BASIS AMA Research Program
University of California
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AMA Collaborative Research
Support Program

B A S I S

Request for Research Proposals
Proposals due 23 September 2012

The BASIS Assets and Market Access Collaborative Research Support Program is a virtual institute comprised of researchers from around the globe that operates in support of USAID's Bureau for Food Security. The goal of BASIS is to build resilience and assets for food security by designing and rigorously testing financial technologies and other complementary innovations that lay the foundation for inclusive agricultural growth.

BASIS invites researchers from US universities to submit proposals for four-year research projects that will contribute to this goal. Proposals may request up to a total of $700,000. Projects must be collaborative and have genuine linkages with researchers in the country where the research takes place, and contribute to capacity building in the host country. Approximately six projects will be funded. Proposals must be submitted by 23 September 2012 and a final selection decisions will be made by 15 October 2012. Project implementation may begin immediately at that time.

In addition to funding research, BASIS sponsors policy-oriented outreach activities that integrate the themes and findings of its research projects into a coherent, evidence-based voice about policy priorities and programming options. BASIS-funded researchers will be required to contribute their time and participate in these activities. Principal Investigators (PIs) should anticipate participating in one or two activities over the life of their project.

Questions may be directed to the BASIS office (basis@ucdavis.edu or 530.752.7252).

ELIGIBILITY

Each proposal must identify at least one PI from a US academic institution and one PI from a host-country institution. BASIS will subcontract with the US-based PI. The US PI and his or her institution will be responsible for negotiating and entering into sub-agreements with all partner institutions and for accounting to BASIS for all program accomplishments, expenditures and reporting requirements.

RESEARCH THEMES AND AREAS OF INQUIRY

Proposals should put forward a research plan that promises to add to our knowledge by addressing one of the BASIS research themes listed below. You should make a strong case for how your work ties in to one or more of these themes, and provides answers that will improve future program design and policy intervention. BASIS needs to insure the coherence and complementarities in its research program that will permit it to craft a high policy impact program. Especially welcome is research that is built up around the evaluation of pilot and other innovative projects designed to address one of the BASIS themes.

Theme 1: Instruments for Risk Management & Resilience

Risk is economically costly in low-income agricultural economies, prompting protective self-insurance strategies that keep small farmers poor as they eschew remunerative, but risky opportunities. Making matters worse, self-insurance only partially protects small farm households against the damaging drops in consumption that can irreversibly damage the long-term physical and cognitive development of young children. These problems are further compounded because risk itself stunts the development of rural financial markets, making it that much harder for small farmers to capitalize and move forward with new technologies and market opportunities.

The I4 Index Insurance Innovation Initiative (http://basis.ucdavis.edu/i4/), launched by the prior BASIS AMA CRSP, has begun the creation of a critical mass of learning on the effectiveness of innovative insurance contracts that transfer correlated risks out of small farm economic systems. To complement this on-going work, this RFP is especially interested in proposals that:

- Design, implement and test risk transfer contracts that enhance the value of small farm agricultural insurance, including innovations that
    - Reduce the uncovered basis risk faced by farmers under index insurance contracts;
    - Respond to the risk management needs of women farmers by targeting crops typically grown by women and, or that offer payoff structures that meet the needs and preferences of women producers;
    - Incentivize climate change adaptation investments;
    - Protect producers against price or revenue fluctuations; or,
    - Crowd-in agricultural credit supply and adoption of improved agricultural technologies.
- Design, implement and test contracts that are informed by insights from the behavioral literature on how households choose amongst risky and uncertain prospects.
- Create the science to cost-effectively scale-up index contracts without undercutting their effectiveness as risk transfer and development instruments.

Theme 2: From Social Protection to Economic Growth

Cash and food transfers—whether regularized as periodic payments to poor populations or distributed in the wake of adverse events—are the foundation of most social protection systems. While these core social protection programs are effective in guarding the human capital of the next generation, they often appear to do little to promote the economic advancement of families, especially when poverty has deep structural roots in inadequate access to markets, low levels of productive assets, exposure to risk and, or social discrimination.

