

Subaward Request for Applications - Evaluation

RFA Release Date: 31 July 2023
Deadline for Questions: 07 August 2023
Closing/Submission Deadline: 13 August 2023, 23:59 GMT
RFA Code: IB20MEL1
Subject: Evaluation of CASA TAF's Inclusive Aggregator Model

Eligible Organisations/Criteria: Organisations with extensive experience in conducting evaluations for programmes supporting smallholder farmers, agricultural development, and food security

Dear Applicant,

This document constitutes a request for applications (RFA) from eligible bidders for an independent evaluation 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 Noel Verrinder nverrinder@contractor.tns.org by the deadline listed above. Include the RFA Code and Subject in the subject line for your questions.

TechnoServe, CASA TAF & 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

TechnoServe and CASA TAF

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. We are business specialists assisting farmers and other entrepreneurs in 29 countries, increasing their access to information, capital, and markets. The increased income our clients derive enhances resilience and prosperity for their families and communities. In 2020, TechnoServe assisted 298,000 farmers and businesses resulting in \$188 million of new revenues and wages for participating farmers, businesses, and employees.

In 2019, TechnoServe was competitively selected by the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to lead part of a five-year programme – Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusinesses (CASA) – focused on driving catalytic change in how investors view and invest in agribusinesses operating in supply chains with significant numbers of smallholder producers. CASA is focused on increasing economic opportunities for smallholder farmers by:

- Enabling more smallholder farmers to engage with and trade into commercial markets;
- Demonstrating the commercial viability of agribusinesses with significant smallholder supply chains and attracting more investment into these businesses;
- Deepening the smallholder impact of investments made by development finance institutions and impact investors.

TechnoServe's role on CASA is to establish and operate a £8 million 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., Dob Equity, Barak Fund) 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 an agriculture technology service provider in Ghana that focused on input distribution and crop procurement from smallholder farmers in the cashew, maize, rice, and soybean value chains. The technical assistance provided by TechnoServe is to explore an opportunity for the company 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 the company.

The goal of the supported pilot 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. The company'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. Included in the pilot are 14 aggregators that can be categorised into three sizes, small (service ~100 farmers), medium (service ~300 farmers) and large (service ~3000 farmers). There are 3 small, 6 medium and 5 large aggregators included in the pilot so far.

B. Evaluation

Purpose of evaluation

CASA TAF is calling for proposals from specialised evaluation firms to conduct an evaluation for the aggregator project in the maize, soya and cashew value chains. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the initiative on smallholder farmers' incomes, resilience, and food security, and the business operations, profitability, and expansion plans of the involved aggregators, as well as the commercial benefit for the company in relation to CASA TAF's support. While findings and insights of this evaluation will be used to assess our impact performance, they will also be used to establish what works and what could be replicated in other contexts.

Scope of evaluation

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to provide CASA TAF and its partners with a view of the smallholder farmer, aggregator and business benefits resulting from the supported inclusive business model. Specifically, the evaluation will need to collect quantitative data on the key outcome and impact level indicators from a representative sample of smallholder farmers at baseline and a follow-up in 2025, to contribute to CASA TAF's overall logframe. These are:

Farmer side:

- Probability of Poverty Index (PPI)
- Mean food insecurity experience & dietary diversity scores of CASA target households
- Number of smallholder producers and small scale retailers currently engaged with CASA TAF, disaggregated by poorer (those earning less than \$1.90 per day) and gender of benefiting individuals
- Existing net annual income per farmer (£)
- A comprehensive measure of their resilience covering climate, anticipatory and economic resilience
- Difference between men and women's score for two questions in the women's empowerment in agriculture index (WEAI) for beneficiaries of CASA interventions (focus on income and production domains)
- Percentage of smallholders applying GAP practices
- Percentage of farmer crop sold to Aggregators
- Number of smallholders accessing input packages through the aggregators
- Average % of smallholder farmer inputs bought from aggregators
- Number of smallholder farmers trained by the aggregators
- Average cost of inputs bought per farmer

In addition to the farmer data, qualitative and existing data should be gathered on the following:

Aggregator side:

- The current business operations, profitability, and expansion plans of aggregators as they relate to the business relationship with the Company
- The changes in aggregator relationships with smallholder farmers since program inception
- The perceived value of the program from the aggregator's perspective
- Any changes in the supply consistency and quality of maize and soya sourced from smallholders

- The number of services the aggregators have been able to offer to smallholders as a result of this programme

Company side:

- Input sales through aggregator model
- Output purchases through aggregator model

In addition to collecting and gathering data on the above indicators, the evaluation will aim to answer questions regarding the current conditions and operations of smallholder farmers and aggregators within the CASA TAF model. The insights will serve as a starting point for understanding how change can be realised, informing future evaluations and other inclusive business models.

