REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

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RFP SOLICITATION NUMBER: FY16-RFP03-6014

Issued by: University Research Co., LLC

USAID Reading within Reach (REACH)

USAID Contract No. AID-OAA-M-14-00001

Reference: Enabling Writers Implementation

Date of Issue: October 21, 2016

Closing Time and Date for Proposals: <u>November 18, 2016, 5:00pm EST</u>

Proposals must be emailed to: <u>reading@urc-chs.com</u>

Deadline for Questions: <u>October 28, 2016</u>
Questions by email ONLY to: <u>reading@urc-chs.com</u>

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute a contractual commitment on the part of URC nor does it commit URC or the US Government to pay for costs incurred in the submission of a proposal. All costs of the Offeror in the preparation and submission of an offer shall be borne by that Offeror. URC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to make no award at all, or to make an award without further discussion or negotiations if it is considered to be in the best interests of the project and URC.

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1. BACKGROUND

The Enabling Writers prize competition was an All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development competition to produce a book authoring software that could be used globally to develop books for use in early grade reading programs. It is part of the Global Book Alliance and supported by the All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development partners— United States Agency for International Development, World Vision and the Australian Government—and resulted in the award of the prize to SIL's Bloom software.

The All Children Reading Partnership and USAID are now supporting Enabling Writers programs to create new books in underserved languages for primary school age children in developing countries. The programs also support training and capacity-building for local authors to create high-quality children's book titles for reading instruction and practice. The program includes the use of the Bloom software to develop leveled and decodable books. The titles developed through this program will be provided to national ministries of education to support provision of high-quality decodable and leveled books for young readers. These books will also be shared through the Global Digital Library, making it possible for educators and families around the world to access and use quality books with young readers everywhere.

2. Purpose & Focus

A. Context and Statement of Need

URC, in conjunction with the All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development partners, USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Government, is seeking proposals from responsible organizations interested in providing the services contained in this solicitation (hereinafter referred to as the "RFP"), more specifically the implementation of writer's workshops and associated activities, including the use of Bloom book-writing software to develop/version decodable and leveled texts in Arabic and Kiswahili. URC anticipates awarding up to two (2) awards to complete this work, according to the schedule and *Statement of Work* below.

This RFP is being issued with full and open competition. All types of organizations, including, but not limited to, local and international NGOs, universities, faith-based groups, governments, and individuals, are eligible to compete. All organizations responding to this RFP must submit their proposal in accordance with Section L of this RFP. **Proposals must be submitted electronically to URC-CHS by November 18, 2016**. Late proposals will not be considered.

The award to a successful organization shall be in the form of a subcontract. The estimated period of performance for activities under the award shall be one (1) year. The estimated cost range for each award will be between $100,000 – $145,000. Offerors must propose costs that are reasonable and realistic for the work described below. Implementation design, experience, capacity, staffing, and cost will be evaluated as a part of the selection criteria.

Questions: Questions concerning this RFP will be accepted until October 28, 2016. Responses to all questions will be compiled into a single response, and provided to all organizations that submit questions.

B. Program Purpose

The purpose of these awards is to support the implementation of writer's workshops and associated activities to use Bloom book-writing software[1] to develop/version decodable and leveled texts in Arabic and Kiswahili. The total number of titles developed will be at least 100 decodables and 50 non-fiction leveled reader titles. Non-fiction titles must be aligned with national early primary curricula and additional topics within the specific cultural context. All titles should consider language, curricula, and cultural context, ensure gender equity, and be inclusive and representative of students from different demographics within the country, including students with disabilities. All titles will be licensed with a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0).

The awards will provide funds for outreach, training of local stakeholders and authors, support for user software implementation, processes for title adoption by Ministries of Education and evaluation of results. Printing and distribution of titles will not be funded by these grants. Proposals that show clear commitment from Ministries of Education, development partners and/or other entities to fund printing and distribution are preferred.

