



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **Evaluation Sub-contractor**

**Opportunity:** USDA Food for Progress Program (FFPr) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in Coffee and Cashew Value Chains

**Expected start date:** November 2019

### **1. Background**

#### **1.1 Background on TechnoServe**

TechnoServe is an international nonprofit organization that promotes business solutions to poverty in the developing world. It is headquartered in Washington, DC and operates in 29 countries worldwide. TechnoServe's mission is to work with enterprising men and women in the developing world to build competitive farms, businesses and industries. It does this by linking people to information, capital and markets. With nearly 50 years of proven results, TechnoServe believes in the power of private enterprise to transform lives.

#### **1.2 Background on the opportunity**

TechnoServe is currently developing proposals in response to USDA's Food for Progress Program (FFPr) [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#), specifically the coffee (Ethiopia, \$12-15M project budget) and cashew (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria, \$20-25M project budget) value chains. TechnoServe has a proven track record of winning awards similar in nature to the current opportunities.

In line with our commitment to rigorous results measurement, we seek to execute a first-class evaluation, and demonstrate this intent in our proposal. The evaluation would assess the project's overall impact on the agricultural value chain of interest and inform project implementation at relevant touchpoints during execution. The evaluation approach will be informed by the scope and complexity required to implement against the objectives laid out in the NOFO. We require a strategic approach to evaluation that will be rigorous without exhausting project resources.

## **Role of the Sub-contractor**

The selected sub-contractor will have the opportunity to provide input on the draft evaluation plan before it is submitted as part of the bid proposal. Upon awarding of the project to TechnoServe, the contractor/s will be tasked with finalizing and then executing the evaluation plan, starting with the baseline study and eventually to include the mid-term and final evaluations.

The broad objectives of the program evaluation will be to:

- Provide an objective assessment of the characteristics of the value chain at program outset (baseline) and provide data to be used as a benchmark for performance indicators to support the ongoing monitoring activities as well as subsequent program evaluations.
- Provide insight into what is working and what is not working and recommend adjustments to the implementation strategy and process during the life of the project.
- Undertake an end-of-program evaluation that will inform TechnoServe and its partners on the project's results and impact. In addition, to identify lessons learned from the project's implementation experience for future programming either at TechnoServe or within the donor/partner organizations.

## **Profile of Evaluator/Evaluators**

A competitive bid for the sub-contractor role will demonstrate:

- At least five years of experience in designing and leading multi-faceted evaluations of agricultural livelihood programs or market facilitation programs, preferably in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Proven gender qualifications
- Proven ability to use quantitative, qualitative and participatory evaluation methods, with examples and references that can speak to this experience
- Data analysis and presentation skills
- Strong writing ability, particularly in English
- Sensitivity to cultural/historical context in the data collection process
- Experience conducting evaluations for international donors (e.g. USDA, USAID, and European Union, etc.)

## **Period of Performance**

The period of performance of any contract resulting from this solicitation is anticipated to begin on or about Nov 15, 2019 and last for the duration of the project.

## **Submission Process and Evaluation of Proposals**

The procurement will take place in 2 phased submissions.

1. Interested parties who intend to submit a proposal for this RFP should notify TechnoServe of their intent to bid by emailing [procurement@tns.org](mailto:procurement@tns.org) with the subject line "USDA [coffee/cashew] evaluation procurement" by **March 29, 2019**.
  - a. Interested party may bid on coffee alone, cashew alone or both.
2. All questions must be submitted by March 29, 2019. TechnoServe will provide a transparent response to interested parties by April 5, 2019.
3. **Phase 1 submission is due at 11:59PM on April 20, 2019.** The submission must be emailed to [procurement@tns.org](mailto:procurement@tns.org) with the subject line "USDA [coffee/cashew] evaluation procurement" and must include:
  - a. A cover letter summarizing the applicant's interest and capacity to implement the evaluation plan for this program. (1-2 pgs)
  - b. A description of the proposed evaluation approach suitable to evaluate the desired impacts in the market (coffee and/or cashew) as laid out in the NOFO. (1-2 pgs)
  - c. List of the three relevant evaluation assignments, including a description of why these are relevant to this RFP and what learnings were drawn from that assignment. (1 pg)
  - d. Concise biographical paragraphs of the evaluator(s), outlining previous evaluation experience and accomplishments as it relates to demonstrating the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill the requirements of the RFP.
4. TechnoServe will invite parties with the top-ranking submissions to proceed to Phase II by **April 23**. At that time, TechnoServe will provide relevant information including the draft implementation approach.
5. Questions on the second phase must be received by April 25, with a response from TechnoServe by April 26.
6. **Phase 2 submission is due by 11:59PM on April 30, 2019.** The submission must be emailed to [procurement@tns.org](mailto:procurement@tns.org) with the subject line "USDA [coffee/cashew] evaluation procurement phase 2" and must include:
  - a. A description of the recommended evaluation methodologies that demonstrates an understanding of the expected impact, implementation approach, and operating context of the program(s). This proposal should iterate on the submission in phase 1, based on the detailed implementation plan. (3-5 pgs)
  - b. A budget and budget notes for implementing the evaluation approach, including critical assumptions informing the estimate. (1-2 pgs)
    - i. The evaluations are expected to cost between 5-10% of the total project budget. Proposals for this bid should be sized accordingly. The final contract ceiling will be contingent on both the "value for money" of the selected applicant's cost proposal and on the final program budget.
  - c. Demonstrated financial and administrative capacity to manage the proposed contract
  - d. CVs for each proposed member of the evaluation team.

