

Request for Proposals

Final Evaluation Services for IESC

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

1. Disclaimer

The information contained in this request for proposals (hereinafter referred to as RFP) document is provided to the Offeror(s) by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC). IESC is the prime implementer of the Food for Progress Exporting Quality project (September 2015 to November 2021) in the Dominican Republic funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). IESC is seeking a third-party contractor (independent consultant or firm) to conduct the Final Evaluation for the Exporting Quality project.

The purpose of this RFP document is to provide Offeror(s) with information to assist them in the preparation of their proposal/s for the services that IESC seeks to source. This RFP document does not claim to contain all the information each Offeror may require. Each Offeror should conduct their own assessment and should check the accuracy, reliability, and completeness of the information in this RFP document, and where necessary obtain independent advice from appropriate sources.

IESC may cancel this RFP and is under no obligation to make an award as a result of this RFP, although IESC fully anticipates doing so. Note that the USDA Exporting Quality Program Director determines proposal notification, award, and start dates, and they are subject to change at USDA or IESC's discretion. IESC may, at its own discretion, but without being under any obligation to do so, update, amend, or supplement the information in this RFP document. Interested offerors are responsible for all costs associated with preparation and submission of proposals and will not be reimbursed by IESC.

Any activities under a final agreement are subject to and shall be carried out in accordance with the regulations promulgated by the USDA for foreign donation of agricultural commodities, codified at 7 CFR 1499, 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR I, II, IV and any other subsequently published rule or regulation governing the Food for Progress (FFPr) program.

Any contract resulting from this RFP will be a cost-plus fixed fee contract. The estimated value of this contract is between \$80,000 to \$100,000 USD.

2. Exporting Quality Background

IESC is a U.S. based nonprofit that creates and expands economic opportunities, helping to lift those we support out of poverty. IESC believes that helping enterprises grow is the most sustainable way for communities to have access to jobs and for families and people to have opportunities for a better quality of life. IESC's USDA-funded Exporting Quality program helps to directly increase the quality and safety of agriculture products in the Dominican Republic by ensuring they meet international safety and quality standards to enter higher value premium markets domestically and at export. Exporting Quality is increasing agricultural productivity and trade in five high-value horticultural and vegetable value chains: avocado, cocoa, pineapple, Asian vegetables, and greenhouse vegetables. Since the estimated \$16.8 million project began, more than 13,000 people have directly benefited from DR Exporting Quality's work, generating more than \$95 million in sales.

The program is designed to achieve the two following objectives:

- 1. Increase agricultural productivity** in targeted high-value horticulture and vegetable value chains through capacity building activities, which include training on improved technologies and farm, land, and water resource management, that help producer groups, cooperatives, and their members achieve international standards.
- 2. Increase trade of high-value horticulture and vegetable products** by improving product quality, increasing production efficiency, increasing the value of post-harvest products, and improving marketing and market linkages.

