Tips for Proposal Development Timelines

1. **Consider lessons learned** from past similar processes, at the country program, regional and even agency level. Consult with regional business development and program quality staff and headquarters IDEA staff to identify relevant lessons learned, such as:

   Which project design steps have often taken longer than planned

   Which project design activities we tend to overlook

   What the most efficient ways to coordinate project design and proposal inputs from programming, finance, and other operations staff have been

   What the effective ways are to engage partners without overburdening them, particularly partners in different locations from the CRS proposal development team

2. **Plan for a design process** that:

   Follows CRS **quality standards** outlined in *ProPack I*

   Includes meaningful potential **beneficiary involvement in the design** through assessments

   Draws on programming **experiences and lessons learned** from other CRS programs; consider Past Performance Records on Gateway as a resource

3. **Schedule design, review and finalization of the results framework and theory of change as early as possible** in the timeline, since many other proposal sections depend on them.

4. **Be sure to plan, and schedule sufficient time for steps related to partner engagement**, including:

   Partner selection (including competitive partner selection, if required by the donor)

   Finalizing partnering arrangements and teaming agreements, including meetings with partner leadership

   Consortium planning (if applicable, see Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence)

   Engagement of partners in the design process (assessment, design workshops, activities schedule and budget development)

   Partner review of the draft proposal

5. **Consider how much time will be needed for government engagement** to validate design (and obtain letters of support, if needed, for external funding opportunities).

6. **Divide responsibilities appropriately among members of the proposal development team** to maximize efficiency and ensure that no one person shoulders an undue burden. Refer to the proposal development team roles established when completing CRS Project Management Standard 1, key action 1.

7. **Plan for multiple CRS reviews of the proposal at different stages**:

   Country, regional, and HQ/other technical review of preliminary design and/or concept note

   Country, regional, and HQ/other technical review of full proposal

   Final submission package review and HQ compliance check, if needed

TIPS FOR PROPOSALS DEVELOPED FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

8. **Work backwards from the proposal submission date** to determine how much time you can allocate to each step.

9. Include as a step in the proposal development timeline a **review of the donor's award decision and agreement development processes and timelines, as well as compliance considerations with implications for project design** (see CRS Project Management Standard 5, key action 4).

10. **For competitive multi-stage proposals, develop an overall timeline for the full proposal development process** and update it after each stage of the proposal development process. Develop an overall checklist, if sufficient information is available, on requirements; otherwise, develop a checklist for each stage of the proposal development process.

11. **Include time as needed for items such as translation of documents (e.g. partner capacity inputs, letters of support)**, particularly if the donor requires English translations of all required proposal components.

12. **Budget enough time for final tasks** such as editing, formatting, and packaging of both the technical and cost applications, and for submission.

13. **Allow extra time for submission** if the donor requires submission via an online portal or other system more complicated than email.

14. **Specify exact dates** of known deadlines if your timeline is organized by weeks. Consider a day-by-day timeline closer to the submission date.