- e. Optional: one example of an evaluation report recently completed or any other document that demonstrates analytical approach. (These documents will be handled with the utmost confidentiality).

The following criteria will be used to evaluate and rank the proposals submitted for phase 1.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Points</b>
Proposed Evaluative Approach and Suitability	50
Past Performance	30
Staffing	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The following criteria will be used to evaluate and rank the proposals submitted for phase 2.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Points</b>
Proposed Evaluative Approach and Suitability (updated from phase 1)	40
Past Performance (carried over from phase 1)	30
Staffing (updated from phase 1, if necessary)	20
Cost	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

TechnoServe reserves the right to award the contract to the consultant or firm whose proposal is deemed to be in the best interest of TNS and the Donor.

The consultant or firm with the winning proposal will be notified in writing. Applicants who are not selected will also be notified.

Proposals should remain valid through December 31, 2019.

#### **Appendix 1 – TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. The Consultant or Consulting firm, and all parties constituting the Bidder, may have the nationality of any country. All national or international consulting firms or group of individuals acting as a Consulting Group must be legally constituted. In the event that the candidate is a natural person, the following principles apply:

1. The Consulting firm will act in representation of a group of consultants;
  2. The Consulting firm will receive any remuneration from TechnoServe, to be distributed among the team members as they are defined;
  3. If the Consulting firm finds that any of their staff have committed serious misconduct or low performance, then the consultant shall provide in a timely manner, as a replacement a person with qualifications and experience acceptable to TechnoServe. Penalties will apply if the Consultant does not remedy a failure in the performance of their obligations under the Contract.
2. A bidder must meet all requirements of an independent evaluator indicated in Part 7 CFR 1499.13, articulated in USDA Foreign Service Evaluation Policy. These requirements include but are not limited to:
    1. [Independent evaluator] uses acceptable analytical frameworks such as comparison with non-project areas, surveys, involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation, and statistical analyses;
    2. Uses local consultants, as appropriate, to conduct portions of the evaluation; and,
    3. Provides a detailed outline of the evaluation, major tasks, and specific schedules prior to initiating the evaluation.
  3. A bidder must not have a conflict of interest. Bidders who are found to have conflict of interest shall be disqualified. Bidders shall be deemed to have a conflict of interest with one or more parties in this bidding process if they are or have been associated, directly or indirectly, with a company or with any of its affiliates which have been hired by TechnoServe to provide consulting services for the preparation of the design, technical specifications and other documents to be used in the tender for the acquisition of goods subject to these bidding Documents.
  4. The Request for Proposal is not and shall not be considered an offer by TechnoServe.
  5. All responses must be received on or before the date and time indicated on the RFP. All late responses will be rejected.
  6. All unresponsive responses will be rejected.
  7. All proposals will be considered binding offers. Prices proposed must be valid for entire period indicated in the RFP.
  8. All awards will be subject to TNS contractual terms and conditions and contingent on the availability of donor funding.
  9. TNS reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal or cancel the solicitation process at any time, and shall have no liability to the proposing organizations submitting proposals for such rejection or cancellation of the request for proposals.
  10. TNS reserves the right to accept all or part of the proposal when award is provided.
  11. All information provided by TNS in this RFP is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time, and all bidders will be provided with notification of any changes. TNS is not responsible or liable for any use of the information submitted by bidders or for any claims asserted therefrom.
  12. TNS reserves the right to require any bidder to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.
  13. The bidders are solely obligated to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever, which may be incurred by bidder or any third parties, in connection with the Response. All

responses and supporting documentation shall become the property of TNS, subject to claims of confidentiality in respect of the response and supporting documentation, which have been clearly marked confidential by the bidder.