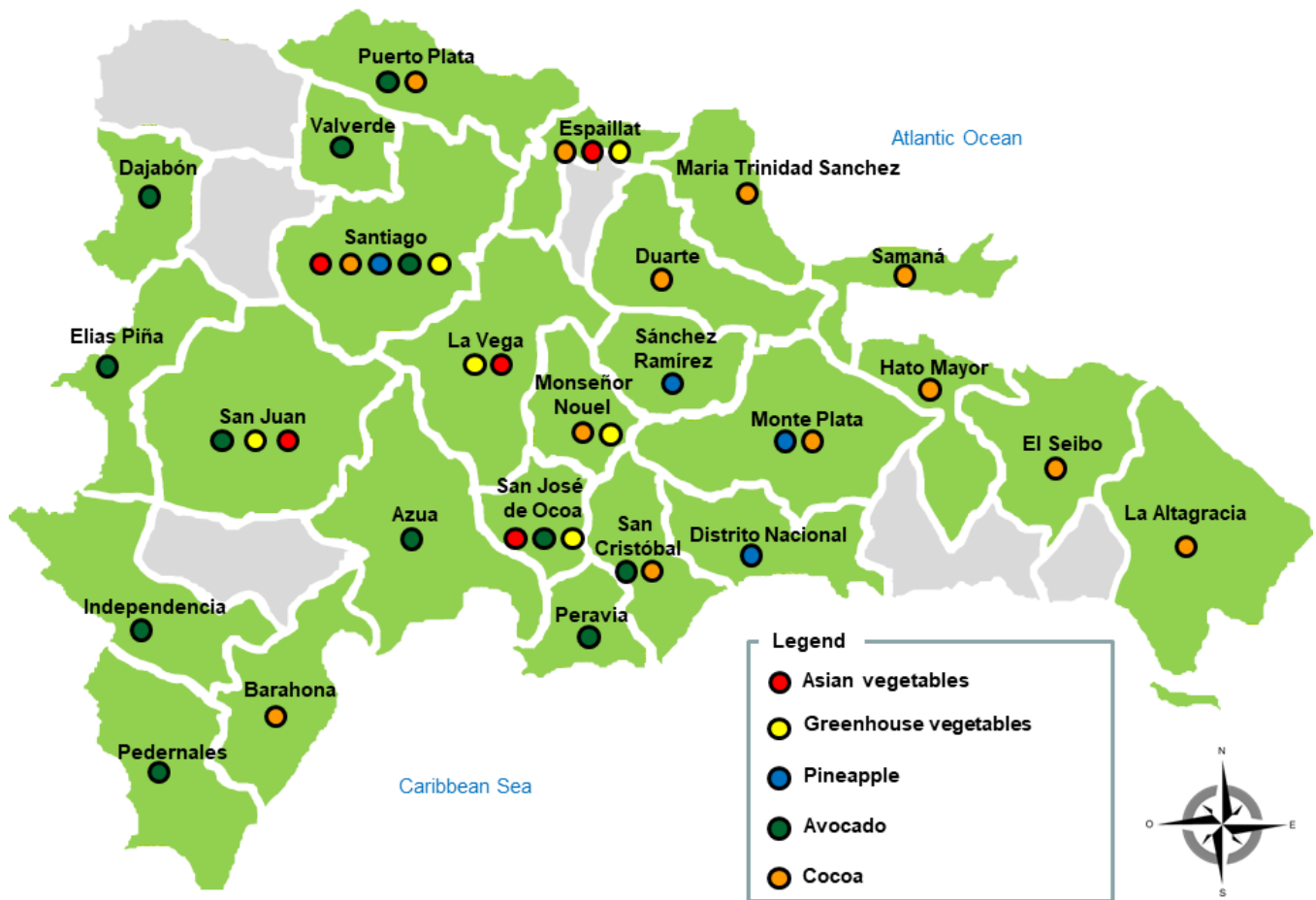
Exporting Quality works towards these objectives through a series of five activities that:

- 1) Strengthen producer organizations;
- 2) Build the capacity of trade associations;
- 3) Improve cold chain management;
- 4) Increase adoption of food safety practices and value addition through in-kind equipment donations; and,
- 5) Promote consumer awareness of food safety through mass media communications campaigns.

Exporting Quality activities are designed to work primarily with value chain aggregators, such as producer organizations, cooperatives, packinghouses, processors, and trade associations, to reach middlemen traders and producers. The program looks at end markets to determine growth-related demand and requirements, in turn focusing on

technical solutions related to productivity and product losses related to volume and sales. Losses can also be defined as not having access to key markets due to certain product bans or refusals based on import inspections. The program has endeavored to work with a significant number of beneficiaries in each value chain to achieve targets, which should allow the transformation needed for continued and sustained growth as further market-driven scaling and sector-wide replication occur.

Image 1: Exporting Quality Program Activities by Value Chain and Province, Dominican Republic



Exporting Quality is monitoring a total of 35 result and activity indicators, of which 32 had a baseline of zero and four had baseline data established within six months of program start-up (one result and activity indicator was removed). To view Exporting Quality's baseline evaluation, click [here](#). Click [here](#) to view Exporting Quality's midterm evaluation. Please visit <https://iesc.org/current-procurements/> to download a copy of the Exporting Quality program-level results framework and indicator table by clicking Exporting Quality Final Evaluation Services - Attachment A: Program-Level Results Framework and Indicator Table.

Exporting Quality Program aimed to reach about 3,528 unique beneficiaries through USDA-funded interventions over the life of the project. Beneficiary types include agricultural producers, producer groups and trade associations, private enterprises, people in firms, and people in government.

3. Period of Performance

The contractor will perform the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation conducted over the period August to October 2021. The anticipated due date is October 15, 2021 with an additional month to respond to USDA comments.

