

REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS (RFA)

BUILDING CAPACITY OF CROSS-BORDER TRADE ASSOCIATIONS AND PROMOTE UTILIZATION OF TRADE FACILITATION TOOLS BY WOMEN AND YOUTH IN TRADE IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

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A. SYNOPSIS OF THE RFA

RFA No.	PSC/RFCN 009/2023
Issue date	Tuesday May 30, 2023
Title	Request for Concept notes for Grant Application – Build capacity of Cross Border Trader Associations and promote utilization of trade facilitation tools by women and youth in trade in Eastern and Southern Africa.
Issuing organization	AGRA – Sustainably growing Africa's Food Systems Head office: West End Towers, 4 th Floor Kanjata Road, off Muthangari Drive, Off Waiyaki Way P.O. Box 66773 Wetlands, 00800 Nairobi, Kenya
Submission of Concept note application and questions	We only accept online submission at AGRA's online portal AMIS (the link for online submission will be live on AGRA's website upon the RFA launch on May 30, 2023)
Deadline for Receipt of Questions	By Wednesday June 7, 2023
Deadline for Responding to the questions (for AGRA)	By Sunday June 11, 2023
Final Deadline for Receipt of Concept note Applications	Wednesday, July 5, 2023 before 11:59 pm, Eastern Africa Time (EAT).

B. SCOPE OF WORK

1.0 Background

1.1 AGRA

Founded in 2006, AGRA is an African-led African-based organization that seeks to catalyze Agriculture Transformation in Africa. AGRA is focused on putting smallholder farmers at the center of the continent's growing economy by transforming agriculture from a solitary struggle to survive into farming as a business that thrives. As the sector that employs the majority of Africa's people, nearly all of them small-scale farmers, AGRA recognizes that developing smallholder agriculture into a productive, efficient, and sustainable system is essential to ensuring food security, lifting millions out of poverty, and driving equitable growth across the continent.

AGRA is rolling out a new 5-year strategy to catalyze the Food System-led Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa to increase incomes and improve food security for 28 million farmers across 11 countries in West, East and Southern Africa. The new Strategic Plan sets out to catalyze the growth of sustainable food systems across Africa by influencing and leveraging partners to build a robust enabling environment where the private sector thrives, and smallholders are empowered to produce sufficient, healthy food in an equitable and inclusive manner.

There is increasing acknowledgement that gender inequality and social exclusion of women, youth and rural poor continue to impede Inclusive Agricultural Transformation (IAT). State of the art evidence shows that agricultural development interventions can only be effective if they are intentional in their approaches towards gender equality and social inclusion (Quisumbing et al., 2020; Nyasimi and Huyer, 2017; Doss, 2016). **Another critical component in inclusive agricultural transformation is participation by youth**, a population which is rapidly growing and is expected to double to 830 million by 2050. A total of 12 million youth enters the employment market each year but only 25% are absorbed into formal jobs leaving large numbers either unemployed or underemployed (AfDB, 2016). AGRA's approach to the youth is anchored on its inclusive agriculture transformation goal, driving broad-based agricultural transformation that will make agriculture more productive and profitable, thereby creating on-farm and off-farm opportunities. To attain the levels of **scale and reach necessary to create fundamental change in youth employment in Africa**, it is critical to come up with scalable solutions that reach a substantial proportion of youth – the food

system and agriculture present an opportunity in this regard.

Building on the gains AGRA has achieved over the past decade and a half and leveraging the learnings from our recent Impact Evaluation, AGRA intends to make focused and catalytic investments that contribute to inclusive agriculture and food systems transformation. AGRA's 2030 Strategic framework directly draws on and contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and is anchored in unlocking systemic barriers and building resilience and capabilities to catalyze the growth of sustainable food systems on the African continent.

To achieve its vision, mission and strategic objectives, AGRA will build on key assets, models and key lessons accruing from past strategic investments to deliver three core objectives:

1. to empower and build the resilience of smallholder farmers;
2. to support the development of inclusive markets that can further unlock and sustain functional agricultural and food systems; and
3. to build state capacity to scale and sustain agricultural and food systems transformation.

To achieve the vision, mission, and objectives of the new Strategic Plan, AGRA has prioritized and organized its work around four interlinked business lines to catalyze agricultural transformation which include 1) Policy and State Capability; 2) Seed Systems; 3) Inclusive Markets and Trade; and 4) Sustainable Farming. The new strategy has also prioritized three cross-cutting areas which are critical to ensuring that agricultural transformation is inclusive and reflective of broad food system needs. Intentional inclusivity is one of the three cross-cutting areas which seeks to eliminate barriers to participation of women and youth for them to contribute to, and benefit from agricultural transformation.

