all of the countries listed in the proposal would have to be on the priority list.

21) If applications covering projects in more than one country are allowable, should we submit separate applications for each country or one joint application?

A single application for both countries is acceptable.

22) How would a proposal involving a mix of both priority and non-priority countries be evaluated?

If a multi-country proposal is put forward including both priority and non-priority countries, the proposal would have to demonstrate a strong regional development approach and focus on the program's priority sectors for development assistance.