

Request for Clarifications and Answers

Final Evaluation Services for IESC

RFP Issue Date:	Friday, May 7, 2021
Closing Date For Proposals:	Thursday, June 3, 2021
Closing Time:	5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)
Project Title:	Exporting Quality
Offer Reference Number:	RFP-DREQ-004-2021
Clarifications Issue Date:	Friday, May 21, 2021

Per RFP Section 9.2 Clarification and Amendments, Offerors may request clarifications not later than **5:00 pm EDT on Thursday, May 20, 2021**. IESC will provide answers to these questions and requests for clarification simultaneously via email and posted on the IESC website with the RFP before the close of business on/or before **Friday, May 21, 2021**.

Question 1: Does the IESC have by name lists of the 3,931 agricultural producers; agricultural producer organizations; agricultural associations; and private firms that received direct assistance (or indirect assistance from participating intermediary organizations) and detailed descriptions (scope, process, duration) for each of the multiple, distinct interventions identified in the questions listed in RFP Table 2, e.g. including but not limited to market driven programs; field farmer schools; integrated pest management; improved post-harvest infrastructure; trade shows; pilot cold chain program, and other IESC interventions that will be made available to the successful bidder?

Answer 1: IESC has a list by name of the 3,931 agricultural producers; agricultural producer organizations; agricultural associations; and private firms that received direct assistance from Exporting Quality program, its implementing partners, its consultants, and subcontractors. IESC understands “indirect assistance from participating intermediary organizations” to mean the direct assistance provided by our implementing partners operating under an Exporting Quality program subaward. IESC has detailed descriptions of each activity intervention throughout life of program, such as scope, process, and duration of each intervention identified in the questions listed in RFP Table 2. These will be made available to the contractor.

Question 2: The Food for Progress Exporting Quality project focused on several different commodities: avocado, pineapple, cocoa, Asian vegetables and greenhouse vegetables. For some of these data are readily available on a six-digit harmonized system basis, i.e.

avocado (080440) and pineapple (080440). Does IESC have and will it make available to the successful bidder the relevant six-digit HS codes for the specific vegetables referenced in the RFP as Asian vegetables group on which the project focused; the specific vegetables in the greenhouse vegetables group on which it focused in the Dominican Republic; and the subset of six-digit cocoa products (below the two-digit code (18) on which the project focused.

Answer 2: Data sources consistent with those used during Baseline and Midterm Evaluation will be shared with the contractor.

Question 3: Preliminary research suggests that other donors, the GoDR, and other USG entities have also engaged in agricultural production and export support activities in the Dominican Republic, potentially overlapping with at least some of the commodity and beneficiary populations on which the Food for Progress Exporting Quality project focused. With respect to scoping the other contributions aspect of a contribution analysis, could IESC/USDA describe the extent to which the Food for Progress team has already researched/documented and will share its information on other similar/relevant interventions/programs for the same beneficiary/commodity populations during the time period over which this evaluation will examine and document the Exporting Quality project's activities and their results?

Answer 3: IESC's Exporting Quality Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team collects data directly from the beneficiaries and requests only the information linked to program support. Program achievement is derived only from what beneficiaries report. IESC does not collect data on support that program beneficiaries may have received from other sources. IESC will share information on other similar and relevant interventions and programs for the same beneficiary and commodity populations during the life of program with the contractor.

Question 4: In Table 1 in the RFP for this evaluation does the term "unique beneficiary count" refer to (1) individual agricultural producers, people in firms and people in general, (2) specific firms, associations or other entities/institutions, or (3) a mix of individual people and organizations. If the answer is (3), a mix, does IESC have its beneficiary counts by commodity in a form that disaggregates human beneficiaries and institutional beneficiaries. Could IESC provide beneficiary data in this disaggregated manner now to help all bidders, or if not will beneficiary counts disaggregated in this way be provided upon award?

Answer 4: Table 1 refers only to the unique beneficiaries (individuals) who are agriculture producers and the value chains to which they belong. Other beneficiary types

like people in firms, agricultural producer organizations and trade associations, private enterprises, people in firms, and people in government are not included in this table. Table 1 is not a mix of individuals and institutions, but it may be helpful for bidders to know that the paragraph immediately above is a mix of institutions and individuals. Per the program's indicators, 1) agriculture producer organizations and trade associations and, 2) private enterprises are recorded as institutions. IESC does not disaggregate, or count, the human individuals belonging to these institutions when the institution itself is the unit of measure for an indicator, and therefore cannot provide this information to bidders at any stage. However, people in firms are counted and there may be some cases where a counted individual belongs to a counted institution. IESC will provide the list of individuals and the list of institutions to the contractor.

Question 5: Program coverage maps presented in the project's mid term evaluation and the RFP for the final evaluation do not match. This suggests that some provinces and some commodities agricultural producers and other beneficiaries may have been exposed to various interventions for different lengths of time which might well yield differences between provinces on the same commodity that are a function of duration intervention duration/frequency not a function of specific interventions to which producers were exposed. Does IESC have a table or graphic that maps differences in project implementation by location and commodity and related adjustments in targets for various indicators/outcomes that it can share with bidders?

Answer 5: IESC does not have a table or graphic that maps differences in project implementation by location and commodity and related adjustments in targets for various indicators and outcomes. Please refer to RFP Section 4. Exporting Quality Final Evaluation Objectives and Scope Statement for IESC's objectives in evaluating follow-up on midterm evaluation recommendations.

Question 6: Table 1 in the RFP shows that the numbers of producer beneficiaries by value chain differs. Differences between the numbers/percentages of producers by type of commodity are similarly large in the mid-term evaluation findings. If the final evaluation mimics these imbalances by sampling proportional to beneficiary counts, or by using a simple random sample of the total beneficiary count, its findings distribution would more likely than not parallel those seen in the RFP and mid-term. Given that roughly the same types of interventions were implemented across commodities I4DI would like to know whether the uneven distribution of beneficiaries and the uneven distribution of mid-term evaluation data across commodities has been deliberate and something IESC and USDA want to replicate in the final evaluation? Or would IESC and other stakeholders prefer or be open to a more balanced representation of the program by commodity? There are various ways to achieve this, one example might involve equal cell size sampling on a

multi-stage basis, e.g., 3 randomly sampled provinces per crop from the RFP map and 30 producers randomly sampled per crop per province (30 x 3, or 90 per crop) x 5 crops which totals out at about 450 survey respondents, or roughly the same as a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 5% with IESC's 3,931 unique direct beneficiaries (dropping out the 70 coded as being in more than one value chain). For all questions that would be the same for every producer no matter what value chain they are in, the results would be equivalent to the approach used for the mid-term, yet the distribution between crops, and thus IESC's ability to understand differences between its producer beneficiary population segments would be much more comparable, and its answers for questions asked of only one value chain cluster would be considerably stronger as a function of the Central Limits Theorem.

Answer 6: During the mid-term evaluation beneficiaries were selected randomly. The distribution of the sample is a percentage of the total beneficiary universe, not divided by value chain. Please refer to Midterm Evaluation Annex 2: The Program Database and the Evaluation Sample for more detail. IESC is open to a more balanced representation of the program by commodity but will decide with the selected contractor which methodology will be used for the final evaluation.