Request for Applications

RFA Release Date: 21 March 2023

Deadline for Questions: 5pm SAT, 8 April 2023

Closing/Submission Deadline: 5pm SAT, 15 April 2023

RFA Code: 09

Budget: US$80 000.00

SUBJECT: Digitalisation of Agent Training and Development

Purpose of the RFA: Technology diagnostic and comprehensive design recommendations for a digitally enabled training and development model for a large agent network

Eligible Organizations: Experienced Consultant/Organisations with expertise in developing and implementing robust digitally-enabled and training platforms in developing countries specifically with technology solutions and curricula design expertise

Dear Applicants,

TechnoServe invites you to participate in this competitive solicitation for proposals related to a diagnostic of an existing recruitment and training model, and development of comprehensive technology solutions and design recommendations for a digitally-enabled agent recruitment and development model; for a B2C e-commerce company based in Nairobi, Kenya. The work will be conducted closely with the ZEBU Africa Food Security Fund (AFSF) Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) team based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Position Location: The project will be completed in Nairobi, Kenya
Anticipated start date: 25 April 2023
Estimated Duration: The timing of the project is April – June 2023

Please note that the 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 wnyambayo@tns.org by the deadline listed above. Include the RFA Code and Subject in the subject line for your questions.

A. Background

TechnoServe is the implementing agency for the AFSF TAF. The AFSF is a second-generation fund managed by Zebu Investment Partners (ZIP) and targets high-growth Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs) across the food value chain in Africa. Africa's food requirements are expected to double in the next 30 years with a food import bill estimated to reach USD 50 –70 billion per annum. Food value chains remain weak and under developed, while agriculture is the main form of economic activity for most people on the continent. Private investment in the agriculture sector is critical for Africa's food security and growth. The AFSF will target deal sizes of USD 2–8 million, with the goal of investing in a minimum of 10-12 agribusiness SMEs over the next 8 years. This segment of SMEs often faces challenges related to business skills, weak accounting and management systems, poor visibility and/or

limited bandwidth to take advantage of market opportunities. And yet, SMEs are able to pivot and scale quickly, when the right resources are provided.

TechnoServe works alongside ZIP to implement the AFSF TAF alongside the AFSF. This is a $1.9m grant-based facility tasked with supporting the capacity building of AFSF portfolio companies and deepening the development impact of the AFSF investments. The facility is tasked with providing TA to AFSF portfolio companies that receive investment through the AFSF, promoting new opportunities for smallholder farmers, farmer business groups, rural communities and enhancing local economic development. This will be achieved by linking private equity investments to economic opportunities for smallholder farmers (including women and youth) and micro-enterprises; promoting uptake by AFSF investee companies of inclusive business models thereby increasing beneficiary incomes and thus enhancing economic access to food. Moreover, the TAF will support AFSF investee companies with their growth objectives by providing them with expertise and support that drive best practice and innovation.

The AFSF TAF is able to support projects in and around portfolio companies under the following components:

Inclusive Business Technical Assistance
Inclusive business TA supports investee companies to plan and pilot new business models that improve commercial and broader community (or development) impact often demonstrating the business case for smallholder sourcing and supporting SMEs to integrate more farmers into their supply chains and micro-retailers into their distribution chains.

Core Business Support
The Core Business TA is intended to enable AFSF portfolio companies to attract and take full advantage of capital investments from the AFSF, realising their potential as high-growth companies, creating jobs and contributing to the agricultural and economic development of Africa.

Ecosystem Development Technical Assistance
Ecosystem Development projects will seek to strengthen market systems around AFSF portfolio companies and will be measured by quantitative indicators such as finance mobilised as well as qualitative indicators for market development such as policy change, industry influence and stakeholder learning. This component will serve as an important knowledge sharing conduit emphasizing key thematic and common areas/issues identified through the scoping, design and execution of TA.

B. Business Context and Programme Description

Launched in Kenya in 2013, the Company is a leading B2C e-commerce platform with a distribution solution to serve the rapidly growing 750 million middle and low-income African consumer market who are remote, unbanked and unconnected. It harnesses mobile technology, a network of approximately 36k local Agents, and its proprietary logistics platform to reach a market that formal retail and even other Kenyan e-commerce models cannot - it is the only e-commerce business operating in rural areas in Kenya. The Company markets c.4.2k competitively priced, high quality SKUs across 14 categories, delivering at no cost to thousands of rural customers every day; broadening access to affordable high quality products for hundreds of thousands of low-income families located in difficult-to-serve areas regardless of their access to technology.

Sales and Marketing (S&M) expenses account for a high percentage of total operating costs, of which c.60% of S&M is in the central Sales Agent[1] team that manages the Company's 36k rural agent network. Near term growth in rural agents will require Sales Agent numbers to double at significant additional cost without finding more efficient ways to recruit, train and manage agents. In order to prove the

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[1] Sales Agents are employees of the Company responsible for the recruitment, development and management of the agents (micro-distributors part of the network in the market).

pathway to profitability at scale, the Company needs to rapidly identify and implement a lower cost digitally-enabled model for training, developing and managing its agent network.