## Phase 1 Q&A

- 1. Can you please confirm that we should rely on this document ([https://apps.fas.usda.gov/fais/public/files/FY%2019%20FFPr%20NOFO\\_3-14-2019%20FINAL.pdf](https://apps.fas.usda.gov/fais/public/files/FY%2019%20FFPr%20NOFO_3-14-2019%20FINAL.pdf)) for our understanding of the project and our initial design of the approach?**

Correct

- 2. What language(s) do you anticipate that the deliverables will be prepared and presented in?**

English

- 3. If we are interested in both, should we make two distinct proposals for Coffee in Ethiopia and Cashew in West Africa or one proposal with clear sub-sections for each value chain?**

Please submit separate proposals but feel free to recycle all relevant content.

- 4. Will there be another opportunity to ask questions for those firms shortlisted for the second phase? We anticipate that more questions will emerge after seeing the additional documentation that is provided.**

We have added an opportunity for a second round of questions. The RFP has been updated accordingly. Questions must be received by April 25, with a response from TechnoServe by April 26, in order to maintain the original deadline of April 30.

- 5. Would TechnoServe consider allowing one page each for the following: "List of the three relevant evaluation assignments, including a description of why these are relevant to this RFP and what learnings were drawn from that assignment. (1 pg)," thus increasing the page limit to 3 pages so that offerors can adequately address the description and relevance of the evaluations?**

It is our preference that these explanations remain succinct, therefore we will not expand the page limit.

**6. The project is expected to start on November 15th while the submission date for the second proposal is April 30th: when do think you will be able to make your selection?**

Our selection will be made by May 6 at which time the selected firm will be notified. Upon signing of an MOU memorializing our commitments, the firm will have the opportunity to engage in final revisions of the evaluation plan (already informed by their proposed approach). The selected firm will be named in the proposal as the evaluation sub-contractor along with the contractor's experience and qualifications. The proposal will be submitted to USDA by May 15th. USDA expects to notify recipients by July 30, 2019 and will finalize agreements by September 30, 2019. Hence TechnoServe expects their winning proposal to become a live project by November 15, 2019.

**7. Will you expect the selected bidder to be involved in the Results Framework design?**

No, that process is currently ongoing with guidance from the internal M&E function. The selected bidder may provide feedback on the results framework and indicators. Given the late stage at which they will join the bid, though, it is unlikely substantial changes can be made to either. The selected firm's proposed evaluation methods will form the basis of the evaluation plan required as part of the proposal submission.

**8. How detailed does the response to Question 2 on the Phase 1 submission have to be? Phase 1 requires a description of the proposed evaluation approach suitable to evaluate the desired impacts in the market (coffee and/or cashew) as laid out in the NOFO. However, the NOFO provides a very broad outline of the main interventions. It is difficult to propose an evaluation approach for such diverse goals if it is not determined as yet what TechnoServe's specific intervention is at this point.**

We recognize this challenge and appreciate that it requires bidders to work in uncertainty. We ask for bidders' understanding of the competitive nature of this award and, as such, our reticence to share details of our approach in an open forum.

However, we believe it is feasible to set out the framework you would use to evaluate a program with the high-level goals laid out in the NOFO. Specifically for coffee: The overarching purpose of the project would be to increase smallholder incomes through sustainable yield increases and market access opportunities, while building resilience through the adoption of improved agricultural practices. And specifically for cashew: The overarching purpose of the project is to build the competitiveness of the West African cashew industry (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria), ultimately leading to increased direct trade with the region.

What is the best strategy (RCT, participatory evaluation, developmental evaluation, appreciative inquiry etc.) for measuring impact at the country, industry, and regional level, and why do you think it is better than other approaches? We invite you to make your assumptions clear and to update those assumptions when you have more information based on the draft implementation approach you will receive in advance of the Phase 2 submission. A phase 1 submission that focuses on a high-level approach can be later bolstered by specific methods in phase 2.

**9. Does TechnoServe anticipate that personnel for data collection will be hired and managed by the evaluator, hired and managed by TechnoServe, or would project staff play a role in this?**

We have found had success with each of the approaches. Please submit the approach that best integrates with the evaluation approach you propose, but clearly break out the costs for data collection personnel in the budget.

**10. For any of the technical assistance provided to USDA by Technoserve under Food for Progress to what extent is it likely that the evaluator might be able to influence, either geographically (cross-sectionally) or temporally (phased-in implementation), how Technoserve would roll-out such assistance to the target population stipulated by USDA?**

TechnoServe is open to this possibility and can consider it at design. There is also an opportunity to look at this again with the Chief of Party at contracting. Note that some aspects of program implementation will occur at a macro-level, so a proposal that exploits phased-in approaches for some elements of the evaluation, but doesn't rely entirely upon them, will be more feasible.