The period of performance of any contract resulting from this solicitation is anticipated to begin on or about August 1, 2021 but is dependent upon USDA's approval of the final terms of reference of this RFP. The duration of the contract is until the anticipated Exporting Quality project close in November 2021.

4. Exporting Quality Final Evaluation Objectives and Scope Statement

The purpose of the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation is to impartially assess whether the project achieved the expected results as outlined in the results framework. The scope of the evaluation will comprise of Exporting Quality project design, implementation, management, and replicability; lessons learned and recommendations for USDA, Exporting Quality participants, and other key stakeholders for future projects; and follow-up on midterm evaluation questions, including assessing direct and indirect, intended and unintended, positive or negative impacts; and the extent to which Exporting Quality addressed midterm evaluation recommendations and incorporated them into the program's activities and operations.

The contractor will conduct the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation in compliance with [USDA's monitoring and evaluation \(M&E\) policy](#) and the approved Exporting Quality

Evaluation Plan. The evaluation will examine both administrative and programmatic aspects of Exporting Quality related to data capture, measurement, and intervention impact. The analysis of progress against indicator targets will define areas of shortfalls and areas of success that may highlight opportunities for IESC and USDA to design future successful interventions leading to greater impact.

The contractor's evaluation team will include various positions and the Offeror should present a detailed scope of work for each proposed role on the team. The positions and relevant qualifications for each are described below under Section 10, Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements.

5. Evaluation Key Audience

The key audience for the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation includes the IESC Exporting Quality program staff, including the Exporting Quality Steering Committee comprised of key U.S. government and Dominican government stakeholders, USDA staff, and other USDA implementers.

The audience also includes Exporting Quality's international partners Global Cold Chain Alliance-World Food Logistics Organization (GCCA-WFLO) and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), local partner Centro para el Desarrollo Agropecuario y Forestal (CEDAF), Exporting Quality participants and beneficiaries, and trade associations and agencies within the government of the Dominican Republic. These evaluations also intend to benefit other USDA implementers and the development community in general.

The Exporting Quality Final Evaluation report will be made publicly available. IESC and the offeror will ensure public copies of the evaluation reports are free of personally identifiable information (PII) and proprietary information. Additionally, final versions of the evaluation reports will also be made accessible to persons with disabilities.

6. Methodology for Exporting Quality Final Evaluation

The independent third-party evaluation contractor will be encouraged to use a mixed methods approach using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods including quantitative surveys, focus group discussions with and direct observation of target beneficiaries, and key informant interviews with government officials and relevant public/private stakeholders including IESC Exporting Quality program staff and USDA representatives. For assessment purposes, evaluations may consider trade data that is available from official Dominican government sources and/or other reliable sources as appropriate. IESC will confirm details around survey design, interview questions, and

sampling in conjunction with the contractor. IESC will also provide project documents to inform a preliminary desk review, e.g., the baseline and midterm evaluations, program work plans, and semi-annual reports. Information on the relevant value chains and geographic regions of activity implementation may be found in Section 2. Background. The contractor will assess the situation and include any COVID-19 considerations in its data collection methodology as needed.

Due to the likelihood that COVID-19 will still be prevalent during the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation period, all in-person interactions and data collection with pre-identified beneficiaries will follow DR public health protocols to protect the beneficiaries and the evaluation team. Virtual data collection methods successfully tested and used by the Exporting Quality program will be utilized when possible, including phone calls or video conference interviews, surveys conducted by emails, and online surveys using various platforms. The final data collection methods will be discussed and confirmed with the selected contractor.

Some beneficiaries are counted in multiple beneficiary groups depending on the activity and indicator. As of September 30, 2020 the Exporting Quality program registered an estimated 3,931 unique, direct beneficiaries by the following types: Agriculture Producers – 3,002; Agriculture Producer Organizations and Trade Associations – 39; People in Firms i.e., individuals working in private enterprises – 582; Private Enterprises, i.e., packinghouses, processors, exporters – 267; People in Government – 40 IESC will update this count once program activities conclude.

Table 1: Estimated Agriculture Producer Beneficiaries by Value Chain

Beneficiary Type	Value Chain	Unique Beneficiary Count*
Agriculture Producers	Pineapple	1,331
	Cocoa	424
	Avocado	839
	Greenhouse Vegetables	147
	Asian Vegetables	191
	More than one value chain	70

	Total	3,002
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*These figures are estimates. The totals in the table do not necessarily reflect the sum of producers across the value chains at the time of evaluation.

