



Subaward Request for Applications

RFA Release Date:	9 November 2022
Deadline for Questions:	18 November 2022
Closing/Submission Deadline:	25 November 2022
RFA Code:	IB20TAP4b
SUBJECT:	Aggregator Pilot Management
Eligible Organisations/Criteria:	Individuals that have comprehensive experience in crop sourcing, input markets and aggregator model development in soybean, cashew and/or maize value chains

Dear Applicant,

This document constitutes a request for applications (RFA) from eligible bidders for a project funded by the Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders & Agribusinesses (CASA) Technical Assistance Facility. It is accompanied by a template for a letter of intention to submit an application. Interested bidders should sign and return the letter of intention to submit an application to TechnoServe per contact details described in Section E (submission guidelines). Upon receipt of that letter, which also serves as a non-disclosure agreement, TechnoServe may provide additional information to the bidder.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of TechnoServe, nor does it constitute a commitment to pay for costs incurred in the development of an application.

Questions regarding the RFA requirements must be submitted in writing to Ana Herrera aherrera@tns.org by the deadline listed above. Include the RFA Code and Subject in the subject line for your questions.

TechnoServe, CASA TAF & Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) aim to create an inclusive culture of best practice with the delivery partners with whom it engages, and which receive UK taxpayers' funds. All Supply Partners and Subrecipients should adhere to the overarching principles of the Supply Partner Code of Conduct to:

- Act responsibly and with integrity
- Be transparent and accountable
- Seek to improve value for money
- Demonstrate commitment to poverty reduction and FCDO priorities
- Demonstrate commitment to wider HMG priorities

A. Background

Established in 1968, TechnoServe works with enterprising people in the developing world to build competitive farms, businesses, and industries. We have worked in more than 40 countries across Africa, Latin America, and Asia, assisting thousands of businesses and improving the incomes of millions of people.

We provide business solutions to poverty by linking people to information, capital, and markets. With five decades of proven results, we believe in the power of private enterprise to transform lives.

The CASA TAF is an £8 million Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) to support agribusinesses that have received development finance institution (DFI) or impact investor financing to extend and deepen their smallholder impact. The facility will provide grants and technical assistance to agribusinesses that have received financing from a DFI (e.g., CDC, FMO, Norfund) or an impact/patient capital investor (e.g., China-Africa Development Fund, Root Capital, Acumen, AgDevCo) for projects which will increase the volumes of purchases from smallholders and bring new smallholders into business supply chains. CASA-TAF's aim is to increase the development impact of individual deals and help build an evidence base of the potential development returns from agribusiness investments that can be used to raise expectations of investors from future deals. CASA-TAF has the potential to re-define the role that private investments in agriculture can play towards driving development impact for millions of smallholder producers across the globe. Over 5 years, our objective is to work with 35 agribusinesses to increase sales and productivity of over 100,000 smallholders and increase jobs and rural income generation opportunities.

TechnoServe is working with Farmerline, an agriculture technology service provider founded in 2013 focused on input distribution and crop procurement from smallholder farmers in the cashew, maize, rice, and soybean value chains. Through this project, there is an opportunity for Farmerline to coordinate provision of inputs, crop offtake and advisory support via aggregators in a way that will drive both transformational impact for farmers and long term commercial value for Farmerline.

B. Project Description:

Project goal

The project goal is to develop a network of small and medium aggregators in the soybean, maize and cashew value chains that can provide end-to-end services, from input provision, advisory, and crop off taking. Farmerline's aim is to strengthen its relationship with existing aggregators in their network, develop new ones that adopt higher standards and improved business practices, and create synergies that will incorporate their business offerings including technology, data analytics and financing

Deliverable 1: Aggregator selection and onboarding

- Based on initial aggregator profiles developed and the shortlist from the Sourcing team, develop an onboarding program for 20 aggregators for Year 1 (10 for soybean and 10 for cashew)
- Coordinate with the Sourcing and Inputs teams to determine initial targets of each aggregator for crop year 2023

