

Request for Application #2021-013

Decision Support Systems Challenge: Improving Last Mile Access to Contraceptives and Other Essential Health Commodities

I. Summary of Deadlines

The expected schedule for this application is outlined in the following table. Note that PATH reserves the right to modify this schedule as needed. All parties will be notified simultaneously of any changes through a modification posted on [Digital Square's website](#).

Release of Request for Application	April 14, 2021
Live question & answer (Q&A) teleconference	April 27, 2021 at 10am EDT Join: https://path.zoom.us/j/96558167711 Meeting ID: 965 5816 7711 Phone: https://path.zoom.us/j/96558167711
Q&A teleconference recording and transcript posted to Digital Square's website	April 29, 2021
Applications due	May 19, 2021 at 5pm EDT
Applicants notified of decision	June 2021

II. PATH Statement of Business

PATH is the leader in global health innovation. An international nonprofit organization, we save lives and improve health, especially among women and children. We accelerate innovation across five platforms—vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, devices, and system and service innovations—that harness our entrepreneurial insight, scientific and public health expertise, and passion for health equity. By mobilizing partners around the world, we take innovation to scale, working alongside countries primarily in Africa and Asia to tackle their greatest health needs. Together, we deliver measurable results that disrupt the cycle of poor health. Learn more at www.path.org.

III. Project Background and Proposed Timeline

A. Project Background

Digital Square brings the leading digital health experts together to partner with countries, around the world, strengthening digital health systems. In pursuit of our Mission: **connect health leaders with the resources necessary for digital transformation**, Digital Square offers a new way to invest in digital health—providing a space where countries and members of the global community can gather to think big and do good, together. By convening government officials, technological innovators, donor and implementation partners, and others across borders and boundaries in the Digital Square, we can grow possibility into reality by focusing on our common goal: **connecting the world for better health**.

Digital Square's work supports three result areas:

1. **Alignment and Co-investment:** Digital Square helps to identify promising investment opportunities and provides operational support to streamline procurement.
2. **Global goods:** Digital Square promotes the development, adoption, and reuse of global goods, and helps increase their availability, adaptability, and maturity.
3. **Regional and Country Systems:** Digital Square helps elevate country priorities and strengthen regional and national capacity.

Through this Request for Application (RFA), PATH/Digital Square seeks partnership with a subrecipient that can leverage Decision Support Systems to address *Last Mile Supply Challenges* (see below) for family planning and other essential health commodities to support *USAID Family Planning Priority Countries* (see below).

Last Mile Supply Challenges

Many challenges^{1,2} exist in efforts to improve the availability of and access to family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) commodities in communities and service delivery points, including:

- Weak logistics management information systems and inadequate information about inventory, financing, and product flows to guide procurement.
- Inadequate infrastructure, including insufficient road networks and lack of appropriate storage facilities.
- Lack of trained and dedicated staff for supply chain management.

The lack of access and supply failures are among the most cited reasons in LMICs for unmet demand, non-use, and discontinuing contraception.

Responses to this RFA should focus specifically on Last Mile challenges. For the purposes of this RFA, the last mile of the supply chain is defined as communities where people live as well as any point which provides FP/RH commodities (including condoms) to clients (e.g., public and private sector clinics and pharmacies, drug shops, community health workers, home delivery services, automated dispensing solutions).

¹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/255861/WHO-RHR-17.09-eng.pdf;jsessionid=85952E407506ACF338276423A4C82B78?sequence=1>

² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13625187.2017.1394453>

To identify effective means of addressing these challenges, this RFA will support the development or implementation of *Decision Support Systems for Supply Chain* (see below) that will enable or strengthen the analysis and use of data at the last mile, in public or private sector supply chains, resulting in increased availability of or access to contraceptives and other essential health commodities. The Decision Support Systems may be designed to support improved product flows, finance flows, governance, or other critical systems at the last mile.

Decision Support Systems for Supply Chain

The supply chain is inherently complex, and decision-makers constantly manage the risk that medical products will not be available when and where they are needed. Decision Support Systems (DSS) are computer-based systems or subsystems that enhance the ability to use data to identify where decisions need to be made and to assist in making them. DSS can bring substantial benefits to supply chain performance. DSS are essential for visualizing the current situation, predicting future outcomes, connecting decision-makers with data sources across the supply chain and adjusting and optimizing supply chain functions. With support from USAID, Digital Square released a white paper on the utilization of promising practices in the private sector for [Decision Support Systems in Public Health Supply Chains](#). This white paper should serve as the basis for responses to this RFA.

Family Planning Priority Countries

For the purposes of this RFA, applications should work in one of USAID's family planning priority countries or one of the seven Ouagadougou partnership countries. These include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, and Togo.

