Clarifications and Responses to Questions from Prospective Offerors

Research Study on Child Trafficking in Kazakhstan: Vulnerabilities, Trends, Protection Systems, and Response Capacity Kazakhstan Actions against Trafficking in Children (KATCH) Project

Solicitation Number – RFP-10019-KATCH-2026-01

Introductory note

The following responses clarify selected provisions of RFP-10019-KATCH-2026-01. These responses should be read together with the RFP and do not modify its requirements except where a correction or modification is expressly stated. In the event of any inconsistency between these responses and the RFP, these responses will govern with respect to the specific matters addressed. Offerors remain responsible for reviewing the complete RFP, submitting a responsive Proposal, and accounting for all costs, risks, permissions, approvals, and other requirements necessary to perform the assignment. Winrock International reserves all rights provided under the RFP.

Clarifications and Responses

1. **Due Date**. The RFP gives the 6 November 2026 closing time as both 11:59 PM and 11:50 PM Kazakhstan time. Which is correct?
   Response: The correct proposal submission deadline is November 6, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Kazakhstan time. The reference to 11:50 p.m. is a typographical error. We apologize for any confusion.

2. **Submission files**. Section I requests two separate proposal files, while the financial instructions require an Excel budget and Word budget justification. Please confirm whether three attachments: technical proposal, Excel budget, and Word budget justification are acceptable, and whether there are attachment-size limits.
   Response: Please submit the proposal as three separate attachments:
   1) Technical proposal
   2) Excel budget
   3) Word budget justification

   This supersedes the instruction in Section I to submit two files. The fixed price for each anticipated deliverable, required under Section K, should be included as a separate sheet within the Excel budget.

   The technical proposal must not exceed 10 pages, excluding annexes. The page limits for each section in Section J, including the 2-page Technical Experience and Past Performance References section, fall within this 10-page limit. Annexes should be placed at the end of the technical proposal file and do not count toward the 10-page limit. Annexes include the registration certificate, the latest audited financial statement or alternative documentation

(see Response 6), CVs for key personnel (not to exceed five pages per individual), letters of commitment, client reference letters, sample technical outputs, and the signed Certification of Independent Price Determination.

The Financial Proposal must include a complete and itemized Excel budget (with formulas included) and a corresponding Word budget justification explaining the basis and purpose of the proposed costs. Both documents should contain sufficient detail to permit an assessment of the reasonableness and consistency of the proposed costs with the technical approach.

The RFP does not specify an attachment-size limit. Offerors are responsible for ensuring that all required files are transmitted successfully and received by the designated procurement email address before the submission deadline. If an Offeror anticipates transmission difficulties due to file size, it should contact the designated procurement email address sufficiently in advance of the deadline for instructions. Offerors should not use an alternative submission method unless authorized by Winrock International in writing.

3. **Workshops and participant support costs.** Who will organize and pay for workshop venues, interpretation, participant travel, and other logistics? Should the contractor also budget for survivor participation expenses and any necessary psychosocial support, and does Winrock have applicable reimbursement guidance?
   Response: The Offeror should include in its proposed fixed price all costs necessary to implement its proposed methodology and complete the assignment. These may include, as applicable, workshop or meeting venues, interpretation and translation, participant transportation, fieldwork travel, accommodation, data-collection logistics, and other associated costs. Where appropriate, the Offeror may propose virtual workshop arrangements (e.g., for Inception and Validation Workshops).

   The Offeror should also account for reasonable survivor-participation expenses and any safeguarding, referral, accessibility, or psychosocial support arrangements required by its proposed methodology, applicable ethics requirements, and the final approved research protocol. Winrock International may provide guidance on appropriate survivor-participation compensation and documentation practices. However, these costs must be covered within the Contractor's fixed price and will not be funded separately. The Contractor will remain responsible for organizing the activities and managing the associated expenditures.

4. **Schedule commencement.** What event establishes Week 1 of the assignment: contract signature, notice to proceed, or the inception meeting? Can milestone dates be adjusted by agreement if ethics approvals or access permissions are delayed?
   Response: Week 1 will commence on the effective date specified in the resulting agreement. The inception meeting is expected to take place during Week 1 as part of Phase I.

