Subaward Request for Applications

RFA Release Date: 15 December 2023
Deadline for Questions: 3 January 2023
Closing/Submission Deadline: 8 January 2023
RFA Code: IB25TAP4
SUBJECT: Intermediary agent selection, management, and capacity building

Eligible Organisations/Criteria: Individuals or firms that have comprehensive experience in crop sourcing, input markets, aggregator model and BOP model development

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., BII, FMO, Norfund) or an impact/patient capital investor (e.g., DoB Equity, Common Fund for Commodities) 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 redefine 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 31 agribusinesses to increase sales and productivity of over 60,000 smallholders and increase jobs and rural income generation opportunities.

One of CASA TAF’s supported businesses is SAMANU—a leading Ethiopian FMCG group that has recently invested in a solvent extraction plant that will allow it to source oilseeds such as sunflower, rapeseed and soybean from farmers in Ethiopia, rather than importing crude oils. CASA TAF partnered with SAMANU in April 2023 to deliver an inclusive business plan which was completed in August 2023.

Sunflower and rapeseed cultivation in Ethiopia is currently very limited, with a small number of farmers cultivating a handful of old sunflower and rapeseed varieties that are registered in the country. In order to access sufficient supply of sunflower and rapeseed, SAMANU promotes the uptake and cultivation of high performing sunflower and rapeseed varieties that can capture smallholder farmer interest while accommodating the limitations of smallholder agriculture (e.g., suboptimal GAP, limited access to fertiliser and agrochemicals, etc.)

SAMANU proposes to promote improved varieties of sunflower and rapeseed seed to farmers through selected intermediaries, while supporting clusters of farmers with high quality extension to ensure successful harvests and word-of-mouth demand for future seasons.

B. Project Description:

Project goal
The project goal is to develop a network of intermediary agents in the sunflower and rapeseed value chains that can provide multiple services to farmers and farmer cluster groups, including input provision, advisory, and crop off taking. SAMANU’s aim is to strengthen its relationship with existing aggregators or traders in their network, and 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: Project set up and programme management

▪ Develop implementation plan covering the technical assistance activities related to Intermediary Agent Selection and Management
▪ Weekly and monthly progress report on Intermediary Agents engagement and management
▪ Serve as the primary point of contact for Technical Assistant service for Intermediary Agent Selection and Management
▪ Submit monthly progress reports on activities completed, KPIs achieved, challenges, and risks

Deliverable 2: Value proposition design and development

▪ Together with SAMANU and CASA TAF, develop growth trajectory for intermediary agents in the areas of commercial performance, operational excellence and farmer impact
▪ Work with SAMANU to develop indicative targets for intermediary agents in various sourcing areas
▪ Develop value proposition and service offering for intermediary agents which may include financing, technical assistance, and an incentive program
▪ Develop communication plan and key messages to articulate value proposition for each intermediary agent

Deliverable 3: Intermediary agent selection and onboarding

▪ Refine and finalise intermediary selection criteria based on the draft prepared by SAMANU; secure SAMANU’s approval of final selection criteria
▪ Work with CASA TAF and the Programme Advisor to develop an assessment tool for selection
▪ Assess the initial intermediaries identified by SAMANU against the approved selection criteria and propose a shortlist that will be included in the pilot
▪ Onboard selected intermediary agents including

Deliverable 4: Training implementation

▪ Conduct Training of Trainer sessions directly and with 3rd parties for Samanu field, input sales and crop sourcing team who will support aggregators;
▪ Work with the Sourcing team to identify 20-30 intermediary agents and roll-out training for a subset after the final assessment
▪ Perform monitoring visits to assess training effectiveness
▪ Develop refresher training programs that can be conducted by the Samanu team based on aggregators’ feedback on training relevance and quality and the aggregators’ sales performance

Deliverable 5: Capacity Building of SAMANU field team

▪ Identify capacity development areas, develop training content and operational procedures
▪ Provide capacity-building support to the SAMANU field team to manage intermediary agents relationships

Deliverable 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

▪ Support CASA TAF M&E Lead in project monitoring, including data collection for quarterly donor reports
▪ Design and manage Intermediary Agent interviews/data collection for project case studies
▪ Develop an adequate monitoring plan to ensure quality of implementation
Budget
A total of up to $70,000 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 Ethiopia.

Timing
The project duration is estimated at 12 months starting January 2024.

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 5 years’ experience in managing agribusiness programmes, advisory services, Farmer Extension Programs, and Stakeholder Management
- At least five years’ experience in directly working with farmers and incorporating the farmer’s perspective in programs and initiatives
- Proficiency in Amharic and English is required and Oromifa is a plus
- Proven analytical and quantitative skills
- Excellent written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills
- Strong computer skills, including MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel
- Understanding of the agribusiness industry in Ethiopia
- Excellent negotiation and relationship-building skills
- Ability to work independently, flexibly, and responsibly
- Ability to adapt to changing working conditions
- Ability to prioritize and meet deadlines
- Experience in oilseed crops specifically sunflower and rapeseeds is preferred
- Experience working with agribusinesses around shared value initiatives required, mindful of climate and gender considerations
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection Criteria</th>
<th>Scoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>2. Illustrated capacity of the applicant to implement the project and past experience with similar projects</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>3. Experience of personnel or consultants proposed</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Budget reasonableness and cost effectiveness</td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>

**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 $70,000. 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 detailed 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