The Company currently uses an in-person training model, in which Agent development training is facilitated in the following ways:

1. Group training of trainee agents led by the Learning & Development team

2. Onetoone in-person training; and

3. One to one training via calls

Twenty-five (25) sessions are facilitated per month across 5 regions, and approximately 635-650 agents are trained per month, at a cost of KES 40,000 per session (~US$333).

For new agent training the module topics include: graduation & segmentation, product margin, commission structure, return policy, the Company app usage and benefits among other program based topics. To assess effectiveness of the training, monthly agent evaluation assessments are completed through the Company's Agent Assessment Scoring Program for the agents that attend training, and monthly reporting & tracking of key metrics such as graduation progress before & after the training sessions is done - using Tableau. Graduation & Average revenue (and commission) per Agent among the KPIs used in measuring performance for the control and test groups (test groups in this case are Agents who attend the training sessions).

An opportunity exists to digitise this manual model, and successful migration to a digitally-enabled model would help the Company to efficiently expand its network by reaching, recruiting and training more agents. This model would also drive agent sales due to improved training and management of its agents, and would result in better financial performance due to reduced management overhead costs driven by the increase in the ratio of agents per Sales Agent as they leverage this digitally-enabled model. The estimated cost saving for the Company over a 2-year period after implementation will be significant accounting for in-person training and fixed Sales Agent cost saving. The AFSF TAF will be supporting the Company to rapidly design and implement this digitally-enabled model using a phased approach:

● **Phase 1** - **digital agent training and management diagnostic**

(1) assess the Company's current agent training and management model to identify opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the existing model with digital solutions and enhanced content;

(2) advise on what functionality and content is required to access these opportunities and identify a short-list of potential technology solutions/providers bearing in mind company context / constraints

(3) provide guidance on procurement and integration of preferred solution(s) and design recommendations for content based on latest best practice.

● **Phase 2** - **platform procurement, integration and curriculum creation**:

a) procurement and integration of the most suitable technology solution (likely a tailored third- party platform solution)

b) content development for the selected solution; and

c) user testing and snagging.

Resource requirements and timeline for this phase would be informed by Phase 1

● **Phase 3**: implementation of a pilot to train a minimum of c.6,000 agents, and recruit a minimum of 1,000 new agents through the digital platform.

Resource requirements and timeline for this phase would be informed by Phase 1 and initiated on successful completion of Phase 2

The TAF requires expert support to complete this initial diagnostic (Phase 1) that will be carried out immediately to ensure rapid implementation of the model to limit the increases in overheads associated with the current inefficient model, and resulting impact on The Company's bottom line. Successful completion of this initial diagnostic will map out a path for successful migration to a digital-enabled model for the company.

I.   Duties and Responsibilities

Phase 1:

1. **Establish opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the current agent training and development model using digital solutions:**
   a. Assess current sales and agent operations to understand how the Company trains and develops Agents and assesses training effectiveness
   b. *Assess the technology and or media that is being used to deliver the current curriculum, and establish gaps. You will need to consider the current and future agent profile to define the right technology solution(s) and or framework to reach, engage and develop the agents to their full potential*

2. **Research and analysis, and technical requirements assessment for potential micro-learning solutions**:
   a. Advise on the current market trends and best practices in the field of micro learning technology solutions. This will include a review of various technology platforms and solutions, their features, pricing, and suitability for different types of learning scenarios.
   b. Gather the requirements of the client and assess their technical needs in terms of content delivery, learning management systems, user engagement, analytics, and integrations e.g. into the Company app used by the Agents, a USSD platform, Whatsapp, etc.

3. **Develop recommendations on the suitable technology solution(s) and implementation of the digitally enabled training and development model**:
   a. Based on the gap assessment, market research and technical requirements assessment, provide recommendations on the best technology platforms or solutions and type of media platforms that will best meet the Company's agent training and development needs. *This will include a detailed comparison of the platforms and solutions, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, and high recommendations on the design or type of the content that each can deliver*
   b. Highlight the most suitable micro-learning technology solution for the company to train its agents considering the need for -:
      (i)   content simplicity and flexibility;
      (ii)   a tailored personal learning experience for the Agents (considering language, difficulty to access the Internet, etc.),
      (iii)   ease of incorporation of learning activities with other daily Agent tasks to improve uptake; and
      (iv)   white labelling capabilities, etc.
      You will need to consider the current and future agent profile and define the right technology framework to reach, engage and develop to full potential.

c. Provide recommendations on integration and implementation of the recommended technology solution, including providing guidance on how to configure and customize the platform to meet the client's specific needs, and the resource required by the Company for successful implementation

4. **Provide recommendations on a digitally-enabled, micro-learning agent training & development platform, and potential service providers**
   a. Provide the detailed technology solution design, functionalities and framework based on your experience and the needs of the Company, considering scalability of user base (approximately over 200k users), ease of use for the Agents, etc.
   b. Provide a detailed integration and implementation plan for the technology solution, including how to configure and customize the platform to meet the client's specific needs, specifically ensuring all the required functionalities will work according to specifications despite the curricula content.
   c. Provide detailed recommendations of service providers to target for design and implementation.