The evaluation will also answer key questions that will unpack how change is realised and enable stakeholders to learn meaningfully, with a view to inform the rest of the programme and other inclusive business models. Ultimately, the findings and lessons learnt will be shared with a wider audience with the goal of enlightening the broader ecosystem of the benefits technical assistance can have in reducing poverty and improving food security, as well as what its limitations are.

Part of the role of the evaluator will be to assist CASA TAF in refining and prioritising the evaluation questions below. The final list of questions should be agreed upon by CASA TAF and the evaluator during the inception phase of the evaluation. These key evaluation questions will guide the evaluation scope, and the evaluator will respond to each of them in the final report.

Evaluation questions

Smallholder-focused questions:

1. Has the inclusive sourcing model, using existing aggregators, been able to meet the production needs of the smallholder maize, soya, and cashew farmers in the targeted regions of Ghana?
2. Considering both expressed and observed preferences, which components of the aggregators' offers are most valued by the smallholder maize, soya and cashew farmers in Ghana? Have these components led to changes in farmer loyalty to the aggregators or the overall program?
3. Has there been a change in the smallholder maize, soya and cashew farmers' agronomic behaviours, such as an increase in the usage of appropriate inputs, equipment, and services?
4. To what extent did the aggregator-based extension model contribute to increased adoption of good agronomic practices, including climate smart practices and subsequent improved maize, soya and cashew yields?
5. How has the inclusive sourcing model contributed to changes in smallholder maize and soya farmers' farm-derived incomes, as well as their overall wealth?
6. How has the inclusive sourcing model contributed to changes in the food security situation of the smallholder maize, soya and cashew farmers' households?
7. How has the inclusive sourcing model contributed to changes in women's empowerment in terms of decision-making over maize, soya and cashew production and income?
8. How has the inclusive sourcing model contributed to changes in the maize, soya and cashew farming household's resilience?
9. What risks may impede the sustainability of the project outcomes and results for the maize, soya and cashew value chains?

Aggregator-focused questions:

1. How has the inclusive sourcing model influenced the business operations and profitability of the aggregators involved in the maize, soya and cashew value chains?
2. What components of the programme have the aggregators found most valuable to their businesses?
3. Have the aggregators noticed changes in their relationship with the smallholder farmers since the inception of the program?
4. How has the relationship between aggregators and Company changed over the programme?
5. Has the programme affected the supply consistency and quality of maize, soya and cashew sourced from the smallholder farmers?
6. How has the program influenced the aggregators' business expansion plans, if any, in the targeted regions of Ghana?
7. Have the aggregators been able to offer more or improved services to the smallholder farmers as a result of this program?
8. How do the aggregators perceive the sustainability of the benefits they have received from the program?
9. What recommendations do the aggregators have for improving the programme in the future, in terms of its benefits to their business and the smallholder farmers?

Company-focused questions:

1. Has the programme been financially beneficial to the Company?

Method

The evaluator will develop and propose a suitable and sound evaluation design. This design should be flexible and robust, with the foresight to accommodate the complexities of the private sector. A mixed-method, highly participatory, and iterative approach is expected for this evaluation that will equally capture the conditions and perspectives of both smallholder farmers, aggregators and the company.

The evaluation will be based on at least two discrete data collection points, one at baseline and a follow-up at the end of CASA TAF's programme period in 2025 (subject to an FCDO contract extension).

However, a "lighter" midline data collection process is recommended.

The contracted evaluator will be responsible for the design, implementation, analysis, and drafting of an evaluation report. Evidence gathered will be from both primary (interviews, surveys, focus groups, beneficiary stories, etc.) and secondary (project documents, records, etc.) data sources. The evaluation will also include a desk review of project reports and outputs.

The consulting assignment will include the following tasks:

- **Develop Inception Report/Evaluation Work Plan:** The evaluator will produce a detailed work plan, which should include the proposed method to conduct the evaluation, sampling approach, agreed upon data collection and analysis plan, staffing, budget and period. The evaluation design will be developed with CASA TAF's staff and the company.
- **Survey Development/Adaptation:** Along with CASA TAF's team, the evaluator will identify key outcome indicators and other variables that will be measured as part of the evaluation. This will include defining data sources and methods of collection and preferred measurement tools.