The Exporting Quality Final Evaluation will not attempt to confirm direct attribution of impact which is not possible. As such, the evaluation is not expected to include a counterfactual or comparison group. Exporting Quality does not anticipate conducting an experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation for it will be logistically unreasonable to find and maintain control or comparison groups due to the reach of the project throughout multiple agricultural value chains.

This is a performance evaluation and is intended to verify contributions and plausible links between impact and Exporting Quality activities through contribution analysis rather than scientific attribution through randomized impact evaluations.

The concept of plausible association does not mean X input equal Y output. Rather, it means a case can be made that X input, e.g., farm field school trainings, has materially affected Y output, e.g., increased number of hectares under improved techniques or technologies as a result of USDA assistance. Contribution analysis will involve 1) gathering existing evidence on the various results and the links/assumptions that lead to these results; and 2) assembling and assessing the contribution story and the challenges to it. The challenges or weaknesses in the story point to where additional data or information is needed.

The contribution analysis methodology is a useful approach when working in complex areas where assessment of sole attribution is difficult, such as in the space of agriculture and food safety in the context of local, regional, and international trade. The essential value of contribution analysis is that it offers an approach designed to reduce uncertainty about the contribution that Exporting Quality is making to the observed results through an increased understanding of why the observed results have occurred (or not) and the roles played by Exporting Quality and other internal and external factors. The conclusion from a contribution analysis is not definitive proof, but rather provides evidence and a line of reasoning from which Exporting Quality can draw a plausible conclusion that, at some level of confidence, the project has made an important contribution to the documented results.

The evaluation contractor will apply the contribution analysis methodology using existing quantitative data from the program’s M&E system, qualitative information from

interviews, and other contextual factors that help validate or clarify the contribution story. Any missing 'piece' of the story is where additional data or information is needed, which the evaluation contractor will collect. Quantitative data will be analyzed using the appropriate descriptive statistics rather than inferential statistics given there are no control or comparison groups. Certain relationships may be analyzed by calculating the correlation between two variables (e.g., the relationship between the number of trainings delivered to increase capacity of fruit and vegetable producers and processors and the number of project-supported packinghouses that meet FSMA requirements). Details will be discussed and confirmed with the evaluation contractor.

IESC has also conducted post-assessments for equipment donation activities and an internal beneficiary survey. Exporting Quality will share these assessments with the evaluation contractor.

The Exporting Quality Final Evaluation will answer the following questions related to the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. A final list of questions will be developed in consultation with the IESC Exporting Quality project's senior leadership and USDA prior to the commencement of the evaluation field work, similar to the following:

- **Relevance:** To what extent did the Exporting Quality project design address the core issues of target beneficiaries? How were existing relevant USDA and U.S. government activities leveraged? To what extent did the program align with the Dominican Republic's agriculture and/or development investment strategy? With USDA and the USG's development goals? Was the project designed taking into account economic, cultural, and political contexts?
- **Effectiveness:** What were the major results of the project in achieving the goal and intended objectives? To what extent did Exporting Quality achieve the specific targets and results established? Which activity or combination of activities proved to be the most effective approach to achieve the project's higher-level results, namely Increased access to improved market information; Improved capacity of key groups in the agriculture production sector; and Increased leverage of private sector resources? To what extent have training and certification had an influence on improving the quality of post-production agricultural products? How effective has participation in trade shows and buyer missions been to improve linkages between buyers and sellers?
- **Efficiency:** To what extent did the level of project resources lead to achievement of results? Could the same results be achieved with fewer resources?

- **Sustainability:** What is the likelihood that the project benefits will endure over time after Exporting Quality ends? To what extent has Exporting Quality developed local ownership and sustainable partners?
- **Impact:** What are the immediate-, medium-, and long-term effects, intended and unintended, positive and negative, of the project after nearly five years of implementation?
- **Other:** What was the overall impact of COVID-19 restrictions/protocols on project results? How did the program adapt to the pandemic and to what extent were adaptations of activities successful in reaching beneficiaries? The Exporting Quality Final Evaluation must also determine whether recommendations from the Exporting Quality Midterm Evaluation were incorporated into the project and if not, why not?

