



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Consultancy for Prosper Cashew Project Gender and Social Inclusion Assessment

Project name: Promoting Opportunities for Cashew Processing in West Africa (Prosper Cashew)

Expected start date: May 2021

Subject: Request for Proposal to conduct gender and social inclusion assessment for the West Africa regional (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria) Prosper Cashew project

1 Background

1.1 TechnoServe

TechnoServe is an international nonprofit organization that promotes business solutions to poverty in the developing world. It is headquartered in Rosslyn, VA 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 more than 50 years of proven results, TechnoServe believes in the power of private enterprise to transform lives.

TechnoServe is committed to advancing gender equality guided by our Gender Policy, launched in June 2015, which necessitates actions focused on both our programming and our corporate practices and culture. By investing in gender equality and women's economic empowerment, we increase project effectiveness, strengthen our organization, and mobilize greater resources. We recognize that maximizing the inclusive economic growth that is required to achieve widespread prosperity requires the full and unencumbered participation of women and girls. Our Gender Policy and commitment to programmatic excellence necessitates that our work and our organization engage, empower, and benefit both women and men.

1.2 Project background

Prosper Cashew is a five-year, \$26 million project funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Food for Progress Program (FFPr) that aims to strengthen cashew processing in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. West Africa is the world's leader in cashew production, accounting for more than 45% of the raw cashew nuts harvested around the globe each year. However, less than 10% of raw cashew nuts are processed within West Africa. The vast majority are exported to Asia, where they are processed before being shipped to consumer markets around the world.

Prosper Cashew, which launched in October 2020, will act as a catalyst for the sector, strengthening and reviving existing cashew processing units, facilitating access to critically needed working capital, demonstrating the business case for additional investment flows into the sector, and bringing together investors and high-quality investees. The overall goal of the project is that 50% of raw cashew nut production in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria is processed into kernels domestically. The project focuses on four key levers to propel processing capacity in the

region: 1) Establish a Cashew Catalyst Fund with a target size of \$50-100 million, 2) Strengthen the commercial viability of the cashew sector through capacity building, 3) Integrate supply chain and enhance marketing prospects of kernels processed in West Africa, and, 4) Provide Match Making Facility bringing global investors to West African cashew processing businesses. The project's targeted beneficiaries include existing and new cashew processors and emerging value chain enterprises such as local equipment repair services and manufacturers, supply chain management companies, and by-product processors.

Over five years, Prosper Cashew will improve the capacity of 60 processing units who source cashews from approximately 34,000 farmers, facilitate \$497 million of investment in the cashew sector, and generate \$1.5 billion in cashew kernel sales. The project expects to create more than 26,000 new jobs (at least 50% for women) and indirectly benefit more than 133,000 women, men, and children in West Africa. The Prosper Cashew project is currently in its start-up phase and expects to begin implementation of technical activities in July 2021. At this point, given the project's overall goal and the competitive advantage presented by cashew processing in each country, we anticipate that activities will be most intense in Côte d'Ivoire, followed by Nigeria, followed by Ghana. As a result, while the assessment should address each of the three project countries, priority should be given to Côte d'Ivoire.

2 General Requirements & Scope of Work

The objective of this consultancy is to conduct a gender and social inclusion assessment that helps Prosper Cashew understand the current gender and other disadvantaged group dynamics among the project's targeted beneficiaries and provide the project with a roadmap for supporting economic empowerment of women and other disadvantaged groups during the implementation and monitoring of the project. The gender assessment will identify the constraints and opportunities facing women and men at the processing level of the value chain to participate in and benefit from a growing cashew sector, with a particular focus on women and men as owners/founders, managers, and employees of cashew processing firms and support businesses. A strong understanding of the project's design and M&E plan is important to understanding the areas where the project will have influence and the appropriate strategies for advancing women's economic empowerment.

The gender and social inclusion assessment aims to answer the following questions:

- How do women and men participate in 'beyond production' levels of the cashew value chain in the targeted countries? What barriers exist for them to participate as owners/managers or employees of firms generally and in the context of the Prosper Cashew project? What are the root causes of these barriers?
- What constraints, opportunities, or risks exist to advance women's economic empowerment as the cashew processing sector grows? How can Prosper Cashew mitigate risks or take advantage of opportunities via the four activities of the project?
- How can Prosper Cashew advance economic empowerment for women as owners/managers and employees? What strategies are needed to meet or exceed TechnoServe's 40% target to reach women beneficiaries (across different occupations/categories)? How can the project measure the impact of Prosper Cashew on women's economic empowerment? Given the existing gender dynamics among the project's targeted beneficiaries, what is a realistic but ambitious target for women's participation in Prosper Cashew?
- How can Prosper Cashew promote women as owners/founders of processing units? What challenges do women entrepreneurs face in accessing capital, expertise, or other resources relative to men entrepreneurs?