Increasingly, governments and development agencies recognize the need to craft policies designed to promote the graduation of households from dependence on transfer schemes. While there are important efforts already underway, there is still much to learn about the ability to craft graduation strategies, especially those that connect households to

agricultural growth opportunities. Indeed, standard value chain programs often purposefully bypass the poorest household, which can lead to the exclusion of especially women farmers. While there are of course constraints that explain this targeting, BASIS encourages the development and evaluation of strategies that connect poor households to these opportunities. While cash transfer and insurance mechanisms may be important parts of such a strategy, ongoing efforts suggest that graduation strategies may require asset transfers (including land ownership or improved land access), financial training, perhaps through savings programs, technical training and perhaps even efforts to build aspirations and hope. BASIS encourages research that builds off of programing efforts of USAID missions, especially those being pursued under the Feed the Future agenda.

Theme 3: Land Access in Contemporary Economic Development

Theme 2 above suggests research on engaging poor households as direct producers. At the same time, large-scale investment in agriculture—and agricultural land—is taking place in many countries, raising multiple issues about the impact of land concentration on both growth and income distribution objectives. The very fluidity of the current situation offers opportunities to explore long-standing questions about land concentration, agricultural labor markets and contract farming as pathways from poverty. While not always the easiest to study from a methodological perspective, we welcome creative efforts to answer important questions in this realm.

Theme 4: Rural & Agricultural Finance

Upward mobility for small-scale farmers may not only require risk mitigation and connections to markets, it may also require access to the financial resources that would allow farmers to invest and experience a discrete jump in farm productivity and income. There has been a proliferation of efforts by NGOs and others to employ new savings and credit instruments in rural areas, including:

- Self-finance and savings (including savings-secured lending);
- Self-collateralizing loans, including those for tree crops;
- Index insurance and joint liability credit; and,
- Matched savings.

Many of these instruments have yet to be thoroughly evaluated in terms of their development impacts. BASIS is developing a list of NGOs and other implementers with novel programs in this area and who are amendable to rigorous evaluation. Researchers interested in this area of work and who need contacts are welcome to contact BASIS to obtain a list of people in organizations open to evaluation.

COLLABORATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Collaboration and capacity building are central to BASIS' collaborative research support program. All proposals should be a genuine collaboration with a host-country researcher. Proposals should describe the history of collaboration among partners, specific strategies for involvement of PIs, clear distribution of labor, and primary avenues of interaction

between researchers.   It is preferred that at least 50% of your budget be spent supporting activities in the country or your research.

In addition to peer research collaboration, BASIS seeks to promote collaboration and capacity building at additional levels.   One such level is academic. Academic collaboration and capacity building can take place through student training. While not always feasible within the context of a specific research program, training for host country nationals is especially encouraged. Please be specific about the planned number of students to be trained, location of training, and efforts that will be made to recruit women and developing country nationals. Be specific about your plans for recruiting students, how they will participate in the program, their anticipated funding, and anticipated outcome (degree, *etc.)*.

In addition to student training, academic collaboration and capacity building can take place through curriculum development and support. Again while not always feasible or appropriate, research projects at times have the opportunity to support the development of courses and courses of studies within host country academic institutions (including faculty training). Please specify any plans to teach short courses, work on curriculum development or other similar activities that will enhance the development of host country academic institutions.

Beyond academic collaboration, many BASIS projects offer opportunities to build capacity and collaboration with other stakeholders in research projects. Financial market projects, for example, may have opportunities to collaborate and build capacity with banks or insurance companies. In addition, many projects will include training and capacity building activities for producer households (*e.g*., training in financial literacy or in the use of technology options). Please be specific regarding the nature, timing and estimated size of proposed training activities.

POLICY INTEGRATION AND OUTREACH

In addition to contributing to knowledge, proposals should demonstrate the capacity and a plan to engage with local policymakers and work toward the adoption of policies that emerge from the research findings. Applicants should show a plan for involving policy makers in various stages of research design and implementation; and show plans for disseminating findings to policy community, conducting outreach to USAID Mission, and for encouraging incorporation of research findings into policy formulation.