B. Proposed Project Timeline

PATH anticipates that the implementation period for multiple successful applicants will be up to 12 months, with possible extension contingent upon availability of funds and satisfactory performance. In addition to project-specific deliverables based on individual scopes of work, PATH will require applicants to provide, at minimum, quarterly narrative and financial reports to support their work. For more information about the project lifecycle for the selected applicant(s), please review Digital Square's [investment process](#).

IV. Scope of Work and Deliverables

A. Scope of Work

Through this RFA, PATH/Digital Square seeks partnership with subrecipient(s) that can leverage Decision Support Systems to address Last Mile Supply Challenges in family planning priority countries. *The Technical Application must be broken up by objective and workstreams with dependencies clearly articulated.*

The applicant shall identify one or more of suggested strategies in the [Decision Support Systems in Public Health Supply Chains](#) white paper for application in addressing last mile health supply chain challenges. The proposed solution should have a direct application for Family Planning and Reproductive

Health supplies; however, solutions which have the potential to benefit broader health supply systems or to address COVID-19-related challenges will be viewed favorably.

Based on the identified strategies, the applicant shall provide a technical implementation of the strategy that has high-likelihood to scale across geographies and across health program areas. While specific funding for scaled implementation is not provided under this RFA, piloting or proof-of-concept activities will be considered.

While specific solutions are not prescribed by this RFA, there are several characteristics a successful applicant, as relevant to their proposed solution, should address including:

- Output and deliverables should adhere to the Digital Square [definition](#) of global goods.
- Documentation, guidance material, and other related artifacts should be released under an appropriate Creative Commons license;
- If a machine learning component is envisioned, then:
 - any software, tooling, machine learning components, analytical tools, or platforms should be open source or freely available.
 - any algorithms should be documented under publicly shareable licenses that allow further adaptation and which can be deployed as an open source stack of tools.
 - anonymized training data available should be available under an open license.
 - if cloud services are leveraged, the solution should not be tied to a particular cloud service vendor provider.
- If data exchange or the utilization of product master data is needed, applicants are encouraged to leverage the Open Health Information Exchange interoperability framework as well as GS1 and Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources standards.

All proposed activities must be linked and clearly marked to one of the “DSS impact areas for improving the supply chain” and one (or more) “Key Supply Chain Functions” described in the [Decision Support Systems in Public Health Supply Chains](#) white paper referenced above. Each application should also clearly articulate if it responds to any of the “Transformative Opportunities” identified in the white paper.

The scope of work must be framed around workstreams that address key areas and outputs and, as much as feasible, be severable and stand alone. Should there be interdependencies between work streams, these are to be clearly noted and identified as to which aspects of the linked workstream it is linked/dependent upon.

Local authority approval for proposed activities and workstreams is considered beneficial and preference is for signed commitments as outlined in the evaluation criteria (below) and Section VII.

B. Deliverables

Due to the broad range of potential support contemplated under this RFA, specific deliverables are not being defined. However, proposed deliverables should include:

- Solution package including all components of the proposed solution.
- Final report discussing challenges, opportunities, and potential next steps.

V. Application Requirements – Technical

Provide a narrative on your technical approach to accomplish objective(s) identified in the Scope of Work identified in section IV, including:

Section A: (4-8 pages)

- Description of technical approach which includes:
 - Problem statement.
 - Solution description and approach broken into packaged workstreams.
 - Please note any interdependencies between workstreams.
 - State the impact areas, supply chain functions, and any transformative opportunities that the solution addresses, based on the [*Decision Support Systems in Public Health Supply Chains*](#) white paper, as described in Section 4A: Scope of Work.
 - Activities.
 - Family planning priority country(ies) to be supported.
 - A description of how your solution will accomplish each of the workstreams; clearly outlining approach and envisaged activities as appropriate.
 - A description of how your solution will scale to growing needs of users across the globe.
 - Potential obstacles and plans to overcome them.
 - Proposed results and deliverables.
- Notional work plan for your chosen workstream(s), aligned to the activities outlined in this RFA with illustrative timeline to meet deliverables.
 - This work plan should include illustrative results and describe specific interventions to achieve those results. The illustrative work plan should describe specific interventions (activities) planned for the relevant tasks and should include a timeline providing target dates for achievement of milestones and illustrative results.
- Identification of major internal and external resources.

