Evaluation and Learning on the Introduction of the LNG IUS: Request for Concept Memo – Evaluation

Proposal Deadline: March 17, 2017

Overview

Introduction

The Family Planning team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), in collaboration with other stakeholders, is committed to accelerating progress toward universal access to reproductive health and quality family planning (FP) services. BMGF would like to invite initial submissions ("Concept Memos") from qualified organizations ("Applicants") interested in receiving grant support to fill research and evaluation gaps in the introduction effort for the Levonorgestrel Intrauterine System (LNG IUS) contraceptive. This potential investment will build off of existing pilot activities funded by USAID and other donors. Several organizations (e.g. PSI, Marie Stopes International, Jhpiego and WomanCare Global) are beginning introduction of the LNG IUS in Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, Madagascar, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These pilot programs incorporate important evaluation questions such as understanding client profiles of acceptors of LNG IUS, understanding client/provider perceptions of the product and opportunities for overcoming barriers to provision and uptake of IUDs generally. However, there are a number of evidence questions that are important to answer in order to inform future introduction and scale-up efforts of the LNG IUS; and the necessity and structure of a price reduction strategy to make the LNG IUS more affordable in priority donor countries. The main question that this potential grant aims to address is whether the LNG IUS can play a catalytic role in driving increased contraceptive use and continuation, thereby contributing to long-term increases in contraceptive prevalence rates and reductions in unintended pregnancy in key geographies in sub-Saharan Africa. In this Concept Memo, we are looking for creative ideas to incorporate evaluation and learning activities around the LNG IUS introduction to better understand:

- The demand for the LNG IUS among specific populations of women (e.g. new users or youth/adolescents, women in lower quintiles);
- The potential demand for LNG IUS uptake and subsequent annual volumes compared to that of other contraceptive methods (e.g. implants, injectables, etc);
- Reasons for switching to or away from the LNG IUS (what would women choose if the LNG-IUS was not available?);
- Provider factors in providing LNG IUS (e.g. counseling, insertion, follow-up, removals, client feedback, etc);
- User profile and acceptability/satisfaction including characteristics of women who choose LNG IUS and their experience with counseling, insertion, follow-up, access to removals, etc;
- Continuation rates of the LNG IUS compared to other long acting products and/or how women’s intent to continue use with LNG IUS compared with other LARCs;
- The extent to which the LNG IUS is more or less cost-effective compared with other modern family planning methods;
- What, if any, non-contraceptive benefits are experienced by users of the LNG IUS and their impact on intent to continue use;
- How programs can overcome service delivery and demand barriers that have impacted provision and uptake of IUDs historically;
- The “value add” of the LNG IUS over other long-acting methods.

From the Concept Memos submitted, up to 3 Applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal for consideration for a final grant award.

Background

There is strong interest from the global FP community in making the LNG IUS available for women in developing countries to improve method choice over their reproductive life span. The growing popularity of the product in the US and other developed country markets highlights the potential of the LNG IUS to meet the contraceptive needs of women globally. In the US alone, the percentage of women using IUDs started declining in the late 1970s to less than 1% in 1995. The LNG IUS (Mirena) was approved by the USFDA in 2000 and likely contributed to the growing increase in IUD use since reaching nearly 9% in 2013 (UNPD World Contraceptive Use 2016).
Historically, IUD prevalence is low in most of the FP2020 sub-Saharan African countries. Reported reasons for non-use include side effects (e.g., bleeding with copper IUD), provider behavior or lack of training on IUD insertions or lack of competency and confidence in IUD provision, lack of equipment and supplies, women's discomfort with a pelvic exam and the intra-uterine insertion process, and myths and misconceptions about IUDs. Almost all available IUDs in sub-Saharan Africa are the traditional copper IUDs and not the LNG IUS, which is just now being launched in various pilot programs.

![US IUD Prevalence (%)](image)

![IUD Prevalence (%)](image)

Source: UNPD World Contraceptive Use 2016 Country Data

**Purpose**

This project contributes to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Family Planning Team’s strategic goal of generating high quality, credible, timely, relevant, and actionable evidence on what works across multiple countries to accelerate introduction and scale up of interventions or products and specifically how to increase method mix and method choice in priority geographies. The purpose of this work is to generate key evidence to inform continued rollout and scale-up of the LNG IUS contraceptive product. The global community has expressed concerns around the price of the LNG IUS for developing countries. However, before price reduction strategies can be implemented, it is critical to understand the value proposition of this product when added to the FP method mix in key geographies. Based on the results of this project, sufficient information should be available to define a price reduction strategy and country scale-up plans, if warranted.