The proposal should also clearly explain outreach strategy, including targete audiences, specific activities, timeline, and clear benchmarks for measuring impact. Please be specific about how this project relates to ongoing debates, research or programs in the relevant country, the expected contribution of the research, and how this can be measured. This can include both in country debates as well as donor processes such as Poverty Reduction Strategies (a World Bank activity), Millennium Challenge Corporation compact development, USAID mission programming, or other donor policy-related initiatives. For those projects that cannot be directly tied to ongoing policy initiatives, applicants should clearly explain the potential value of the research, and their plan for ensuring that the results will inform ongoing development strategies. Annual

activity reports will ask for concrete indicators of how research is being used in policy and programming.

In some instances projects may be more relevant to a broader, global context than any individual country. In this case, the proposal should develop an outreach plan for this constituency.

SUPPORT OF USAID OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES

USAID is both a donor and partner of the AMA CRSP. As such, the BASIS research program should be complementary to the food security and agricultural development objectives of the Agency. Research in countries where USAID is not active cannot be funded. The major USAID initiatives and objectives with which proposed research projects should connect are:

- **Feed the Future (FtF) –** Feed the Future is the over-arching U.S. government global hunger and food security initiative. Its goal is to reduce poverty and under-nutrition. You can find both the full FtF Guide, as well as the research strategy, at www.feedthefuture.gov. A focus on the priority countries for FtF is preferred. Proposals for work in non-FtF priority countries that can clearly demonstrate contribution to the FtF mission are welcome.
- **USAID Mission Strategic Objectives—**Each USAID Mission has its own set of strategic objectives, priority value chains, and programming. We encourage you to explore your proposed country of study on the USAID website and the individual Mission website, and show how your activities relate to ongoing work at the Mission. A clear plan for outreach to, and interaction with, the Mission throughout the life of the project is required.
- **Other USAID Initiatives—**Projects might also connect with USAID initiatives, including PEPFAR, Global Climate Change and Food for Peace.

We encourage researchers to familiarize themselves with the current priorities of the Agency, and design programs with them in mind. The proposal should clearly explain complementarities between the research program and ongoing USAID goals and activities, in both Mission and Washington offices. Research projects that build up against specific USAID programs are especially valued.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT AND IMPACT INDICATORS

While the AMA CRSP is primarily a research organization, our goal is to achieve concrete development outcomes through research. A proactive and joint effort between individual researchers and the AMA Management Entity can help ensure not only that its social science research reaches its full impact by being incorporated into development policy and programs, but also that this impact is demonstrable and measurable. Please submit concrete indicators of what types of policy and programming recommendations you will generate, and what steps you will take in order to increase the likelihood of adoption of the recommendations. These can include, but are not limited to, initial and follow up meetings with local stakeholders, academic and non-academic outputs, and a clear strategy for dissemination of results to parties with the potential to implement them.

In your annual activity plans (described in the next section) you will need to provide explicit accounting of any citations of your research in policy debates, type and level of policymaker engagement, and all outreach and education efforts made to get your research integrated into ongoing dialogue. This can include citations in ongoing policy debates, donor activities, or other development efforts. You should also identify any participation in, or collaboration with, ongoing efforts by other parties, and the ways in which the finding from your research help inform the process.

You should provide a clear set of ultimate impact goals, as well as benchmarks that can be achieved in each year of the project. You will be asked to report on specific progress towards these benchmarks at the end of each year. You will also be asked to provide reporting on all training and outreach activities.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION & RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting requirements will include an annual work plan and budget, an annual activity report summarizing results and accomplishments, impact analysis and results monitoring, trip reports (one per trip), research outputs and summaries, and research updates as needed.

At the initiation of each project, the PI will be responsible for preparing a short brief that summarizes his or her project for a lay audience (see the *BASIS Brief* series on the BASIS web site, < http://basis.ucdavis.edu/live/ama_publications.html>). At least one additional brief should be prepared as project results come in. As mentioned above, PIs will be asked to present their projects to relevant meetings of policy makers, including the AMA Workshop series in Washington, D.C.