Section B: (no page limit)

- Past performance information sheets demonstrating:
 - Profile of relevant corporate qualifications.
 - Profile of relevant corporate/firm experience and examples of related work.
 - Applicants may provide any information on awards or certifications.
- Staffing plan accompanied by Curriculum Vitae (CV) for key technical positions.
 - Offerors must include a staffing plan in accordance with the Cost Application personnel requirements, including specific position titles and the approximate level of must for each position.
 - A complete and current resume must be submitted for each of the key staff/key technical positions, detailing the requisite qualifications and experience of the individual.

VI. Application Requirements - Cost

The estimated size of award for this application is up to US\$125,000 for multiple successful applicants for up to the 12 months. This figure is just an estimate provided for informational purposes to the applicants and is not binding.

PATH will evaluate the quoted prices and hourly rates. No analysis will be performed on quotes determined as non-responsive or if the technical quote is determined to be technically unacceptable. The price/business evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the quoted utility-based solution and proposed labor categories, their rates and Evaluation Matrix. Digital Square will conduct an analysis to determine if all quoted prices are reasonable. This evaluation is conducted with the expectation of adequate price competition and will rely heavily on market forces to determine whether proposed prices are fair and reasonable. The comparison of proposed prices in response to this solicitation is the preferred and intended price analysis technique.

PATH will also compare the proposed prices to historical prices paid for the same or similar services and the independent government cost estimate. Other techniques and procedures may be used to ensure quoted prices are fair and reasonable. A cost realism analysis will be performed to determine whether the quoted Level of Effort is realistic for the work to be performed, reflects a clear understanding of the requirements and is consistent with the unique methods of performance set forth in the company's technical quote.

Required Elements

The Cost Application must include a budget narrative, detailing the cost and cost basis applied in generating the application and describe the reasonableness of each proposed cost. The Cost Application must also include a detailed budget that is itemized along the cost categories defined below by objective and workstream. This detailed budget should be submitted in an unlocked Excel spreadsheet and must include the following information:

- Personnel at minimum the budget should detail:
 - All proposed staff/positions with daily rates.
 - Total number of days in total level of effort according to key staff.
- Itemization of all other costs (e.g., agency costs, service tax, administrative costs, supplies, etc.).
- Estimated schedule of other anticipated expenses (travel, subawardee resources, supplies, outside resources, etc.).
- Details of all subcontracting out of work; this includes proposed consultants as well as proposed subawardees.

The Cost Application must be broken up by objective and workstreams. Workstreams should be no greater than \$45,000. The Cost Application shall begin with a summary budget detailing costs by objective and respective workstream(s) in the following categories:

ex. Objective 1

Description	Workstream 1	Workstream 2	Workstream 3	Total Cost (USD)
Personnel				
Fringe Benefits				
Travel				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Other Direct Costs				
Contractual				
Consultants				
Total Direct Costs				
Indirect Costs				
Total Project Costs				

Special Note on Prohibition on Certain Telecommunication and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment

Procurement of telecommunications or video surveillance equipment and services produced by Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, and Dahua Technology Company, or any other company, including affiliates and subsidiaries, owned or controlled by the People's Republic of China is strictly prohibited under this solicitation and applications will not be funded.

Special Note on Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are overhead expenses incurred as a result of the project but not easily identified with the project's activities. These are administrative expenses that are related to overall general operations and are shared among projects and/or functions. Examples include executive oversight, existing facilities costs, accounting, grants management, legal expenses, utilities, and technology support.

If your organization includes indirect costs in the budget, you must provide a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with the US Government or three years of audited financials to PATH to validate the use of this rate.

VII. Additional Attachments, optional

1. Third-tier Subawardee Agreements, Contracts or Commitment. Offerors may submit any agreements, contracts, or commitments it has with any potential third-tier subawardee.

VIII. Application Evaluation Criteria

The following is a list of significant criteria against which applications will be assessed.

1. Sound, feasible, and promising Technical Approach that conforms to all of the components listed in Section V above **(60 points)**
 - Description of technical approach.
 - Activities supporting family planning priority countries.
 - Proposed results and deliverables.
 - Timeline to meet the deliverables.
 - Identification of major internal and external resources.
 - Approval from relevant local bodies/authorities for proposed activities.
 - Qualifications.
 - Profile of relevant experience and examples of related work.
 - Staffing plan accompanied by CVs for key technical positions, including list of certifications possessed by each key technical personnel.
2. Organizational and Team experience - in the following areas to be validated by past performance information references **(20 Points)**
 - a. Digital Health
 - b. In USAID family planning priority countries
 - c. Supply chain
3. Costs - as detailed in Section VI **(20 points)**.

Note: PATH reserves the right to include additional criteria.