- How can Prosper Cashew promote women in management, engineering, and equipment maintenance roles? What are risks to greater inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups with increasing automation of factories and how can the project mitigate those risks?
- What are best practices to make cashew processing units supportive and empowering places to work for women?

The assessment should rely on existing data and literature, including project information (such as the project's comprehensive baselines study), complemented by new information gathering such as through desk research and key informant interviews to inform the analysis. Data collection and analysis will include, but not be limited to the following:

- Review published sex-disaggregated data, available research, and other data on men's and women's participation in the cashew value chain, particularly in processing, in West Africa
- Review of existing tools from donors and implementing agencies regarding working with the private sector to increase gender and youth inclusion in market systems development activities
- Key informant interviews with cashew value chain actors in the targeted geography
- Interviews with key Prosper Cashew project and other TechnoServe staff

The deliverables include:

- An inception report that details the revised methodology, questionnaires, interview guide, target audience, and revised implementation plan within the agreed-upon timeframe
- Gender assessment report
- A strategy that describes how the project can address the findings of the gender assessment report across the project's four activities, including a detailed action plan and a recommendation on realistic but ambitious gender targets
- A 2-3 page standalone brief in both English and French, presented to project staff (and potentially USDA and other stakeholders)
- Training with DCOP and MEL Manager who will be responsible for training project technical staff on outcomes of the gender assessment throughout the course of the project

2.1 Period and Location of Performance

The recruited consultant will carry out the mission in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria, along with remote work. The duration of the assignment and fieldwork is flexible; candidates should propose their recommended approach. The ideal start date would be in May 2021. The project team will facilitate the consultant's logistics and contact with the various actors in the project geography.

3 Required Skills & Experience

A competitive bid for the contractor role will demonstrate:

- Bachelor's degree in gender & development, rural development, economics or other relevant field with at least 7 years' professional experience in development, economics, or other relevant field including proven experience in the field of women's economic empowerment, or Master's degree with at least 5 years' experience
- Proven research and analytical skills
- Ability to facilitate and relate to stakeholders at multiple levels
- Sensitivity to cultural/historical context in the data collection process
- Proven ability to work within limited time constraints in the preparation of high quality documents
- Demonstrated analytical skills on issues related to gender mainstreaming, women's economic empowerment, rural development

- Previous experience in developing programmatic documents for governments, international organizations or civil society organizations on women's economic empowerment
- Proficiency in French and English highly preferred
- Previous experience in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, or other West African country preferred
- Experience in agriculture or food processing, particularly cashew or other tree crops preferred

4 Submission Process and Evaluation of Proposals

4.1 Form and Content of Response

Candidates meeting the aforementioned criteria and interested in being considered for this consultancy should submit one Word document (with a maximum of 12 pages) with the following contents:

- A maximum one-page cover letter summarizing the applicant's interest and capacity to implement the assessment.
- A description of the recommended methodology and approach to the scope of work that demonstrates an understanding of Prosper Cashew's expected impact and implementation approach, and the context of cashew processing in West Africa.
- Sample workplan with project milestones that details how and when the contractor proposes to deliver the Scope of Work.
- CV(s) and a summary of the contractor's experience in gender and social inclusion in the development sector, especially in specific areas relevant to the project such as food processing or agricultural product transformation, enterprise development, investment fund management.
- List of three professional references we may contact who can attest to your experience and expertise in gender and social inclusion. Include contact information (daytime phone numbers and email contacts).
- List of the three most recent relevant assignments that you have undertaken, including a description of why these are relevant to this RFP and what learnings were drawn from that assignment.
- Detailed budget to deliver the scope of work.

*Optional, outside of the page limits, applicants may choose to submit one example of a relevant assessment report recently completed or any other document that demonstrates strong writing ability as a separate attachment. All documents will be handled with the utmost confidentiality.

All proposals shall also:

- Remain valid for a period of 90 days from submission.
- Be in the English language.
- Provide requested payment terms and conditions.
- Include a contact name, email address, and telephone number to facilitate communication between TNS and the submitting independent consultant/organization.
- If applicant is an organization, provide a brief outline of the organization and services offered, including:
 - Full legal name, jurisdiction of incorporation and address of the company
 - Full legal name and country of citizenry of company's President and / or Chief Executive Officer
 - Year business was established

4.2 Criteria for Selection

The evaluation of each response to this RFP will be based on the criteria set out below. At the sole discretion of TechnoServe, the top proposals may be selected for follow-up questions.

- Experience and past performance (as demonstrated in the applicant's proposal and based on the reference check) – 35%
- Work plan & approach (tailored to Prosper's unique design and context) – 35%
- Cost proposal – 30%

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

TechnoServe will not award a contract to any bidder where there is indication of a lack of business integrity.