The PIs of approved projects will be responsible for submitting an annual work plan to be approved by BASIS. Assuming satisfactory progress on the research project (including timely submission of required reports), annual funding allocations to each program will follow the budget developed at the beginning of the project. However, because the BASIS CRSP program is itself subject to annual budgetary approval, it is possible that a change in research funding will be necessitated in the event that the core budget from USAID declines below projected levels. Such changes will be negotiated with each PI and subject to the approval of the BASIS Technical Committee. Major budget reallocations will also be subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.

The USAID mission in the country in which the research will be conducted will be consulted before research can begin. Researchers themselves must obtain any visas or other permissions required by host-country governments. All grant awards will be made conditional on obtaining all required clearances.

BUDGET GUIDELINES

An indicative budget must be submitted using the template provided at http://basis.ucdavis.edu/information_ama/index.html. Line items are provided as guidelines, but are not comprehensive. The budget must be broken out by yearly expenditures and estimated matching contributions must be included. Each proposal must include a budget for each institution participating in the activity, providing accurate

institutional costs and negotiated administrative rates. Individual institutional budgets are necessary to monitor US-based and host-country expenses.

Travel to Annual Technical Committee Meetings

All project PIs will be members of the BASIS Technical Committee, which meets once per year. The purpose of these meeting is to provide peer feedback on BASIS research, and to lay the foundation for synthetic activities that draw together the policy messages from the different BASIS projects. All research budgets need to provide for annual travel expenses for both US and host country PIs. For planning purposes, assume that the meetings will be held in Davis, California. In practice the meetings will be held in either the US or another country, depending on the location of PIs and visa, cost and other considerations.

Matching

BASIS requires that each research project match a portion of their budget with **non-federal funds or contributions**. All projects must provide indicative matching figures for their projects in the templates provided. Providing matching funds of $100,000 or more over the life of the project is strongly encouraged.

The matching requirement for US universities participating in USIAD's Collaborative Research Support Programs is based on the concept that pursuit of CRSP goals will mutually benefit USAID's interest in providing development assistance for developing countries and the interest of US universities in improving US agriculture. Matching shows institutional commitment to the program.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals must be submitted in electronic format to the AMA CRSP, and must contain the following elements:

- **Title page**, including a list of Principal Investigators (include name, title, institutional address, phone, fax, and email), total project budget, and funds requested from the AMA CRSP.

- An **abstract** not to exceed 200 words.

- A **narrative description** of the project not to exceed 20 double-spaced pages. In addition to detailing the intellectual context and proposed research methodology, the narrative description should take care to describe the policy relevance of the research and how the project will contribute to host country research capacity. It should also detail how the project contributes to USAID objectives and initiatives as discussed above.

- **Anticipated outputs** including dissemination activities targeted at policy makers as well as academic publications

- **Anticipated impacts** including measurable indicators of the potential development impact of the research

- A schedule or **timeline** of activities over the life of the project

- A **budget** for the life of the proposal that gives detail for each institution as well as an overall budget summary. The budget should also clearly describe how you will meet the matching requirements described below.

- One paragraph summary of both US and host country **PI's qualifications**

- **Curricula Vitae** for Principal Investigators

SELECTION PROCESS

A review panel comprised of the BASIS Program Director, the USAID Project Officer and three independent reviewers will score proposals based on the following criteria:

1. *Technical merit of proposal (25 points)[1]*

1. *Broader applicability and synthesis (5 points)[2]*

2. *Collaboration and capacity building (20 points)*

3. *Policy Integration and Outreach (20 points)*

4. *Contribution to USAID objectives and initiatives (15 points)*

5. *Development Impact & Impact Indicators (15 points)*

The BASIS Board of Directors will then select from the top-rated proposals to ensure a project portfolio that is balanced for regional coverage and theme coherence. Prior to announcing project awards, BASIS will communicate with USAID Missions to notify them about the proposed research activity and solicit their input regarding synergies with on-going activities and Mission strategic objectives.

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[1] Contribution to policy oriented poverty alleviation research, contribution to AMA themes; relevance of sites chosen for themes/topics selected; appropriateness of research methodology; qualification of researchers, and feasibility of research design, schedule and budget.

[2] Additional points will be given to projects that have broader regional or global applicability. Proposals should also identify opportunities for synthesis with other research findings or for cross-regional comparisons, and provide information on how results could be used in other contexts.