The work plan in Table 1 is illustrative. Offerors may propose an alternative allocation of activities within the overall implementation period, provided that the proposed schedule is realistic, adequately justified, consistent with the proposed methodology, and responsive to the required milestones and completion date. Any subsequent adjustment to a contractual milestone will be subject to Winrock International's prior written approval and the terms of the resulting agreement. No schedule extension should be assumed, except as described in Response 11 with respect to ethics review.

5. **Taxes and fixed price.** Should the fixed price include all applicable Kazakhstan taxes, including VAT and any withholding on payments to non-resident consultants? If Winrock or the award is tax-exempt, please say how we should show that, and whether the USD 30,000 ceiling includes any taxes.
   Response: The Offeror should include in its proposed fixed price all costs and any applicable taxes for which it may be legally responsible. The selected Contractor will be responsible for determining, reporting, and paying any taxes applicable to the work performed, including taxes related to its personnel or consultants. Offerors should not assume that Winrock International or the award is tax-exempt unless Winrock International confirms an exemption in writing. Any applicable taxes must be covered within the USD 30,000 ceiling.

6. **Audited financial statements.** If an offeror has no audited statements, what alternative will Winrock accept (for example, reviewed statements, tax filings, bank references or a management letter)?
   Response: If audited financial statements are unavailable, the Offeror may submit its most recent available financial documentation for Winrock International's review and should explain why audited statements are not available. Submission of alternative documentation does not guarantee that the documentation will be considered sufficient. Winrock International reserves the right to determine whether the information submitted adequately demonstrates the Offeror's financial capacity and to request additional documentation as part of its evaluation or due-diligence review.

7. **Registration documents.** An Offeror proposes a lead entity and partners registered outside Kazakhstan. Will Winrock accept each entity's registration documents from its home jurisdiction instead of a Kazakhstan registration? Is a Kazakhstan-registered entity required for any role?
   Response: A Kazakhstan-registered entity is not required by the RFP to serve as the lead Offeror, consortium partner, or subcontractor. Each legal entity identified in the Proposal should provide the registration or legal-formation documentation applicable to its jurisdiction and its proposed role, as required by the RFP or subsequently requested by Winrock International. Nevertheless, given the national scope and context-specific nature of the assignment, the Proposal should demonstrate adequate Kazakhstan-based expertise, language capacity, institutional understanding, and ability to engage relevant stakeholders

and participants. This may be demonstrated through Kazakhstan-based experts or other substantive local participation in research design, stakeholder engagement, data collection, contextual analysis, and development of recommendations. The absence of a Kazakhstan-registered entity does not, by itself, make a Proposal ineligible. However, every Offeror remains responsible for demonstrating that its proposed team and implementation arrangements are sufficient to perform the assignment effectively and in compliance with applicable requirements.

8. **Past-performance references.** Do ongoing assignments, subcontracted assignments, or assignments completed by a partner count toward the three required references? Is a client reference contact required for each, or is a client letter acceptable?
   Response: This response modifies the requirement in Section J that references be from completed assignments. Completed assignments are preferred. Ongoing assignments may be counted toward no more than one of the three required references, provided that the assignment is at least 50% complete and that the Offeror has delivered at least one substantive deliverable (such as a draft report or dataset) under it. The remaining references must be completed assignments. All referenced assignments must have been performed within the last five years. Assignments the Offeror performed as a subcontractor are acceptable, provided the Offeror clearly describes its role and scope of work on the assignment. For subcontracted assignments, the reference may be provided by either the prime contractor or the end client. Assignments completed solely by a partner organization are not acceptable; references must reflect work performed by the Offeror itself. For each reference, Offerors may provide either a client reference contact or a signed client letter that includes the client's contact information, so that Winrock can verify the reference if needed. Reference descriptions must fit within the 2-page section; client letters should be included as annexes.