The above questions about the program's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, and responsiveness to the pandemic must be considered essential components of the evaluation. These questions frame activity-specific lines of inquiry, shown below in a sample arrangement to illustrate the types of questions the contractor may align per beneficiary type. Based on the lines of inquiry in the table below, the Offeror should explore areas of impact in each activity. The methodology for weighting impact should be proposed by the Offeror and include key factors like return on investment, gender, youth, and sustainability and the level of buy-in by beneficiary type.

Table 2: Program Beneficiary and Methodology Map

Legend:

- A = Avocado; P = Pineapple; C = Cocoa; AV = Asian Vegetables; GV = Greenhouse Vegetables. Indicates target and actual value chains.
- “Private Enterprise” refers to packinghouses, processors, and exporters.
- “People in Firms” refers to individuals in packinghouses, processors, and exporters.

Activity 1: Capacity Building: Producer Groups/Cooperatives							
Illustrative Question	Beneficiary Type	Value Chain					Anticipated Data Collection Method
		A	P	C	AV	GV	
What impact has market-driven certification programs had on beneficiaries' access to markets and exports?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
What effect has the increased presence of traceability systems had on beneficiaries' market access and exports?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews

What impact has improved compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards had on market access and exports?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and focus groups
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
What effect have the use of farmer field schools had on organizational effectiveness, production costs and yields?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and focus groups
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
Has the revitalization of cocoa and avocado farms led to significant increases in overall production and yields?	Agriculture Producers	✓		✓			Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓		✓			
	Private Enterprises	✓		✓			Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews

Has the implementation of recommendations by the organizational capacity index led to significant performance improvements in the organizations?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
What impact has integrated pest management had on beneficiary costs, yields, access to markets?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, direct observation, and focus groups
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
What impact has the FSMA readiness food safety strategy for packhouses and related interventions had on market access and exports?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and focus groups
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, direct observation, and key informant interviews

Did improved post-harvest infrastructure contribute to an increase in the value added to post-production agricultural products?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and focus groups, direct observation, and key informant interviews
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Has the support for the Ministry of Agriculture in monitoring and trapping Medfly and Tuta Absoluta led to notable commercial impacts for the private sector (e.g., sales/exports) and/or the ministry's disposition to continue to apply such mitigation/preventive measures after program close-out (sustainability)?	Agriculture Producers				✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and focus groups

Activity 2: Capacity Building: Trade Associations							
Illustrative Question	Beneficiary Type	Value Chain					Anticipated Data Collection Method
		A	P	C	AV	GV	
What impact has establishing market linkages through participation in trade shows, trade missions, market promotion, and market studies had on expanding market access and increasing sales?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, focus groups
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
Due to the pandemic some trade fairs were virtual. What was the impact of participation on virtual trade fairs?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, focus groups
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews

Did program interventions had an impact in increasing the value and volume of exports? Has increasing the value and volume of exports altered the scale, composition or structure of value chains?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and direct observation
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and direct observation
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, and direct observation
Has the introduction of new export products altered the scale, composition or structure of value chains?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations		✓				Quantitative surveys and direct observation
	Private Enterprises	✓		✓			Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, and direct observation

Has the development of new markets altered the scale, composition or structure of value chains?	Agriculture Producers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and direct observation
	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and direct observation
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, and direct observation
How has improving marketing and branding, particularly in tropical avocado impacted exportable product volumes, market access and export sales?	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews

<p>How has the training of beneficiaries to identify market trends and requirements in dried fruit impacted their participation in export markets and their sales/exports?</p>	<p>Private Enterprises</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews</p>
<p>Has training beneficiaries in financial and accounting management and e-commerce led to organizational improvements and improved commercial performance (sales, exports)?</p>	<p>Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations</p>		<p>✓</p>				<p>Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews</p>
	<p>Private Enterprises</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews</p>

To what extent did improved marketing of agricultural products contribute to an increase in access to markets to sell agricultural products?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
Has the implementation of initiatives to ensure inclusive growth and diversity within the export sector, e.g. Young Exporters Network and Networking for Women in Trade Leadership led to increased partnerships among membership that yielded greater lobbying power?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, focus groups and key informant interviews
	People in Firms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, focus groups
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, and key informant interviews
	People in Government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Key informant interviews