- Work with the data team to develop a tracking tool distinct for each aggregator with their respective targets, financing provided, recovery rates, commission structure and business projections that will also serve as an orientation tool during onboarding

Deliverable 2: Content development

- Coordinate with external consultants to develop input packages and recommendations for each crop based on the soil analysis and test results
- Conduct visits to select aggregators to understand and assess their daily business operations; identify specific gaps that can be addressed through planned training
- Review Farmerline's service and product offering, including specific input packages distributed and quality parameters for maize, soybean, and cashew which will form part of the aggregator's training program and service offering
- Identify training needs based on gap assessment above. Sub-contract training topic experts (as appropriate/needed) and develop training curriculum covering topics under input optimisation, product quality, aggregation services and business management that support the core functions of the aggregators in the enhanced service delivery model
- Sub-contract topic experts for training on other identified relevant topics such as farmer group organisation, extension, climate agricultural practices and resilient strategies
- Work with the Farmerline team to determine appropriate training delivery channels and to incorporate digital processes in the training curriculum which will enable faster tracking and monitoring of the pilot
- Finalise training materials and how-to guides based on aggregator profiles and the field realities of their business and operations as well as the optimal delivery channels determined
- Design assessment tool to measure training effectiveness

Deliverable 3: Training implementation

- Conduct Training of Trainer sessions directly and with 3rd parties for Farmerline field, input sales and crop sourcing team who will support aggregators;
- Work with Sourcing team to roll-out training for ~20 aggregators in year 1 and another ~30 aggregators in year 2
- Perform monitoring visits to assess training effectiveness
- Develop refresher training programs that can be conducted by the Farmerline team based on aggregators' feedback on training relevance and quality and the aggregators' sales performance

Deliverable 4: Pilot management

- Develop an operational plan to identify all the dependencies for each Farmerline business unit. For example:
 - o Input product mix and SKUs is dependent on the Inputs team
 - o Working capital for crop sourcing is dependent on the Sourcing and Finance teams
 - o Refresher trainings will need support from the Impact team
- Assist in conducting and monitoring aggregator training under project 2
- Conduct monthly aggregator visits to closely monitor performance and address risks that may be identified
- Conduct monthly performance reviews with the Inputs and Sourcing teams to review actual versus target numbers of each aggregator, including recovery rates
- Implement incentive programs with aggregators as they are developed
- Troubleshoot issues and support needs that may arise from aggregator visits
- Identify areas for synergy for other types of financing including asset and input financing
- Confirm assumptions in the inclusive business plan and validate farmer business case based on input adoption for soybean and maize

- Develop reports and facilitate monthly and quarterly performance review meetings to assess actual results versus targets
- Gather regular qualitative feedback from aggregators to inform factors drive that drive aggregator and farmer loyalty, new business processes and key enablers for the scale up strategy
- Develop final report of pilot consolidating learnings, unintended consequences, and opportunities

Deliverable 5: Partnership management

- Support Farmerline Corporate Services Team to broker and manage partnerships with equipment providers and other potential partners that will be identified during the pilot
- Provide data points for the Corporate Services Team for investor reporting

Deliverable 6: Playbook on enhanced aggregator model

- Develop a playbook and how-to guide for Farmerline to be used as part of their standard operating procedures in scaling the enhanced aggregator model to other crops or regions

Budget

A total of up to **£ 90,000** is available for the cost of implementing this project, including the budget for the individual consultant (based on a daily rate and estimated level of effort required), associated costs of the consultant to deliver the assignment (e.g. travel, supplies etc) and provision for 3rd parties that may be required for niche training needs. These funds are provided by the CASA TA Facility. A performance-based fixed fee contract will govern the fee payments for the project.

Location

The project will be based in Ghana.

Timing

The project duration is estimated at 24 months starting December 2022.