C. Background

Reading is the art of using text to make sense of our world. Young learners in the developing world are disenfranchised from this process in many ways. They may have limited access to text experiences in their early years. Schools may be under-prepared to provide effective instruction. Even when children are in school and schools are prepared with effective pedagogy, a further problem is predominant – a lack of high quality reading materials, designed specifically for children in unique cultural and language settings. Access to high quality decodable and appropriately leveled books, with themes that connect to children, and in languages specific to their home and learning contexts, is critical to ensure development of early reading skills.

Many efforts are underway in the developing world to provide more effective early primary reading instruction. These include large-scale teacher training initiatives, materials provision initiatives, and whole school reform efforts. However, the large scale of such programs does little to reach the local level with sustainable and localized materials development strategies to enable participants to develop their own texts beyond target funding periods. In addition, many texts that are provided to young learners are developmentally inappropriate or stem from cultures other than their own, and as such are difficult for children to read and comprehend, decreasing both motivation to read and skills development.

In response to the lack of appropriate and affordable texts, the All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development partners (USAID, World Vision and the Australian Government) awarded a prize in 2015 to SIL-LEAD for the development of their open-source authoring

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[1] USAID notes that there are other software packages available for the creation of children's texts. This RFP, however, is focused exclusively on the use of the Bloom software for this purpose.

software, Bloom. The software is designed to assist educators, publishers, and other interested writers in writing decodable and leveled children's books for early primary grade levels.

D. Geographic Scope

The multi-country track (1 award for each language grouping identified below): Under this track, Offeror(s) will work to develop the required number of texts in the following languages, each of which is applicable to many countries:

• Modern Standard Arabic

• Kiswahili

Offerors are encouraged to form consortia large enough to allow them to complete the development of titles in the listed languages. Offerors are further encouraged to propose the amount of time required for completing the production of titles, which could vary between 6 and 24 months. Offerors must work with ministries from at least 2 of countries that use the language as a language of instruction to develop the readers and have them approved for use in schools. Countries that currently have USAID-funded reading programs are preferred.

Offerors should note that, in many countries where the target languages are used for instruction, USAID currently has funded reading initiatives or partnerships that facilitate the planning and implementation of such initiatives. Offerors are encouraged to work in conjunction with existing reading initiatives, partner ministries, and ACR GCD partners in order to complete activities under this scope of work and should clearly explain those plans in their proposal. Note that Offerors should not plan for ACR GCD Partner financial or human resource support, only for collaboration. Offerors should plan to work with other funders and implementers of reading programs and should detail that collaboration as well.

It is important to note that offerors will not be responsible for integrating target languages into the Bloom software platform. URC will work directly with Bloom to prepare the software interface for local language access. In addition, offerors will not be responsible for contracting with a Bloom software trainer. URC will provide a lead Bloom software trainer for each funded program.

It is also important to note that African awardees will be expected to collaborate and coordinate their work with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) to promote communications and outreach to potential participants, and should include strategies within their proposal that demonstrate how ADEA can provide additional value-added support for the proposed work.

E. Statement of Work

This opportunity aims at dramatically increasing the number and quality of early reading texts for children in the target languages and countries. These texts will include culturally-relevant

and language-specific decodable and leveled text designed to meet the needs of readers as they develop and use their early skills,

Under any awarded subcontract, the successful offeror will:
- Conduct outreach with potential stakeholders and actors to garner appropriate participation in the Enabling Writers' training workshops (see details about intended participation and audiences below)
- Provide training for those stakeholders on the principles of developing text for early grade reading programs
- Provide training for those stakeholders on the principles of using the Bloom software to develop decodable and leveled readers
- Support ministries of education in updating and applying their processes for title adoption to these texts
- Evaluate the results of each cycle of title production, by language.

Awardees will be expected to actively recruit, vet, and work with a variety of relevant stakeholders, including (but not limited to):
- Ministry of Education staff, with expertise and/or responsibility in the target area
- Professional writers of children's text
- Publishing houses
- Universities
- Other stakeholders deemed relevant by the grantee (include an explanation of how these additional stakeholders will benefit from and contribute to the work)

Work Objective One: Conduct outreach with potential stakeholders and actors to garner appropriate participation in the Enabling Writers' training workshops (10%)
- Identify and meet with key stakeholder groups (in-country NGO staff, ministry personnel, local authors groups, publishers, ACR GCD partners, etc)
- Explain the reasons for the Enabling Writers initiative, as well as the details of the planned Enabling Writers trainings
- Issue invitations and provide logistics for the attendance of a broad cross-section of these stakeholders at the Enabling Writers workshops.