9. **Sample outputs.** May we submit redacted or excerpted work where full reports are confidential? Is there a page limit for samples?
   Response: Where a complete work sample cannot be disclosed because of confidentiality or other binding restrictions, the Offeror may submit a redacted or excerpted version, provided that it is clearly labeled and contains sufficient substantive material to permit an assessment of the quality and relevance of the work. The Offeror is responsible for ensuring that it has the right to submit the material and that the sample does not disclose confidential, proprietary, personally identifiable, or other protected information. Winrock International reserves the right to request additional information or verification if a submitted sample is insufficient for evaluation.

   The RFP does not specify a page limit for work samples. As stated in Section J, Offerors should submit one or two samples, included as annexes; they do not count toward the 10-page limit. The 2-page Technical Experience and Past Performance References section does

count toward that limit (see Response 2). Offerors should submit focused and relevant samples and avoid unnecessary supporting material.

10. **Key personnel.** (a) May one person serve as both Team Leader and Child Protection and TIP Specialist? (b) May international advisers lead the ethics, safeguarding and TIP-methodology functions alongside the two national experts? (c) If a key person is confirmed after the proposal date, can CVs and letters of commitment follow before award?
    Response: (a) No. The Team Leader/Principal Investigator and the Child Protection and TIP Specialist must be different individuals. Section J requires the team to include, at minimum, both roles, and the Specialist is expected to provide independent technical guidance on safeguarding, consent, and survivor-centered approaches. (b) Yes. International advisers may lead or contribute to ethics, safeguarding, and TIP-methodology functions, provided the Proposal demonstrates substantive Kazakhstan-based expertise and national participation (see Response 7) and a realistic level of effort for each role. (c) CVs and letters of commitment for proposed key personnel should be submitted with the Proposal. The RFP does not authorize their routine submission after the deadline; any exception would require Winrock's written approval.

11. **Ethics approvals.** The RFP refers to the Central Bioethics Commission and Local Ethics Commission. For adult-only survivor interviews, is approval required? If so, who applies and pays, and does the review time count within the 13-week schedule?
    Response: Interviews limited to adult survivors are not, by that fact alone, exempt from ethics review. Survivors of trafficking are considered a vulnerable population, and Offerors should assume that ethics review will be required unless the competent reviewing body determines otherwise in writing.

    The selected Contractor will be responsible for determining the applicable ethics-review requirements and for obtaining any required ethics approval, determination, or documented exemption before beginning activities subject to such review. The Contractor's ethics-review plan, research protocols, informed consent procedures, and survivor safeguarding measures will be subject to review and approval by Winrock International before submission to any ethics body. The Contractor must also comply with any applicable Winrock International and donor requirements for research involving human subjects, which Winrock will provide to the selected Contractor. The Contractor will prepare and submit all required materials and cover any associated fees within its fixed price. Ethics review must be incorporated into the 13-week implementation schedule, and Offerors should reflect realistic review timeframes, including time for Winrock's review, in their proposed workplans. The Contractor must not begin survivor interviews until the required written approval, determination, or exemption has been obtained. If ethics review is delayed for reasons outside the Contractor's control despite timely and complete submission, the Contractor should notify Winrock International promptly, and Winrock may consider a schedule adjustment.

At the proposal stage, each Offeror is responsible for identifying the competent ethics commission or other reviewing body that may have jurisdiction over the proposed research. Reference in the RFP to a particular commission should not be interpreted as a determination by Winrock International that the commission will accept jurisdiction or that no other review is required.

12. **Access to participants.** Will KATCH help introduce the researchers to service providers and referral partners for interviews, focus groups and survivor consultations, or must the contractor recruit independently?
    Response: Winrock International may facilitate introductions to relevant service providers, government stakeholders, and referral partners within its existing network, where appropriate and feasible. However, the Contractor will be responsible for developing and implementing the participant-recruitment plan, coordinating interviews and focus groups, and securing informed consent. Any survivor engagement must be coordinated through qualified service or referral partners and conducted in accordance with the approved ethics and safeguarding protocols. Offerors should not assume that Winrock International (KATCH) will provide a complete participant list or guarantee access to any particular stakeholder or survivor group.