TA mechanism

Open

Value for money

Potential TA providers will be evaluated in terms of value for money with a benchmarking of bidder costs in relation to outputs before TA contracts are awarded.

The selected subrecipient will be subject to a Risk Assessment Analysis prior to contracting which will ascertain the TAF service provider's value for money capabilities and commitment. Proposed costs will be analysed in relation to market rates. However, payment will be based on performance once the project is contracted.

Duty of care

The Sub-recipient owes a duty of care to the Subrecipient personnel and is responsible for the health, safety, security of life and property and general wellbeing of such persons and their property and this includes where the Subrecipient personnel carry out the Services. An assessment of the consultant's duty of care capabilities will be undertaken pre-award.

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's Degree in agriculture, business management or relevant field

- At least 7 years' experience in developing and/or managing aggregator models for input delivery or crop sourcing and trading required
- Deep experience in the soybean, cashew, or maize value chains preferred
- Deep experience in agronomy, advisory services, or farmer extension programs
- Comprehensive understanding of the Ghana input market dynamics required
- Experience in working in the Northern and Brong Ahafo regions preferred
- Advanced degree in agronomy, business management or other relevant field preferred
- Demonstrated ability to facilitate consultative meetings with farmers, input dealers, franchise shops and executive teams
- Ability to synthesise technical findings to a wide audience
- Should possess excellent business management and project management skills
- Experience working with agribusinesses around shared value initiatives required
- Full professional language proficiency in English required
- Strong written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills
- Strong computer skills, including MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel
- Ability to work independently, flexibly, and responsively
- Ability to adapt to changing working conditions
- Ability to prioritise and meet deadlines
- Sub-contracting for certain components of the deliverables listed is allowed

C. The Application and Subaward Process

Application Submission

The subaward application process under this RFA will consist of 1 phase of competition where full applications shall be submitted by interested parties to TechnoServe for evaluation. Application sections must include, but not limited to:

- CV highlighting relevant experience in past projects
- How the individual intends to carry out the project – proposed approach, consultant line up to deliver actions/activities, timelines, and project/stakeholder management plan.
- Milestones and results to be achieved over the life of the project
- Budget details (including any value for money arguments) with the level of detail similar to the budget template provided for guidance, and compliant with FCDO's Cost Eligibility Guidance for Commercial Contracts (found [here](#)).
- Risk Matrix and risk mitigation strategy - A risk matrix should be included that outlines the risks to project success, the size/importance of each risk to the project, and the proposed mitigation strategy that the TA Provider will take to minimise the risk becoming a reality. The table should also include a column indicating how the TA Provider will track the status of the risk and how this will be reported on during the project.
- Referees: Names and contact information for work completed on similar projects (references will only be collected if bidder is shortlisted and bidder will be notified prior to communication with any referees listed).
- Signed declarations – Attachment 1 to this RFA
- Duty of Care Response – Attachment 2 to this RFA

Step 1:

Applications will be developed and submitted by the Applicant to TechnoServe utilising the templates provided (or other referenced material as stated in the RFA) in accordance with all guidelines by the stated submission deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

The main body of the technical proposal should be no longer than 5 pages.

Step 2:

Applications will be vetted by TechnoServe staff to ensure each application meets the requirements set forth in this RFA. Any applications failing to meet minimum requirements will be disqualified from competition. The minimum requirements include the eligibility criteria, use of application templates provided, submission by the deadline, etc.

Step 3:

Applications received within the application deadline that meet the minimum requirements set forth in the RFA will be evaluated by a Selection Committee using the following criteria:

Selection Criteria	Scoring
1. Relevance of the proposed project to the RFA; feasibility of planned activities and anticipated results (including project sustainability and impact on target beneficiaries/communities)	20
2. Illustrated capacity of the applicant to implement the project and past experience with similar projects	20
3. Experience of personnel or consultants proposed	40
4. Budget reasonableness and cost effectiveness	20
Maximum Score	100

Step 4:

The Selection Committee will recommend those applications with the highest scores for an award. As applicable, the Selection Committee may request applicants to provide additional information and edit their applications. In such cases, the Selection Committee will also establish a deadline for submission of revised applications.