IX. Instructions and Deadlines for Responding

A. PATH contacts

Program Contact: Caitlin Bowman; cbowman@path.org

Procurement Contact: Jessica Nguyen; jenguyen@path.org

B. Applications Due: **May 19, 2021**

Completed applications should be submitted by email to the contacts listed above. The subject line of the email should read: "RFA # 2021-013 - (Applicant name)"

We advise that you send files in commonly recognized Microsoft formats and or PDF. We will not accept responsibility for resolving technical transmission problems with applications.

C. Live Q&A Teleconference

During the RFA submission process, one live teleconference will take place on April 27, 2021 at 10am EDT to address any questions related to RFA # 2021-013. All submitters are welcome to join and for those unable to attend, or for those wanting to reconfirm answers to questions, a recording of the Q&A session will be posted on the solicitation pages of the Digital Square wiki and website found at <https://digitalsquare.org/solicitations>, and <https://wiki.digitalsquare.io/index.php/Solicitations>, respectively. Attendance at the Q&A session will not affect the scoring of applications.

Anonymity

As this will be a live teleconference, submitters choosing to attend are requested to follow the steps outlined below to assist in maintaining applicant anonymity.

Signing into the meeting

To join the teleconference, there are two options, dial-in and browser-based. Please see the appropriate instructions based on your available resources.

Either entry will require the following meeting ID when prompted: **965 5816 7711**

Browser-based

Please join by clicking the following link: <https://path.zoom.us/j/96558167711>

If you are new to zoom, you will be prompted to enter your email address and name. Please enter the following:

- Email Address: please leave this field blank
- Name: "Anonymous"

Note: If you already have a Zoom account, please be sure to log out of your account so you are not automatically identified upon joining the meeting.

Dial-In

To join the meeting over the phone, please visit this website to locate your international and toll-free number: <https://path.zoom.us/u/acbgoByuv>

Note: If you are joining by phone, your phone number will show up as your participant name in the list of participants on the browser-based version, thus participants are encouraged to join via the browser-based version when available. The host will change your number to "Anonymous" upon entry, but this is not guaranteed as multiple participants will require management during the call.

Asking a question

Participants are encouraged to join the teleconference with prepared questions, feel free to submit these questions in the chat box and we will address them during the session. There are two options for submitting a question during the Q&A teleconference:

- Chat: when accessing the teleconference via a browser, an option to select “chat” will appear in the bottom of the screen. Please feel free to type your questions to “everyone” and they will be addressed during the session.
- Voice: during the meeting, please place yourself on mute so that others in the meeting can easily hear the moderator. However, when prompted, please feel free to unmute your microphone and state your questions directly to the moderator.

For additional questions, Zoom User guides and support can be found at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

D. Conclusion of Process

Applicants will be notified of the decision in June 2021. Final award is subject to the terms and conditions included in this solicitation, as well as successful final negotiations of all applicable terms and conditions affecting this work.

X. Terms and Conditions of the Solicitation

A. Notice of non-binding solicitation

PATH reserves the right to reject any and all bids received in response to this solicitation and is in no way bound to accept any application. The applications submitted through this RFA process are the responsibility of the submitter and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Government, or PATH.

B. Confidentiality

All information provided by PATH as part of this solicitation must be treated as confidential. In the event that any information is inappropriately released, PATH will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. Applications, discussions, and all information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential, except as otherwise noted.

C. Conflict of interest disclosure

Suppliers bidding on PATH business must disclose, to the procurement contact listed in the RFA, any actual or potential conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest could be present if; there is a personal relationship with a PATH staff member that constitutes a significant financial interest, board memberships, other employment, and ownership or rights in intellectual property that may be in conflict with the supplier's obligations to PATH. Suppliers and PATH are protected when actual or perceived conflicts of interest are disclosed. When necessary, PATH will create a management plan that provides mitigation of potential risks presented by the disclosed conflict of interest.

D. Communication

All communications regarding this solicitation shall be directed to appropriate parties at PATH indicated in Section IX. A. Contacting third parties involved in the project, the review panel, or any other party may be considered a conflict of interest and could result in disqualification of the application.

E. Acceptance

Acceptance of an application does not imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. PATH reserves the option to negotiate on the final terms and conditions. We additionally reserve the right to negotiate the substance of the finalists' applications, as well as the option of accepting partial components of an application if appropriate.

F. Right to final negotiations

PATH reserves the option to negotiate on the final costs and final scope of work, and also reserves the option to limit or include third parties at PATH's sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

G. Third-party limitations

PATH does not represent, warrant, or act as an agent for any third party as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not authorize any third party to bind or commit PATH in any way without our express written consent.

H. Application Validity

Applications submitted under this request shall be valid for 90 days from the date the application is due. The validity period shall be stated in the application submitted to PATH.