The target audiences for the evidence generated from this investment include implementing partners/service delivery organizations including those that serve the public and private sectors, MOH as they consider whether and how to add LNG IUS to their national FP programs, and donors as they consider future funding for the expanded introduction and scale-up of LNG IUS. Ideally data will be gathered from both public and private settings, as applicable, but will be drawn from the existing pilot introduction efforts funded by USAID in Kenya, Nigeria, Madagascar, Senegal, Zambia and/or Zimbabwe. Depending on the context, private providers may include...
for-profit providers, SMO providers, and NGO/FBO providers. Additional research or evaluation questions may be considered if necessary for decision-making on future scale up of LNG IUS in a specific country. This should be further explored by the partner(s) selected to submit a full proposal.

Scope and Approach

Primary evaluation questions: This investment seeks to understand the added value and impact of adding LNG IUS to the FP method mix in priority geographies. The specific questions include:

- What is the potential demand for the LNG IUS among specific populations of women (e.g. new users or youth/adolescents, women in lower quintiles)?
- Why do women choose the LNG IUS and/or switch to/from the LNG IUS?
- What are the key facilitators or barrier to offering LNG IUS for providers?
- What are the user profiles of women choosing to use the LNG IUS?
- What is the user experience in accessing LNG IUS? Are there facilitators or barriers to uptake?
- What is the continuation rate or intent to continue for the LNG IUS compared to other long-acting methods?
- What, if any, non-contraceptive benefits are experienced by users of the LNG IUS and their impact on intent to continue use?

Approach and methodologies: There is a need to deepen the global community’s understanding of the value proposition of the LNG IUS method when added to the mix of contraceptives in family planning programs. Applicants may choose to include rapid or iterative ways to gather some types of data and information that will help address the key questions outlined above. This Call for Concept Memos offers an opportunity for organizations to draw on innovative approaches for generating data and gathering information from programs. The Applicant should include a variety of methodologies for answering the key evaluation questions including, but not limited to, qualitative and quantitative studies, modeling for demand estimates, and cost-effectiveness.

Scalability/replicability: This investment is primarily focused on generating evidence and conducting research to inform future introduction efforts of the LNG IUS. It is not anticipated that the investment will require additional funding once the research is complete.

Geography: The geographies to be considered for this award must have LNG IUS introduction programs planned or underway and already funded. This investment does not include funding for training or other service delivery aspects of an LNG IUS introduction. The priority geographies for BMGF include Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal, but other geographies will be considered if they have funded introduction programs and have started introduction or will imminently.

Outputs

It is anticipated that this investment will achieve the following outcomes based on the evaluations and/or research studies conducted on the introduction of LNG IUS in 2-3 priority countries. These outcomes will disaggregate data based on type of user including new user of modern FP vs. switcher; adolescent or youth; and use post-partum or post-abortion. It is anticipated that various methods and/or studies will be needed to answer the key research questions and deliver the outcomes below (e.g. modeling, qualitative data collection, etc).

- Demand forecast developed for LNG IUS in 2-3 countries
- User/client profile created for acceptors and rejecters of the LNG IUS in 2-3 countries
- Reasons for initiating use of LNG IUS, intent to continue use and other user acceptability factors
- Continuation rates of the LNG IUS at 6 and 12 months compared to other LARCs in 2-3 countries
- Costs of introducing/delivering LNG IUS in 2-3 countries and estimated cost-effectiveness (given continuation rates at 6 and 12 months)
- Delivery/programmatic challenges and successes (supply and demand) identified for increasing access and use of LNG IUS in 2-3 countries and with respect to specific populations (e.g. adolescents, new FP users)
- Provider/health system factors that contribute to the accessibility (or lack of) LNG IUS including provider perspectives, counseling, side effect management, follow-up, access to removals, etc.

Rules & Guidelines

Organizational Relevance

Funding Criteria

This Request for Concept Memo is open to any organization that is able to complete the template within the required deadline for submission. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to seek partnership with other organizations or individuals to complete the work. In the case of a multi-partner approach or consortium, it must be led by a prime organization and the prime organization will provide coordination and overall management of the project.
Funding criteria:
The selection of Applicant(s) to submit full proposals will be based on the technical merits of the concept memo, the organization’s capacity, strength of proposed partners (as applicable), and proposed budget.

Exclusion Criteria

We will NOT consider funding for:
- Projects that include or focus on service delivery (e.g. training, demand generation);
- Do not leverage an on-going or planned LNG IUS introduction/pilot program;
- Do not respond to the key evaluation questions outlined above;
- Evaluate impact of LNG IUS use on anemia reduction; and/or
- Where the applicant or partners (if applicable) do not have demonstrable capacity in the areas of expertise defined in the request.