1.2 Inclusive Markets and Trade (IMT)

The Inclusive Markets and Trade business-line of AGRA focuses on strengthening viable and inclusive local and regional agri-food markets to facilitate entry of female and male farmers and businesses including young people into a positive and sustained cycle of commercialization and reinvestment. Progress on Inclusive Markets and Trade continue to face several systematic barriers which include:

- i. Limited/inadequate alignment of agricultural produce with quantity, safety and quality demands of domestic and regional markets;
- ii. The lack of sufficiently available nutritionally rich food that is easily accessible and affordable to regional market consumers;
- iii. Limited market information, linkages and matching platforms that impede access to domestic and regional markets;
- iv. Inadequate access to finance which affect agriculture SMEs to grow to scale, and participate competitively in agricultural markets and trade;
- v. Limited transparency and predictability of trade policies, and non-tariff barriers that hinder effective participation of agriculture SMEs in markets and trade;
- vi. Limited participation of women and youth in agriculture trade, as well as climate change and global shocks which have negatively affected agriculture trade.

In the new strategy, AGRA will tackle systematic constraints in access to finance, market, and trade institutions in order to build a strong agri-food markets and trade at the domestic, regional, and continental level. This will help to ensure that increased on-farm productivity is matched by post-harvest opportunities for aggregators, traders, and processors as well as access to finance that is required to pursue these opportunities. To achieve these systematic changes, AGRA through IMT business line will seek to deliver the following by leveraging resources from its key strategic partners:

- i. Develop inclusive market systems by shaping markets based on consumer demands and increasing local capacity for safe and nutritious foods;
- ii. Facilitate stronger intra-African agricultural and food trade by reducing search and transaction costs, and improving predictability and transparency;
- iii. Enhance market actor competitiveness by enhancing market access, improving market access to finance, and enhancing capacity and incentives for agri-food system actors.

Key expected results from this work include the following, for which this grant applicant will also be contributing:

- At least 500,000 youth and women in work opportunities created.
- Reduction in non-tariff barriers in supported trade corridors/value chains particularly those that affect participation of women and youth in domestic and regional markets.
- Increase in the number of policies, regulations, certifications, and standards related to markets and trade that are adopted and implemented in the targeted countries.
- Increase in the number of supported countries using improved market data and information systems for supported commodities.
- Increase in the number of targeted countries adopting reforms for improving the functionality of the national Strategic Food Reserves.
- Increase in volume and value of net agricultural exports of supported commodities and corridors in the targeted countries.
- Reduction in the cost of doing business in the targeted countries particularly in the reduction of cost/time of obtaining trade documents.
- Increase in the number of new SMEs/agribusinesses established (including women and youth led) within the selected value chains in the targeted countries.
- Increase in the number of targeted smallholder farmers and SMES in the targeted countries that are able to increase volume and value of agriculture food trade.
- Increase in volume and value of off-taker sales for supported market actors.
- Increase in the number of targeted smallholder farmers/SMEs/agripreneurs accessing and using business development services including financial and or market information services.

1.3 Call for Grant Applications

Inclusive Markets and Trade (IMT) work will be centered around i) creating an enabling environment for inclusive markets, trade,

and finance (i.e. policy reforms, implementation, trade facilitation, etc.) and ii) supporting a well-functioning private sector that will be capable of driving farmers and agri-business into a cycle of commercial growth and reinvestment. To support the implementation of Inclusive Markets and Trade work through market shaping/trade facilitation interventions, **AGRA is seeking potential partners, to manage the necessary sub-awards**, to deliver the three long-term Objectives of the IMT program:

- SO-1:** Resilient supply and demand of supported agricultural products and services;
- SO-2:** Inclusive market (output and finance) performance for supported value chains;
- SO-3:** Improved enabling environment for inclusive markets, trade, and finance especially for youth and women agri-entrepreneurship.

The potential partners will include, but not limited to, the following:

- NGOs or private firms providing Business Development Services and other consultancy services.
- Capacity building/training institutions that have a strategic focus towards training of Trade Associations and business associations involved in national and intra-regional trade.

AGRA therefore invites submissions of grant applications from interested and qualified organizations operating in the agricultural value chains for projects that contribute to the achievement of AGRA's stated intended objectives and outcomes.

2.0 Grant Investment Area

Interested Applicants are invited for Regional Grant concept note applications covering the Eastern and Southern Africa region on this investment area, as summarized below:

Build capacity of Cross Border Trader Associations (regional and national levels) and promote utilization of trade facilitation tools at regional level to enhance participation of women and youth in trade which includes;

- Building the capacity of Cross Border Traders Association in lobbying and advocacy skills in order to engage key relevant stakeholders (i.e. RECs, Government, etc.) for policy reforms and follow up with key stakeholders on removal of Non-Tariff Barriers and resolution of reported NTBs.
- Working with regional and national CBTAs to design and implement various sensitization and awareness strategies for promoting utilization of regional trade facilitation instruments (i.e. AfCFTA, COMESA STR, EAC STR, SADC Trade Protocol, Charter of Cross Border Traders, etc.) by SMEs including women and youth traders.
- Enhancing the awareness of existing regional food trade promotional incentive schemes, and capacitating CBTAs on accessing the benefits of such schemes,
- Establish linkages among the CBTAs and the relevant governmental agencies to enhance the relationship and coordination for supporting the regional food trade transactions,
- Training session to CBTAs personnel in enhancing their capacity and knowledge about regional food trade documentation and procedures and available digital information tools (online NTB monitoring and reporting platforms; markets/trade information, and procedural and documentational information for trade).
- Capacity building of CBTAs to enhance access of CBTAs to the Quality Standards and norms expected from major food off-takers and also available best handling technologies and techniques while aggregating the food commodities for regional trade.