Work Objective Two: Provide training for those stakeholders on the principles of developing text for early grade reading programs (10%)
- Introduce participants to the simple view of reading and its implications for early grade reading instruction
- Introduce participants to the concept of scopes and sequences, word frequency lists, etc.
- Introduce participants to the concepts of decodable and leveled texts, and to the principles for their development
- Introduce participants to the concepts and processes for Creative Commons licensing (creativecommons.org)

Note that core content for work objective two should come from the approved, core "EW workshop kit." This kit will be provided to all awardees by URC prior to implementation.

Work Objective Three: Provide training for those stakeholders on the principles of using the Bloom software to develop decodable and leveled readers (10%)
- Provide an overview of the Bloom software
- Demonstrate how to create decodable readers using the Bloom software
- Provide ample practice in creating decodable readers using the Bloom software
- Demonstrate how to create leveled readers using the Bloom software
- Provide ample practice in creating leveled readers using the Bloom software

Note that core content for work objective three should come from the approved, core "EW workshop kit."

Work Objective Four: Support authors and illustrators to develop final, tested decodable and leveled readers (30%)
- Use the Bloom software to develop at least 100 decodable and 50 non-fiction leveled reader titles per language. The leveled reader titles may be new titles or versioned titles from another language, as long as the text and illustrations are contextually appropriate. All texts must be gender and conflict-sensitive, and ensure appropriate representation of people with disabilities. Stories that incorporate gender inclusive characters and characters with disabilities are encouraged.
- Conduct limited field testing of these draft titles with ministry of education officials
- Revise and refine the titles after field testing, as needed

Work Objective Five: Support ministries of education to adopt final decodable and leveled readers (20%)
- Update and apply Ministerial processes for title adoption
- Validate titles by and with the Ministry of Education
- Note that all titles will be Creative Commons "BY" licensed as per the above.

Work Objective Six: Evaluate the results of each cycle of title production, by language. (10%)
- Formatively monitor implementation of the award, and use data to continually improve their implementation
- Engage an external monitoring and evaluation partner to evaluate
  - Content and quality of training
  - Quality of books produced

ACCEPTANCE OF ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS

URC is also interested in considering alternative proposals that apply a different process and mechanism than noted in the Statement of Work above. For example, offerors may build upon existing regional, national and/or local reading and/or book development programs, existing partnerships, and/or initiatives which are already in-country including providing targeted technical assistance, additional training, creative strategies for in-country capacity-building, or alternative stakeholder inclusion - based on barriers or opportunities unique to their specific context.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING & EVALUATION

Awardees will engage an external partner to monitor and evaluate program implementation (see Objective 1.4 above). The evaluator will hold exclusive responsibility to
- Conduct a small case study, engaging software users without any training or mentoring support, to examine the difference in the quality of resulting text, in essence testing out the feasibility of fully self-guided software use (no training or support to be provided)
- Regularly report to the implementer on the quality, fidelity, scope, and impact of the larger training and book development program
- Provide feedback and suggestions to the implementer to strengthen all aspects of program implementation
- Report to the funder on the quality, fidelity, scope, and impact of the program
- Produce two reports (6-month implementation report, and final impact report – both in collaboration with the implementing partner)

DELIVERABLES

It is presently contemplated that an awarded subcontract will include, in part, the following deliverables:

Deliverable	Due Date
A comprehensive training plan	Within 30 days of award
Training materials use and report of results	Within 15 days of training completion
Monthly implementation reports, including - Success stories - Images from implementation - Sample pupil books - Classroom use stories - Next steps	Monthly
Six-month progress report	Six months after award
Titles (printed and electronic titles in .pdf and .epub format)	One month prior to the end of the program period
Final impact report (in collaboration with monitoring and evaluation partner)	At the end of the program period

KEY PERSONNEL/QUALIFICATIONS

The following are the key personnel that are required to be part of an offeror's proposal:

Project Manager: The project manager should have experience managing a project of similar scope and period of work. The project manager should have at least limited knowledge of early grades reading and book production, as well as formative monitoring and evaluation strategies. The project manager should have experience managing a small staff for similar programs.