<p>Has the promotion of cocoa and chocolate through activities like the National Chocolate Competition and Festival lead to a discernible impact on the chocolate industry and exports?</p>	<p>Private Enterprises</p>			<p>✓</p>			<p>Quantitative survey, focus groups and key informant interviews</p>
<p>Activity 3: Improve Cold Chain</p>							
<p>Illustrative Question</p>	<p>Beneficiary Type</p>	<p>Value Chain</p>					<p>Anticipated Data Collection Method</p>
		<p>A</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>C</p>	<p>AV</p>	<p>GV</p>	
<p>To what extent did key players – logistics and export operations actors who transit cargo, like Cold Chain Working Group members - recognize and comply with the program’s cold chain pilot program guidelines and use the related manual?</p>	<p>Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Quantitative survey, focus groups and key informant interviews</p>
	<p>Private Enterprises</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Quantitative survey, focus groups and key informant interviews</p>
	<p>People in Government</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Key informant interviews</p>

What was the impact of the World Food Logistics Cold Chain Institute training?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, focus groups and key informant interviews
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, focus groups and key informant interviews
	People in Government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Key informant interviews
Did cold chain interventions have an effect on other sectors? If so, to what extent?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews
	People in Government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Key informant interviews

Activity 4: In-Kind Grants: Equipment							
Illustrative Question	Beneficiary Type	Value Chain					Anticipated Data Collection Method
		A	P	C	AV	GV	
What impact did in-kind equipment grants have on productivity, e.g. enhanced production volumes?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and direct observation
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, and direct observation
What impact did in-kind equipment grants have on product quality as experienced by the program beneficiaries who used equipment donated by the program?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys and key informant interviews
Did increased productivity from improved equipment increase domestic demand for raw materials? If so, what was that estimated increase?	Ag. Producer Organizations and Trade Associations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, direct observation, and key informant interviews
	Private Enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Quantitative surveys, direct observation, and key informant interviews

Activity 5: Public Information Campaign			
Illustrative Question	Beneficiary Type	Value Chain	Anticipated Data Collection Method
What degree of coverage and outreach was achieved through the Consumer Food Safety Campaign?	People in general	N/A	Record of broadcast media metrics, key informant interviews, and quantitative survey
What were the discernable behavioral changes that may have occurred in particular population segments as a result?	People in general		Record of broadcast media metrics, key informant interviews, and quantitative survey

The Exporting Quality Final Evaluation will be conducted three months prior to project completion, barring any extension. IESC will confirm the timing of the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation with USDA during the first half of 2021.

7. Statement of Work

7.1. Schedule of Authorities

The contractor will report to the U.S.-based IESC Exporting Quality program director headquartered in Washington, D.C. and will provide all IESC approvals of the work product. Other IESC personnel with significant oversight are the Exporting Quality chief of party in the Dominican Republic, and IESC's U.S.-based monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) director. USDA will be a key informant and review the report for clarity, maintaining ultimate approval authority.

7.2. Deliverables

To complete the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation, the contractor will undertake following tasks that include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Final evaluation work plan that describes the following:
 - Understanding of the project based on desk review and kick-off meeting;
 - Final evaluation methodology, including detailed sampling plan, field work plan, and any limitations of the proposed approach;
 - Description of planned quality control measures;
 - Communication protocol with interview subjects related to purpose of interview, the project, and consent for participation and/or inclusion of subject in photograph captured during the study; and,
 - Final timeline.
- Electronic copies of all clean and final versions of data collection tools;
- Clean and final versions of quantitative datasets and qualitative transcripts in agreed upon format;
- A two- to three-page stand-alone brief describing the evaluation design, key findings, and other relevant considerations. The brief will serve to inform any interested stakeholders of the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation, and should be written in language easy to understand by non-evaluators and with appropriate graphics and tables;
- An electronic draft the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation report in English, addressing all evaluation objectives and questions;
- Oral presentation materials of evaluation findings in agreed upon format;

- 15 to 20 high quality pictures of the process;
- An electronic final English version of the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation report in PDF and Word. The report is estimated to range from 30 to 40 pages excluding relevant annexes. The report should include, but not limited to:
 - List of acronyms/abbreviations;
 - Table of contents;
 - Executive summary;
 - Background, which should include a discussion of how project activities changed or adapted because of the COVID-19 pandemic and any other external contextual factors. Background may also include a brief discussion of how the pandemic impacted market dynamics for different value chains. For example, did border closures and other restrictions due to Covid-19, significantly affect export volumes or prices? Did restaurant closures and reduction in tourism affect the internal demand and prices for these commodities significantly?
 - Detailed evaluation methodology;
 - Findings;
 - Lessons Learned;
 - Recommendations for USDA, participants, and key stakeholders;
 - Annexed scope of work;
 - Annexed data collection instruments; and,
 - Annexed photo montage.