5. **Monitoring and reporting**:
   a. Provide bi-weekly reports to the Steering Committee to track the milestones and success of the project
   b. Submit all documentation and reports required in Sections 1-4.

All the above activities form the major and critical parts of the scope. Candidate selection and performance will be judged on capability to implement and successful achievement of these.

II.   Deliverables

Activity	Deliverable	Anticipated due date
Establish opportunities to improve the current agent training and development model (see Duties and Responsibilities, Section 1 (a) – (d))	Document detailing the assessment of current operations, gaps and opportunities identified to improve the agent training & development model	20 May 2023
Research and analysis, and technical requirements assessment for potential micro-learning solution (see Duties and Responsibilities, Section 2 (a) & (b)	Document providing comprehensive market research, analyses and comparisons	10 June 2023
Develop recommendations on the suitable technology solution and implementation of the digitally enabled training and development model (see Duties and Responsibilities, Section 3 (a)- (c))	Document providing detailed recommendations of the suitable technology solution(s) including integration and implementation based the most appropriate content structure and delivery approach	24 June 2023

Recommendations of the technology solution and recommended digitally-enabled agent training & development platform framework (see Duties and Responsibilities, Section 4 (a) & (b))	Document with the technology solution and framework, and the solution development and potential implementation recommendations	30 June 2023
Monitoring and reporting (see Duties and Responsibilities, Section 5 (a) & (b))	Submission and approval of bi-weekly project progress reports to Steering Committee and final reports for each milestone	From 1 May – 30 June 2023

III.   Expected Impact:

Business impact: In addition to the current revenue generating initiatives, following implementation of this digitally-enabled model The Company could achieve significant incremental revenue; and cost saving of its in-person training and fixed Sales Agent salaries over a 2-year period.

Micro-enterprises impact: The Company will be able to distribute additional products through micro-retailers operating in the informal market in a manner that increases their incomes and enhance economic access to food for each of them and the communities they serve by empowering them with business skills and knowledge and supporting them on-demand.

IV.   Skills Required

- Experienced Consultant/Organisations with expertise in developing and implementing robust digitally-enabled recruitment and training platforms in developing countries specifically with technology solutions and curricula development expertise
- Track record of successfully supporting companies in developing and implementing technology enabled hybrid recruitment and training models; with experience within developing economies in Africa, shared value models and retail networks preferred.
- Expertise in micro-learning in-app training, SMS and What's App platform training, and experience with designing, developing, implementing micro-learning solutions for scale
- At least 8-10 years of relevant experience required.
- Advanced degree in technology or education, or other relevant field preferred.
- Experience working with private e-commerce businesses required.
- Prior consulting experience will be reviewed favourably.
- Strong stakeholder engagement and communication skills required.
- Demonstrated leadership skills, teamwork and relationship building.
- Proven expert analytical and quantitative skills.
- Excellent written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills.
- Strong computer skills, including tech solutions development, LMS platforms, 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.

C. The Application and Subaward Process

Application Submission

The subaward application process under this RFA will consist of two (2) phases of competition where full applications shall be submitted by interested parties to TechnoServe for evaluation. Applications should address:

- How the organization intends to carry out the project – proposed approach, actions/activities and timelines, and project/stakeholder management plan
- Milestones and results to be achieved over the life of the project
- Past performance and institutional capacity
- Team structure; roles and responsibilities of each team member
- Budget details
- Exit strategy
- General and country-specific DoC requirements to assess provider's DoC capabilities, insurance policies, experience, etc. when international travel is involved

Step 1:

Applications will be developed and submitted by the Applicant to TechnoServe utilizing 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 <u>not</u> be accepted.

The main body of the technical proposal should be no longer than 40 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 approach in response to the RFA	30
2. Illustrated capacity of the applicant to implement the project and past experience with similar projects	20
3. Feasibility of planned activities and anticipated results	20
4. Project Sustainability and impact on target beneficiaries/communities	20
5. Budget reasonableness and cost effectiveness	10
Maximum Score	**100**

Step 4:

The Selection Committee will recommend those applications with the highest scores for 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: Program Budget Submission and Costing guidelines

Individual subawards will vary depending on availability of funding, nature and scope of program 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 US$80 000. Subawards will be issued on a competitive basis and only to a selected number of applicants.

While reviewing application budgets and budget narratives, the Selection Committee will ensure that:
1. The budget application reflects all the resources necessary for program implementation (Direct and Indirect Costs, as applicable).
2. The budget narrative provides details on all types of costs planned, cost per unit and cost justification. The budget narrative should be prepared using the provided Budget Notes template (attached).
3. All costs budgeted are eligible. 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 subrecipient's local office to support project implementation.
    e. **Other Direct Costs:** Any other direct costs of the project, such as costs for conducting trainings, developing publications, etc.
    f. **Indirect Costs:** If applicable, organizational overhead costs.

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 allowable 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: Wadzanai Nyambayo, Senior Programme Manager
> Email Address: wnyambayo@tns.org

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

Attachments to this RFA:

Attachment A: Budget Template