Technology Trainer: The technology trainer should have experience training others in the basic use of technology, and should have the skills and experience to teach others to use specific

software applications. Experience working with writing software specifically is also highly desired, but not required.

Writing Trainer: The writing trainer should have experience training others in the process of writing, experience writing children's books, and a clear understanding of early grades text development and use. The writing trainer must demonstrate an understanding of decodable text, text leveling, and use of read-aloud text by teachers.

Evaluation Specialist: The evaluation specialist should have experience conducting evaluations in training settings, and in analyzing the quality of resources developed within reading programs. The Evaluation Specialist must demonstrate an understanding of qualitative methodologies, as well as a basic understanding of decodable and leveled text and text quality.

Additional Staff: Additional important staff considerations include logistical support staff to coordinate training and any necessary travel, and financial support staff to hold responsibility for managing and reporting on expenditures.

NON-EXPENDABLE PROPERTY & TECHNOLOGY PURCHASES

No non-expendable property or technology/hardware is to be included in the cost proposal or purchased as a part of this implementation. These will not be covered under an awarded subcontract. Each awardee is expected to use existing local resources and infrastructure.

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Awardees will be required to provide all necessary logistical support, including travel arrangements, computer support, team planning facilitation, and report editing and dissemination. These will not be covered under an awarded subcontract.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

Awardees will be required to produce children's books in Arabic and Kiswahili Awardees will be required to produce reports (see above) in one of these languages and English, for purposes of both reporting to local stakeholders and reporting to URC.

ATTACHMENTS

APPENDIX A: GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFERORS

Responsiveness to Solicitation: Proposals must respond directly to the terms, conditions, specifications, and provisions and comply with the instructions set forth here or otherwise risk being determined as non-responsive and eliminated from further consideration.

Accurate and Complete Information: Offerors must set forth accurate and complete information as required by this solicitation.

Format and Presentation: Proposals must be submitted in two separate parts: (a) Technical Proposal and (b) Cost Proposal. Technical Proposals must not make reference to pricing data in order that the technical evaluation may be made strictly on the basis of technical merits. All pages of the technical and cost proposals must be sequentially numbered.

Proposal Submission: The Technical and Cost proposal must be submitted via email. No other forms of submission will be accepted. Please submit signed and dated proposals on or before the date and time indicated above to **reading@urc-chs.com**, The proposal must be received by the due date for it to be considered. Email with attachments must be submitted in the following formats: Adobe Acrobat (PDF), MS Word 2010 and Excel MS 2010. Each email must not exceed 5 MB in size. All files must be unprotected including any spreadsheets, which are to be provided as Excel files with visible calculation cell formulas intact. Our preference is that the Technical and the Cost proposal each be submitted as single email attachments. Should offerors send multiple files, they are to be clearly named to allow sequential viewing and/or printing, and the offeror must include instructions in regards to the number of files and their names. Your proposal may not get optimal treatment if we are confused regarding the order and composition of your submission.

Instructions - Technical Proposal: The Technical Proposal must address how the Offeror intends to carry out the Statement of Work. The Technical Proposal should be specific, complete, presented concisely, and responsive to the goals of the funding. The Technical Proposal must address how the Offeror intends to fulfill the RFP requirements. Detailed information should be presented only when required by specific RFP instructions.

The Technical Proposal is limited to **10 pages** and must be written in English. Offerors must use only 8 1/2" x 11" or A4 paper, single spaced, 12 point font Times New Roman or similar font with margins not less than one inch on each border. Use of smaller font or other page format may result in removal of proposal material provided to the evaluation panel. Maps, charts or exhibits may use a font size smaller than 12 point as long as they are legible without magnification. Those pages that exceed the page limitation will not be considered. Number each page consecutively. A page in the Technical Proposal that contains a table, chart, graph, etc. not otherwise excluded below, is included within the above page limitation for the Technical Proposal.