Evaluation Criteria

The following characteristics are required for a successful concept memo:
1. A clear description of the types of disciplines or approaches that will be used for the evaluation/research and how they will adequately address the questions posed;
2. Demonstrated understanding of the issue presented and clear description of how the proposed work will respond;
3. Demonstrated innovation and willingness to try and test new approaches and/or work with new partners;
4. Leverage existing service delivery programs (e.g. LNG IUS pilot programs); and
5. Completion of full concept memo template and other requirements.

The ideal partner will have the following characteristics and experience:
1. Demonstrated capacity to conduct innovative research and evaluation in selected countries including expertise in disciplines such as cost-effectiveness analysis, demand forecasting/modeling, and qualitative and quantitative research and analysis;
2. Strong partnerships with local stakeholders including Ministries of Health, donors, and implementing partners;
3. Experience with new product introduction and evaluation in RH or other health-related field; and
4. An entrepreneurial, results-based mind-set and ability to develop innovative, creative ways for generating and sharing information.

Activities and Timeline for Submission

Successful Concept Memos will be followed by an invitation to submit a full proposal according to the timeline presented below.

February 17, 2017: Request announced
March 17, 2017: Deadline for submitting Concept Memos
April 7, 2017: Finalist(s) notified to submit full proposal
June, 2017: Estimated date for final approval of grant and funding

How to Submit a Proposal

Response Requirements

To apply, please submit a concept memo that includes the attachments listed below. Other attachments will not be reviewed.

- Concept Memo Template (5 page maximum) which includes the following sections:
  - General information: Summary with basic proposal information including names, address, contact information, proposed budget, etc.
  - Project Scope/Program description: Description of overall approach you will take to achieve the intended results of the project.
  - Investment Outcomes: Further describe or elaborate on the draft outcomes provided and required outputs needed to reach those outcomes. Describe how the proposed approach will achieve the desired outcomes and/or outputs and how this will be verified.
  - Organizational Fit: Describe your organization’s experience to implement the proposed work.
  - Risks/Challenges: Describe the anticipated challenges to the success of the project and your proposed mitigation strategies.

- Workplan (1 page maximum; appendix): Develop a high level workplan with tasks, responsible person/s, deliverables and timeline.

- High Level Budget (1 page maximum; appendix) – no official template, but should include a high level understanding of how the proposed funding will be allocated
Bio-sketches of key personnel (no page limit; appendix): Attach short biographies (1-2 paragraphs each) of key personnel and a proposed structure (consortium with prime organization, etc) as relevant.

Submission Instructions

Submit your Concept Memo via the application portal. Please do not email or mail a duplicate copy after submitting your proposal online or send any additional attachments or information (videos, books, program materials, etc.).

The submission must be clear, concise and complete. The Gates foundation reserves the right to mark a submission down or exclude them from the process if its submission contains any ambiguities or lacks clarity. Applicants should submit only such information as is necessary to respond effectively to the request. Submissions will be evaluated on the basis of information submitted by the deadline.

Help Contact(s)

For programmatic clarification and questions, please contact Trisha Wood Santos, Program Officer, at Trisha.Wood@gatesfoundation.org. For template help or general RFP process guidance, please reach out to Marlo Hartung, Program Coordinator, at marlo.hartung@gatesfoundation.org directly with any questions you may have.

More Information

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who can participate? This is an open solicitation. Applicants may choose to form consortia and consortia partners can be from organizations in all sectors (private, NGO, government, academic, for-profit or not-for-profit) and at all levels of expertise.

Is there a preferred list of agencies to engage with for technical expertise? There is no preferred list. We highly encourage applicants to refer to their own networks and contacts in terms of technical expertise.

When are responses due? Responses are due no later than 5pm PST on March 15, 2017

When will proposals be selected? The finalist(s) will be selected to submit a full proposal on March 30, 2017. It is anticipated that the final grant/award approval will happen in June 2017.

Will I receive any compensation for submitting? You will not receive any compensation for your submission even if it is used by the foundation or third parties in any way.

What will the foundation do with my submission? The foundation will review all submissions. We may also share your submission, or ideas contained within it, with internal or external partners for technical review and comment.

What is the available budget for this work? The upper budget limit is $1.5mm

What is the proposed timeline for the project? The anticipated timeline to complete this project is 2 years, but this is flexible if the Applicant can rationalize an alternative timeline.