- **Develop Research Protocol:** The evaluator will identify all requirements for ethical clearance of the evaluation activities. In addition, the evaluator will lead development of the research protocol, which will include:
 - Overview of method, data collection and analysis plan
 - Overview of methods taken for protection of human subjects, including informed consent and respondent confidentiality
 - Assessment of respondent risks and benefits
- **Develop a sampling plan:** The evaluator will define the sample sizes required to estimate project impacts, as well as the sampling strategy.
- **Data collection:** The evaluator will be responsible for overseeing all activities related to preparation and conducting data collection. CASA TAF and the company will assist the contractor with the logistics involved. The evaluator will oversee all activities including:
 - Field data collection
 - Creation of survey training materials
 - Data collectors' recruitment and training
 - Pilot testing with field teams
 - Collection and compilation of any required secondary data
 - Ensuring quality of collected data
- **Data Quality Assurance:** The evaluator is responsible to conduct all appropriate data quality assurance procedures, including instrument review, enumerator instruction, coaching and performance monitoring, back-checks, spot-checks and accompaniments and preparation of daily data quality assurance reports
- **Data Uploading:** The evaluator is responsible to supervise data uploading to the specified server, verification, and cleaning in accordance with established data quality assurance procedures,
- **Data Analysis:** The evaluator is responsible for the analysis of the collected data.
- **Manage data documentation and storage:** The evaluator is responsible for ensuring proper and comprehensive documentation of evaluation activities, as well as making sure all data and corresponding documentation is properly stored. Proper and comprehensive documentation should be provided for the method, sampling procedures, and questionnaires. *Raw data and analysis files must be shared with CASA TAF.*
- **Presentation of outcomes of final evaluation:** The contractor is responsible to produce comprehensive written baseline and final evaluation reports in consultation and collaboration with CASA TAF's staff. Virtual or in-person presentation of each of the reports will also be required.

Deliverables

- Inception report detailing:
 - Method of the evaluation- to be approved by TAF team before implementation including:
 - Sampling method

- Data collection plan
 - Analysis framework
 - Detailed work plan for evaluation
- A baseline report synthesising findings from the baseline data including a completed table of baseline information on key indicators, emerging findings and recommendations.
 - A presentation of the findings of the baseline to CASA TAF and the company
 - A final evaluation report after the endline data collection, that includes a completed table illustrating changes in key indicators, key qualitative insights, answers to the evaluation questions, and recommendations for the company and CASA TAF
 - A presentation of the findings of the evaluation to CASA TAF and the company
 - The raw data collected from both waves of the survey and associated analysis scripts to allow for reproduction of results

Audience

The audience for the evaluation reports and presentations will be CASA TAF, its primary funder, FCDO, the company and its investors, as well as the broader ecosystem of impact investors and practitioners.

Budget

A total of up to £80,000 available for the cost of this evaluation. These funds are provided by CASA TAF.

Location

The evaluation will be based in Ghana with site and field visits to Northern, Upper West, Brong Ahafo regions.

Timing

The project will start in August 2023 and end in July 2025 (subject to FCDO contract extension).

C. The application and award process

Contracting mechanism

Open tender

Value for money

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

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

Required Qualifications

The evaluation team, which may include subcontractors, must have:

- Proven expertise using quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods in projects with the private sector
- Specialised expertise in agricultural development, food security, and gender
- Experience in running large scale surveys in Ghana
- The ability to run data collection processes in local languages
- Strong skills in statistical analysis
- Strong skills in qualitative analysis
- Ability to write reports and present in English

Knowledge of and experience working with aggregator projects will be beneficial.

Application Submission

The 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:

- Organisational experience, including track record of delivery of similar assignments
- Team structure; roles and responsibilities of each team member
 - If the contractor intends to subcontract any aspect of the work, this must be explained in the application, and an overview of how the subcontractors will report to the team leader must be included, as well as an overview of how the team leader will quality control outputs from subcontracted team members. Where subcontractors are firms, the Contractor must provide

a description of the firm's relevant expertise and competencies, in addition to information on the subcontractor's staff intended to provide the services.

- Draft proposed method including activities and timelines
- 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 (you may use your own template), 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 evaluation's success, the size/importance of each risk to the evaluation, and the proposed mitigation strategy that the contractor will take to minimise the risk becoming a reality. The table should also include a column indicating how the contractor will track the status of the risk and how this will be reported on during the evaluation.
- Three references for work completed on similar projects
- Signed declarations – Attachment 1 to this RFA
- Duty of Care Response – Attachment 2 to this RFA

Application assessment process

Step 1:

Applications will be developed and submitted by the Applicant to TechnoServe using 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 7 pages (excluding curricula vitae).

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 method to the RFA; feasibility of planned activities and anticipated deliverables	30
2. Illustrated capacity of the applicant to implement the evaluation and past experience with similar evaluations	30
3. Quality of proposed personnel	20
4. Budget reasonableness and cost effectiveness	20
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 the new contractor to provide an orientation outlining the main requirements for performance and reporting.

Step 7:

Throughout the duration of the evaluation, TechnoServe will monitor the evaluator's performance and compliance with all subaward terms and conditions.

D. Project Budget Submission and Costing guidelines

Individual contracts 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 £80,000. Contracts 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 evaluation 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 contractor'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 award. 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: Noel Verrinder

Email Address: nverrinder@contractor.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 contract. No financial reporting on expenditures is required.

2. Program Reporting

Evaluation reporting will be defined during the contract negotiation stage and is expected to be closely linked to the milestones to be defined in the contract.

Attachments to this RFA:

[Please follow this link to download the attachments](#)

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