4.3 Schedule of events

The procurement will take place according to the following timeline:

1. March 24, 2021 – RFP distributed
2. April 1, 2021 – interested parties who intend to submit a proposal for this RFP should notify TechnoServe of their intent to bid by emailing rfpprosper@tns.org with the subject line "Prosper Cashew gender and social inclusion assessment procurement"
3. April 5, 2021 – Questions regarding this request for proposals may be sent to rfpprosper@tns.org
4. April 9, 2021 – TechnoServe will provide a transparent response to all interested parties who submit an intent to submit a proposal
5. **April 19, 2021** – Proposals responding to the RFP should be sent electronically to rfpprosper@tns.org with the subject line "Prosper Cashew gender and social inclusion assessment proposal"
6. April 26 – 30, 2021 - top candidates may be engaged in an interview to further present their proposed solutions before final selection is made

4.4 Terms and Conditions

1. The Request for Proposal is not and shall not be considered an offer by TechnoServe.
2. All responses must be received on or before the date and time indicated above. All late responses will be rejected.
3. All unresponsive responses will be rejected.
4. All proposals will be considered binding offers. Prices proposed must be valid for entire period provided by respondent or required by RFP.
5. All awards will be subject to TNS contractual terms and conditions and contingent on the availability of donor funding.
6. 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.
7. TNS reserves the right to accept all or part of the proposal when award is provided.
8. 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.
9. TNS reserves the right to require any bidder to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.
10. 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.

11. Bidders are required to identify and disclose any actual or potential Conflict of Interest.

We encourage all qualified individuals and organizations who share TechnoServe's vision of improving the lives of others through proven business solutions to apply. Candidates based within the region are encouraged to apply.

With our commitment to diversity, we are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and affirmative action employer and do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, HIV/AIDS status, protected veteran status, disability, and all other protected classes.

Annex 1 - Additional Project Background

Prosper Cashew is a five-year, \$25 million project funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Food for Progress Program (FFPr) that aims to catalyze investment for the West African cashew processing sector by strengthening cashew processing facilities across Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. West Africa is responsible for 45% of the global cashew production, yet the majority of those yields are exported for processing. The project will complement other USDA investments and programs in this sector to address market barriers through technical assistance and financing solutions along the West Africa cashew value chain to improve sector productivity, increase incomes, and create jobs.

The overall goal of the project is that 50% of cashew production is processed to kernels in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Increased investment in local cashew processing and increased processing capacity and capacity utilization are the key results to achieve this goal.

The project's Theory of Change is that if cashew-processing and other agri-enterprises in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria have better access to appropriate capital and technical expertise, and stakeholders have incentives to establish and maintain local supply chains, then local processing capacity will increase and the competitiveness of the West African cashew processing industry will improve. Achieving this vision requires significant increases in overall capacity utilization as well as in the number of processing enterprises across the three countries. While improvements to existing facilities can move the sector towards the stated goal of 50% domestic processing, the industry will need to crowd in a large number of new processing plants to meet the overall target, requiring significant levels of investment. Prosper Cashew will act as a catalyst for the sector, strengthening and reviving existing cashew processing facilities, facilitating access to critically needed working capital, demonstrating the business case for additional investment flows into the sector, and bringing together investors and high-quality investees.

The Prosper Cashew project identified four key Activities that together address the needs, challenges, and constraints in the cashew processing sector. These activities are summarized as follows:

- **Activity 1: Financial Services – Establish Cashew Catalyst Fund with a target of \$50-100 million for the commercial cashew sector:** The project will assess feasibility and design a Cashew Catalyst Fund. A comprehensive analysis will inform the design and ultimate structure of the fund, including its organizational and governance structure. The analysis will also confirm the investment thesis and inform the development of the investment memorandum which will support outreach to partners and funders to secure initial commitments for the fund's first close. The project will competitively select a third-party fund manager based on criteria developed and validated during fund design. Once launched, the fund will provide capital to cashew processors and other businesses supported through the project.
- **Activity 2: Financial Services – Cashew impact investment:** The project will identify investable companies and connect them to existing capital providers via a matchmaking facility. Through this activity, the project will engage national/sub-national chambers of commerce, export promotion agencies, and industry associations to link promising businesses to providers of long-term financing in the region. The project will coordinate with the African Cashew Alliance and its investment promotion services to stimulate the creation of new cashew processing facilities, strengthen and modernize existing facilities, and support the expansion and professionalization of the broader cashew sector.
- **Activity 3: Strengthen and increase commercially viable cashew enterprises through Technical Support:** The project will build processor capacity in business

management, financial management, investment facilitation, HR and workforce management, marketing, and supply chain development. It will also identify and address specific constraints related to particular sections of cashew processing (raw cashew nut drying, warehousing, calibration, steam cooking, shelling, oven drying, peeling, grading, fumigation, packing, and storage) and provide support to processors to install food safety management systems, support the introduction of traceability, and support the introduction of environmental practices and effective waste management. In addition to its direct support to processing firms, Prosper Cashew will also support development of a vibrant ecosystem by building the capacity of training centers to deliver curriculum for cashew processing operations and management, by supporting local equipment repair services and manufacturers to improve their business offerings, and by promoting processing of byproducts.