Key Terms and Conditions

A. Disclosure Notice

To help the foundation with its review of RFP responses, the foundation may disclose proposals, documents, communications, and associated materials submitted to the foundation in response to this RFP (collectively, "Submission Materials") to its employees, contingent workers, consultants, independent subject matter experts, and potential co-funders. Please carefully consider the information included in the Submission Materials. If you (the "Applicant") have any doubts about the wisdom of disclosure of confidential or proprietary information, the foundation recommends you consult with your legal counsel and take any steps you deem necessary to protect your intellectual property. You may wish to consider whether such information is critical for evaluating the submission or if more general, non-confidential information may be adequate as an alternative for these purposes.

Notwithstanding the Applicants characterization of any information as being confidential, the foundation the foundation is under no obligation to treat such information as confidential.
B. Disclaimer
This RFP is not an offer to contract or award grant funds. The foundation assumes no responsibility for the Applicants cost to respond to this RFP. All responses generated by this RFP become the property of the foundation.

C. Release and Verification
In exchange for the opportunity to be awarded a grant or contract, the Applicant agrees that the foundation may, in its sole discretion: (1) amend or cancel the RFP, in whole or in part, at any time; (2) extend the deadline for submitting responses; (3) determine whether a response does or does not substantially comply with the requirements of the RFP; (4) waive any minor irregularity, informality or nonconformance with the provisions or procedures of the RFP; (5) issue multiple awards; (6) share responses generated by this RFP with foundation staff, consultants, contingent workers, subject matter experts, and potential co-funders; and (7) copy the responses.

Applicant agrees not to bring a legal challenge of any kind against the foundation relating to the foundation's selection and award of a grant or contract arising from this RFP.

Applicant represents that it has responded to the RFP with complete honesty and accuracy. If facts provided in Applicant’s response change, Applicant will supplement its response in writing with any deletions, additions or changes within ten days of the changes. Applicant will do this, as necessary, throughout the selection process. Applicant understands that any material misrepresentation, including omissions, may disqualify it from consideration for a grant or contract award.

By responding to this RFP, you are representing: (i) that you have authority to bind the named Applicant to the terms and conditions set forth above, without amendment; and (ii) that you agree to be bound by them.

D. Global Access and Intellectual Property
Intellectual property (IP) rights and the management of IP rights are likely to play an important role in achieving the goals of this project. To this end, the foundation requires that, even at this stage, all applicants seriously consider their willingness to submit a response in compliance with the foundation’s response requirements, a portion of which may ask for certain information and intentions regarding intellectual property concerns and Global Access. Specifically, the foundation requires that:

You will conduct and manage the Project and the Funded Developments in a manner that ensures Global Access. Your Global Access commitments will survive the term of the Agreement. “Funded Developments” means the products, services, processes, technologies, materials, software, data, other innovations, and intellectual property resulting from the Project (including modifications, improvements, and further developments to Background Technology). “Background Technology” means any and all products, services, processes, technologies, materials, software, data, or other innovations, and intellectual property created by You or a third party prior to or outside of the Project used as part of the Project. “Global Access” means: (a) the knowledge and information gained from the Project will be promptly and broadly disseminated; and (b) the Funded Developments will be made available and accessible at an affordable price (i) to people most in need within developing countries, or (ii) in support of the U.S. educational system and public libraries, as applicable to the Project.

The foundation will be selecting applicants based on the conclusion that their technologies and expertise will be most appropriate for the success of this RFP.

As part of the foundation’s review and evaluation of each response, the foundation will conduct due diligence with respect to each applicant’s ability and commitment to manage intellectual property in a manner consistent with the stated scientific and charitable goals of the foundation. Due diligence activities may include inquiry into an applicant’s:

1) Freedom to operate (FTO) and ability to freely use and acquire needed background technology;
2) Commitment to promote the utilization, commercialization and availability of Funded Developments for public benefit

The foundation encourages you to include this information in your response.

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About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help people lead healthy, productive lives. We work with partner organizations worldwide to tackle critical problems in four program areas. Our Global Development Division works to help the world’s poorest people lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. Our Global Health Division aims to harness advances in science and technology to save lives in developing countries. Our United States Division works to help the world’s poorest people lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. Our Global Development Division works to help people lead healthy, productive lives. We work with partner organizations worldwide to tackle critical problems in four program areas. Our Global Health Division aims to harness advances in science and technology to save lives in developing countries. Our United States Division works to help the world’s poorest people lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. Our Global Policy & Advocacy Division seeks to build strategic relationships and promote policies that will help advance our work. Our approach to Grantmaking emphasizes collaboration, innovation, risk-taking, and, most importantly, results.

To learn more about the foundation's work, visit www.gatesfoundation.org.