Step 5:

Successful applicants will be notified by TechnoServe and will begin to work with TechnoServe staff to revise their applications to be incorporated into a full subaward. This step will include a pre-award risk assessment.

Step 6:

Following the successful conclusion of the application process and acquisition of any required donor approvals, TechnoServe will issue the successful applicant(s) with a subaward with details on the scale, scope, cost, and terms and conditions. Whenever possible, TechnoServe will meet with new subrecipients to provide an orientation outlining the main requirements for performance and reporting.

Step 7:

Throughout the duration of the subaward, TechnoServe will monitor the subrecipient’s performance and compliance with all subaward terms and conditions.

D. Project Budget Submission and Costing guidelines

Individual subawards will vary depending on availability of funding, nature and scope of project activities, the period of implementation, and justification of costs proposed. Although consideration will be given to all applications received by the deadline, it is recommended that the total budget requested from TechnoServe does not exceed **£ 90,000**. Subawards will be issued on a competitive basis and only to a selected number of applicants. A budget template is attached for guidance on the level of detail needed in the proposal.

While reviewing application budgets, the Selection Committee will ensure that:

1. The budget application reflects all the resources necessary for program implementation (Direct and Indirect Costs, including taxes, as applicable).
2. The budget notes column provides details on all types of costs planned and cost justification.
3. All costs budgeted are eligible. Information on eligible and ineligible costs can be found [here](#).

Budgeted costs categories may include but are not limited to:

- a. **Personnel:** Salaries and benefits for full and part-time staff involved in the project. Staff can be paid only for activities performed within the framework of the proposed project. All personnel expenses must be justified with information on the role of the proposed staff in project implementation.
- b. **Consultants and Other Outside Services:** Fees for any external consultants or contracted firms required to support subaward activities.
- c. **Travel:** Flights, per diem, and any other required travel costs for project personnel to conduct implementation activities.
- d. **Office Costs:** Any required cost for the sub recipient's local office to support project implementation.
- e. **Supplies and small equipment under £500:** Any project-related supplies and small equipment with a unit cost under **£500**.
- f. **Equipment:** Any project-related equipment with a unit cost above **£500**, such as project vehicles or generators.
- g. **Other Direct Costs:** Any other direct costs of the project, such as costs for conducting trainings, developing publications, etc.
- h. **Indirect Costs:** If applicable, organisational overhead costs. This must be an annually audited rate or negotiated through FCDO's NPAC procedure.
- i. **Taxes:** The applicant agrees to adhere to the appropriate regulatory requirements and ensures that the correct taxes are included in the proposal in relation to the country in which the applicant operates.

Pre-Agreement Costs - TechnoServe will not reimburse costs incurred prior to the effective date of the subaward. In special cases where pre-agreement costs are necessary to comply with the proposed delivery schedule, TechnoServe may discuss and negotiate with the applicant the approval of certain pre-agreement costs. Such costs are only eligible with the prior written approval of TechnoServe.

E. Submission Guidelines

Applicants must submit their applications, budgetary information as well as any other information responding to the terms, conditions, specifications, and requirements of this RFA to:

TechnoServe

To: Ana Herrera

Email Address: aherrera@tns.org

Applications must be received by the submission deadline specified on the first page of this RFA. Late submissions will not be accepted.

F. Reporting Guidance

1. Financial Reporting

This is a Fixed Amount subaward. No financial reporting on expenditures is required.

2. Program Reporting

Program/technical reporting will be defined during the contract negotiation stage and is expected to be closely linked to the milestones to be defined in the Subaward.

Attachments to this RFA:

[Please click on this link to download the attachments.](#)

Attachment 1:	Declarations
Attachment 2:	Duty of Care Response
Attachment 3:	Budget Template
Attachment 4:	Letter of Intention