- **Activity 4: Buyer-Seller Relationships – Enhance the international marketing of African cashew:** Prosper Cashew will support cashew processors to develop a robust supply chain, from sourcing of raw nuts to sale of processed kernels. The project will identify areas for collaboration with cashew farmer cooperatives/producer groups receiving support from other initiatives to strengthen local supply chains. In particular, the project will aim to link farmers, farmer groups, and farmer associations capacitated by the USDA-funded PRO-Cashew project directly to processors funded by Prosper Cashew via Activity 1. The project will pilot innovative direct supplier programs to guarantee a sustainable source of quality raw material and support the marketing of kernels from West Africa by bringing together processors and international buyers.

We expect that the overall Prosper Cashew project objective of expanding trade of agricultural products will result in the project goal of 50% of cashew production is processed to kernels in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Two key project outcomes will achieve the objective and goal: (1) increasing investment in local cashew processing, and (2) increasing processing capacity and capacity utilization. The planned interventions in Activities 1-4 will support each of these outcomes and produce the foundational and intermediate results necessary to realize the project outcomes, objectives, and goal. These results include increased leverage of private sector resources, reduced investment risk, improved organization of producer groups, incentives, and relationships between value chain actors, strengthened skills and management capacity of cashew enterprises, and enhanced use and availability of financial services.

Annex 2: Responses to Questions Submitted Regarding the RFP

1. **Q:** Will you confirm that TechnoServe anticipates the consultant to travel internationally to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria despite the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions/isolation requirements? This is per "Location of Performance" on page 3 of the RFP.
A: Bidders should propose how they will manage to deliver a high quality gender and social inclusion assessment despite the ongoing pandemic. This strategy could include how the bidder would deliver in two different scenarios: one that includes international travel and one in which international travel is not possible.
In the current environment, we anticipate that international travel is possible with precautions. However, we recognize that the situation is fluid and could change. In any scenario, bidders should prioritize their approach to data collection in Cote d'Ivoire, given its importance for the Prosper Cashew project.
2. **Q:** Is it feasible to conduct key informant interviews with cashew value chain actors virtually? (I.e. Do they have access to the internet)
A: We expect that most cashew value chain actors have access to internet and would be able to do KIIs virtually. However, in some cases the internet may not be reliable and the consultant is responsible for sourcing key informants, scheduling interviews, and managing the entire data collection processes.
If consultants propose virtual KIIs, they should also present a risk mitigation plan that details, at minimum, how they would manage challenges related to connectivity issues as well as potential data quality issues resulting from only virtual interactions.
3. **Q:** Will Prosper Cashew provide translation services for key informant interviews that will be conducted in the local language
A: We anticipate that most key informants will be able to speak either English or French. Ideally, the consultants will be able to hold KIIs in both languages without requiring translation. If there are some key informants who happen to not speak English or French, TechnoServe may be able to support translation via our existing TechnoServe national staff.
4. **Q:** What is your approximate budget for this consultancy, so that I can tailor the methodology and design the best value for price proposal within the budget?
A: TechnoServe estimates a ceiling value of \$35,000 for this consultancy. The final contract ceiling will be contingent on the "value for money" of the selected bidder's cost proposal.
5. **Q:** Are there any restrictions for face-to-face interviews and focus groups related to the Covid crisis in the three countries?
A: TechnoServe recognizes that we need to maintain a flexible and adaptive approach and that we must remain both flexible and cautious. Organizationally, we base operational decisions on local regulation, caseload, and staff infections. These three criteria determine how we operate our offices and field activities. Each country office is required to monitor and tailor their activities to be at least as conservative as national and local government guidance for gatherings and local travel. TechnoServe is open to remote data collection and welcomes bidders to propose how they will manage to deliver a high quality gender and social inclusion assessment given the ongoing pandemic. This strategy could include how the bidder would deliver in two different scenarios: one that includes international travel and one in which international travel is not possible.
For any in person meetings, face masks should be worn, proper hand washing or use of hand sanitizer is required, a distance of 6 feet should be maintained and meetings

should be held outdoors to the extent possible. Additionally, meetings should only be held in person with the expressed consent of all individuals. No large groups should be assembled.

6. Q: Is there logistical support for the traveling within each country?

A TechnoServe can help facilitate travel arrangements in-country as well as support consultants with introductions to key stakeholders. If bidders require specific support, they should identify this in their proposal. Final details can be determined during contract negotiations.