



# Digital Square Fact-Finding Questions

## RFA #2020-053: Telecommunications partner to support health workers in Guinea

October 12, 2020

### Notes:

- Please note that applications must be submitted in **English**.
- Review of the RFA: background to the project in the Mamou region to improve data reporting from the community level to the national level.
  - The 3 districts of Mamou must be taken into account during the implementation of this activity (see inventory table in the RFA).
  - The telecommunications package must be interoperable with existing tools and must include SMS, internet connection, and USSD/voice calls.
  - The implementation is planned for 6 months, between January-June 2021 and includes all stakeholders: the Ministry of Health, ANGEIE, the telecom operator, and Digital Square.
- Digital Square will work closely with the operator to ensure that the implemented tools will be introduced to the health workers during a training so that they understand the functionality of the package.
- Digital Square report back to USAID (funder) to inform them of the progress of the activities and collect feedback from the health workers for the operator to take into account and improve the provided package.
- The authorities of the Mamou region will play a very important role in this implementation process by facilitating the implementation, allowing us to better understand the needs, and identifying the key actors.
- The application deadline is October 23rd. This Q&A session is to see what basic questions you have as a candidate and make sure you have access to all the information that is in the RFA. As you read the RFA and prepare your application, we can, by agreement with all the operators, hold another Q&A session if you have other questions to assist you in this process.
- **Additional edit to the original RFA:** A 1:1 leverage (instead of a 1:1 “match”) requirement must be met through the mobilization of applicants’ expertise, contributions and resources that are non-USG funded. Leverage may be both cash and in-kind contribution that the applicants will make towards meeting project objectives. Cash can be actual financial resources from other non-USG funding sources that are also supporting the program objectives. In-kind is usually supplies, equipment or services.

### Questions/Answers:

**Q:** Where are the email addresses for submitting applications?

**A:** In Section IX of the RFA, page 9: "Instructions and deadlines for reporting": PATH Contacts.



**Q:** Is there a defined number of community health workers to allow us to quantify the overall budget over the 6 months?

**A:** See the table on page 4 which provides key information regarding human resources and health capacities in the Mamou region (3 districts).

**Q:** So that means that the health workers, plus the community health community, plus the health structures, hospitals, and laboratories will communicate to add up the total number of users?

**A:** Yes, the Ministry of Health will also identify what types of communications these health workers need. The idea is to create a restricted user group because not all health actors will be able to play the same role in data reporting and communication. It is therefore important to identify the key actors and make small groups of restricted users who will be able to communicate with each other. You will see that there is another inventory table in the RFA outlining the equipment (computers, telephones); this will allow the operator to see what more they can provide to continue to use the existing equipment with new functionalities, instead of adding equipment that is out of budget.

**Q:** Regarding the restriction on the use of certain Chinese equipment, does the restriction apply to prior purchases? For example, some Chinese antennas in X telecommunications system may have been in place for a long time. While we understand that there should be no new Chinese equipment purchased, does the restriction apply to the totality of the system or only to the purchase of new equipment?

**A:** This restriction comes from the donor and applies not only to the purchase of new equipment with these funds but also to the use of the old restricted equipment for this project's activities. That is, do not use this budget to pay for the use of old equipment that falls under this restriction.

**Q:** We will have to study this internally and we will get back to you. The real issue is not the purchase of the equipment, it is simply the use of the equipment that provides connectivity to final customers. There is a small part that we will have difficulty avoiding, because telecom services will inevitably go through this equipment, and it will be very complicated to sort it out.

**A:** If Operator X has a piece of equipment that has been around forever and we want to add functionality to extend the use of that equipment to cover the activities of this project, it would not be possible under this restriction.

**Q:** Some of the restricted equipment allows users to communicate. Within a telecom network, there might be 10-30% of this type of restricted equipment that drives the operator's network and global infrastructure. It is nearly impossible to promise that no communication will pass through the restricted equipment because the network and infrastructure of Operator X is so vast and complex. It is very complicated to be able to disconnect a link from an infrastructure that is huge. If you cannot use this tool, the entire infrastructure falls apart.

**A (from PATH HQ operations team):** The applicants may only use the project funds to cover the existing internet, cellular, and landline services from communication service-providers who use telecommunications covered in the restricted list through the life of the award and with a plan to transfer to another company. All other costs incurred for covered telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment, such as phones, video surveillance, and cloud servers produced or provided by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of those entities), etc. are not allowed.



**Q:** The application is due October 23rd, you say the chosen telecom partner will be announced in November, what date exactly?

**A:** We launched on October 8, operators will submit their application to us before October 23. Then a review committee will review all applications using the criteria in the RFA and consolidate the scores that were given. On **November 4**, we will announce which operator has been identified to continue this project.

**Q:** When exactly will the second Q&A session take place?

**A:** We don't want to set a date quite yet; the operators will have an option to choose if they want another Q&A call as they work on their applications. We might send out a short questionnaire by the end of the week to ask operators if everything is going well with the applications and see if you need a 2nd Q&A session. If the majority says yes, at the beginning of next week we can do a second session to answer questions and allow the Ministry of Health/ANGEIE to share some expectations as well. For the development of this RFA, we have worked with the Ministry of Health, ANGEIE, and USAID, so it will be this same technical group that will participate in the evaluations of the applications that will be received.