The following items are not included in this page limit:

- Cover page
- Table of contents
- Acronym list
- Annexes
- Work plans
- Monitoring and Evaluation plan
- Organizational Chart
- Resumes/References
- Letters of Commitment
- Past Performance/Experience Attachments

Management and Staffing (2 pages maximum - included in the page limit): The offeror must describe its plan for management of the project. This will include a description (as applicable to the proposed approach) of the roles and functions of the home office, field office, any satellite/regional offices, and each proposed subcontractor and briefly explain the rationale. The offeror must also identify organizational structures (e.g., people, systems, policies, procedures) that support its ability to launch and support this project and the offeror's technical approach. The management plan must include a draft implementation plan (included in the page limit) identifying the steps for project implementation during the first 90 days of award.

Past Performance: The offeror (including all partners of a joint venture) must provide performance information for itself and each major subcontractor, including:

- A list of up to four most recent programs/contracts similar to the work being proposed
- Past performance references for each of the listed programs/contracts (names, job titles, phone numbers, email, mailing address, and a brief description of the work completed with or for this reference
- Proven experience with leveled and decodable text production
- Dollar value of the program/contracts listed in the performance references.
- A brief description of any quality awards or certifications that indicate exceptional capacity to provide the service described in the statement of work.

1. **Instructions – Cost Proposal:** The Offeror must describe the institutional experience and expertise for itself and any major contractor in successfully managing and implementing projects of similar scale, technical scope, and purpose in a development context. The Offeror must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative for all costs in Excel format and in US dollars. Budget details must include Total Direct Labor Salary and Wages, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Transportation and Per Diem, Equipment, Supplies, and Indirect Costs. All spreadsheets must be submitted in Excel format with unlocked formulas. The budget narrative must be in Microsoft Word, Times New Roman font size 12.

APPENDIX B: EVALUATION CRITERIA

Weighting: The chart below shows the weight that will be given to each component of proposals during review and scoring.

Proposal Component	Weight
Technical Plan	
Work Objective One: Conduct outreach with potential stakeholders and actors to garner appropriate participation in the Enabling Writers' training workshops	10%
Work Objective Two: Provide training for those stakeholders on the principles of developing text for early grade reading programs	10%
Work Objective Three: Provide training for those stakeholders on the principles of using the Bloom software to develop decodable and leveled readers	10%
Work Objective Four: Support authors to develop final, tested decodable and leveled readers	20%
Work Objective Five: Support ministries of education to adopt final decodable and leveled readers	20%
Work Objective Six: Evaluate the results of each cycle of title production, by language.	10%
Management Plan	10%
Past Performance	10%

Technical Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Technical Plan: The technical plan
- Is clear and complete
- Addresses the goals and purposes of the funding
- Creates an effective case for the urgency of need in the country context
- Demonstrates detailed planning
- Addresses the unique context of the country (logistical, technical, participant preparation, etc.)
- Ensures production of 50 decodables and 150 leveled titles during the grant period
- Provides creative solutions to potential program implementation barriers
- Demonstrates workable strategies to build capacity for local program sustainability beyond the scope of funding

Management/Staffing Plan: The management and staffing plan demonstrates
- An efficient, but sufficient staffing plan
- An understanding of the skills and experience necessary for staff to perform proposed functions and activities
- A management approach that effectively builds staff capacity, and monitors and supports staff during implementation

Past Performance: Past performance demonstrates
- Institutional experience with similar program implementation
- Institutional experience working at a similar financial and implementation level
- Quality past work, through contact with listed references

Cost Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The cost proposal demonstrates
- Understanding of the detailed costs of implementing the proposed approach
- Efficiency in planned financial expenditures
- Appropriate balance of fund allocation across the period of work
- Appropriate balance of fund allocation across specific program tasks, including
    o Training
    o Mentoring and support after training
    o Book production and delivery
    o Monitoring of program implementation, text quality, and text use
    o Program reporting

The winning proposals will be selected based upon a combination of technical score and cost. A best values approach will be used.