13. **Language of deliverables.** Is English the only required language for the final report, or are Russian or Kazakh summaries also required?
    Response: The final report and other formal deliverables must be submitted in English. Russian- or Kazakh-language versions or summaries are not required unless otherwise agreed in writing with Winrock International. Data-collection instruments, informed-consent materials, and other participant-facing documents must be available in the language or languages appropriate for the intended participants and must comply with the approved research protocol. Offerors may propose additional Russian- or Kazakh-language outputs within the fixed price. However, Offerors should not assume that optional translations will receive separate evaluation credit or additional compensation unless expressly stated in the RFP or agreed in writing.

14. **Payment.** Can invoices be paid by international wire in USD to a U.S. account, and what is the payment term after deliverable acceptance?
    Response: Payments will be made in USD by wire transfer. Payment will be made only to a bank account held in the Contractor's legal name. A U.S. bank account is acceptable; an account located outside the Contractor's country of registration may be subject to additional verification. Before any payment can be made, the selected Contractor must complete Winrock's vendor setup by submitting the required banking and tax forms. To clarify Section O, unless otherwise stated in the resulting agreement, payment will be made net 30 days from the latest of: (a) Winrock's receipt of a proper invoice; (b) Winrock's acceptance of the

deliverable or invoice; or (c) Winrock's receipt of payment from its funder. Final invoices must be submitted within 45 calendar days of the agreement end date.

15. **Certifications**. May the Certification of Independent Price Determination be submitted in our own wording, or must we use the exact RFP text?
    Response: Offerors should use the Certification of Independent Price Determination provided in the RFP and should not materially modify its substantive wording. The certification may be reproduced on the Offeror's letterhead or incorporated into the proposal, provided the complete certification text is retained and signed by an authorized representative.

16. **Eligibility to submit multiple applications from the same organization.** Would it be permissible for one legal entity to submit two separate applications, provided that each application identifies a different Team Leader / Principal Investigator? In this arrangement, the Child Protection and TIP Specialist would be the same organization, acting as the legal entity, while the Team Leaders / Principal Investigators would be different individuals engaged by the organization to conduct the research.
    Response: No. Each legal entity or individual consultant may submit only one Proposal as the prime Offeror. A Proposal may not present alternative teams, Team Leaders, or technical approaches; if more than one Proposal is received from the same legal entity or individual consultant, Winrock International may reject all of them. Each Proposal must name an individual for every key personnel role, including the Child Protection and TIP Specialist. Each Proposal must also include a signed Certification of Independent Price Determination (see Response 15).

17. **Payment arrangements and coverage of research-related expenses.** While preparing the research budget, we would appreciate clarification on the arrangements for financing expenses associated with conducting surveys across different regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These expenses may include transportation, travel-related costs, per diems, accommodation, and other associated expenses necessary for organizing and conducting fieldwork. Would Winrock provide an advance payment to cover these expenses before the relevant activities commence, or would funding be provided only after the expenses have been incurred and supporting documentation submitted?
    Response: Because this will be a fixed-price award, all transportation, travel, accommodation, per diem, and other fieldwork costs must be included in the proposed fixed price. Advance payments are not provided under deliverable-based awards, and the RFP does not provide a separate reimbursement mechanism for travel or fieldwork expenses. Payment will be made upon Winrock's acceptance of each deliverable listed in Appendix B and receipt of a proper invoice (see Response 14). As required by Section K, Offerors should state the fixed price for each deliverable on a separate sheet of the Excel budget. Offerors may allocate the total price across deliverables in a way that reflects when major costs are

incurred, for example by assigning a larger share to the Data Collection Completion Memo, subject to Winrock's review and negotiation.

18. **Clarification (Winrock International).** The Award section states that evaluation points will not be awarded for cost. This refers to the total price itself. As set out in the Evaluation Criteria section (Table 4), the Financial Proposal is scored out of 20 points based on the sufficiency, reasonableness, and accuracy of the proposed costs and the quality of the budget justification. A lower total price does not by itself earn additional points.