3.0 Period of Project Performance

The overall period of this project performance is estimated to be 2 years' maximum, from 1st September 2023 to 31st August 2025.

4.0 Period Grant Applications will be Accepted

This Request for grant concept notes applications will remain open for a period of 20 working days, from May 30, 2023, to 5 July 2023 before 11:59 pm Eastern Africa Time (EAT). Interested organizations/ institutions must submit before the final deadline; and grant applications will be evaluated on a rolling basis as indicated above in the synopsis. Applications made after the final deadline of 5 July 2023 will not be considered.

Organizations must follow the instructions mentioned below and must submit their grant concept note applications using the AGRA guidelines and above mentioned scope of work following AGRA's online portal link of AMIS system.

C. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria		Points
1.	Technical Approach – Description of the methodology and approach which meet or exceed the stated technical specifications or scope of work in this RFA by the grant applicant.	50 Points
2.	Management approach – the grant application should describe how the proposed team members have the necessary experience and capabilities to carry out the scope of work (attach the brief profile of applicant organization and team).	30 Points
3.	Past Experience: Evidence of working experience in delivering assignments in the activities stated in the Scope of work in the following; (a) capacity building of trade associations and other business groups cross border trade focusing on agriculture commodities; (b) popularization of regional and continental trade facilitation instruments/tools/protocols; and (c) awareness raising and campaigns on trade related issues and experience working on gender and inclusivity agenda within the market and trade system space.	20 points
Total		100 points

NB. Once attained the proposal development after the approval of initial concept note, for the financial proposal to be considered by AGRA, the applicant's technical proposal must score 70 points and above. The financial proposal will be reviewed against the proposed approach and methodology, and cost negotiations held if applicable.

D. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Organizations contemplating submission of concept note applications in response to this request for grant applications (RFA) must determine whether they meet the following requirements to be eligible for AGRA financial assistance:

- Five (5) years of demonstrable organization working experience in the following; (a) capacity building of trade associations and other business groups cross border trade focusing on agriculture commodities; (b) popularization of regional and continental trade facilitation instruments/tools/protocols; and (c) awareness raising and campaigns on trade related issues.
- In depth understanding of regional and continental level trade policies and barriers to regional markets particularly those that affect the participation of women and youth in intra-regional markets.
- Excellent understanding of agriculture food trade systems and youth and women empowerment in African context.
- Excellent grasp of markets systems analysis and design of interventions that have the potential to sustainably capture large number of smallholder farmers.
- Relevant experience in Eastern and Southern African trade corridor market.

If an institution/organization meets the above eligibility criteria AGRA may request additional documentation to be submitted as part of the pre-award process. Organizations are advised that any funds made available are subject to AGRA's and its funding partners accountability and audit requirements.

E. HOW TO APPLY

If eligible and interested in this Request for grant concept note Application, please provide the following via AGRA's online portal AMIS (the link for online submission with indicated concept structure will be live on AGRA's website upon the RFA launch on May 30, 2023) by/before, **5 July 2023 before 11:59 pm Eastern Africa Time (EAT)**. Additionally, applicants at proposal-stage once AGRA has communicated to the applicant of the approved concept, are expected to make submission of following documents (at AGRA AMIS online system for which applicant will be informed by AGRA);

1. Request a new account from here: <https://agra.synisys.com/>
2. Create an account as an applicant
3. Log in to the system with your credentials: <https://agra.synisys.com/portfolio/requests>
4. Choose the request and submit your application via Create New Response section of the form before or by 5th July 2023.
5. Detailed organization profile with CVs of project implementation team.
6. Technical proposal – At this stage, applicants are expected to submit a brief concept note only. Once short-listed, AGRA expects submission of a detailed technical proposal from short-listed applicants clearly stating an understanding of the scope of work and elaboration of the methodology including how each of the tasks will be executed. Additional details will include;
 - a) *Past performance*: Demonstrated evidence of undertaking at least three similar assignments done. The information shall include the legal name and address of the organization for which services were provided, a description of services provided and a current contact phone number and email address of a responsible and knowledgeable representative of the organization.
 - b) Demonstrate availability of appropriate skills among staff in sufficient numbers and experience and attach their CVs.
7. Financial Proposal – At this concept stage, applicants are expected to provide a brief budget of the project only. Once short-listed, AGRA will request a detailed financial proposal from short-listed applicants.
8. Two (2) years Audited financial statements at proposal submission stage by short-listed applicants only (send a signed copy by the auditor).
9. A copy of your organization's registration certificate at proposal submission stage by short-listed applicants only.