The final version of the evaluation report will be made publicly available, including to those with disabilities. Please visit <https://iesc.org/current-procurements/> to download a copy of the USDA/FAS evaluation template designed with accessibility in mind by clicking Exporting Quality Final Evaluation Services - Attachment B: Accessible Evaluation Template. Because the report will be made public, IESC expects the contractor to produce two versions of the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation report, one for public distribution and one for internal use that might contain sensitive information that helps project learning. The public version must not release the following:

- Proprietary information owned by third parties;
- Information that could put individual safety at risk; and
- Personally identifiable information (PII). PII is information that can be used to reasonably infer the identity of an individual, directly or indirectly.

8. Contract Type

The contract is anticipated to be cost plus fixed fee.

9. Instructions to Offerors

9.1. Submission

Offerors must submit both a technical and cost proposal, as described below.

Technical Proposal

The technical proposal should not exceed seven (7) pages and should include the following:

- A cover letter summarizing the applicant’s interest and capacity to implement the Exporting Quality Final Evaluation;
- A description of the recommended evaluation methodology that demonstrates an understanding of Exporting Quality’s expected impact and implementation approach;
- A demonstrated understanding of and experience in USDA Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning policies, guidelines and practices, including details on proposed approach to:
 - Gathering, validating, and analyzing data;
 - Drafting and finalizing reports, considering the need for infographics such as concise data visualizations that convey technical ideas and read well to the layperson;
 - Navigating COVID-19 challenges to data collection.
- Experience in evaluating the development sector, including areas such as agricultural production, post-harvest processing, trade facilitation, and global agricultural value chains;
- Strong experience in applying different quantitative and qualitative methodologies (provide some details of specific assignments, challenges encountered and how the challenges were mitigated);
- List of three references who can attest to your experience and expertise in evaluation. Include contact information (daytime phone numbers and email contacts); and,
- List of the three most recent relevant assignments that you have undertaken, including a description of why these are relevant to this RFP and what learnings were drawn from that assignment.

Cost Proposal

The cost proposal must include a detailed budget for completion of the final evaluation work plan and implementing the final evaluation. Offerors are strongly encouraged to keep this project budget constraint for MEL services in mind as they determine costs. Offerors must complete the budget template found in Attachment C, posted on the IESC procurement website as Attachment C – Evaluation Budget Template_ RFP-DREQ-004-2021. Costs should be broken out to include labor, supplies, travel, subcontracts (if any), indirect costs (if any), fee (if any), and total cost. Offerors must include detailed narrative justifications for each cost in order for IESC to determine cost reasonableness.

Should an offeror propose any subcontractors to perform any portion of the work, such subcontract costs must be proposed separately (on a separate tab of Attachment C), demonstrating clear delineation between prime and subcontractor costs. Offerors must include a detailed budget for any subcontract proposed; this budget and narratives must adhere to the same budgeting format requirements (per Attachment C – Evaluation Budget Template) herein for prime offerors, including cost narratives.

For indirect costs proposed, please include a copy of your organization's Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA), if applicable. Otherwise, should your organization or consulting company not have a NICRA and you are proposing indirect costs, you have the option of proposing a 10 percent de minimus rate, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.414(f). Should an Offeror not have a NICRA and the 10% de minimus rate does not cover its real indirect costs, the Offeror may propose rates in accordance with their audited financials which must be submitted as an Annex to the cost proposal. In this instance, the Offeror must also agree to an independent audit of any resulting contract from this RFP. Such audit costs must be built into the DR EQ Final Evaluation budget as a direct cost line item. Only incorporated businesses (501(c)(3), LLC, etc.) are eligible to charge and be reimbursed for indirect rates. No individual (independent consultant that is not legally incorporated) may propose or be reimbursed for indirect costs.

Offerors must submit their proposals by the closing date and time, as listed on page one, to the following: Lily Alcock, Senior Program Associate, at lalcock@iesc.org.

9.2. Clarification and Amendments

Offerors may request clarification questions via email to lalcock@iesc.org not later than **5:00 p.m., Washington DC Eastern Daylight Time (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**. IESC will not answer questions before the proposal submission deadline outside of the allotted response period for clarifications. No questions will be answered over the phone or in person. Any amendments to the RFP will be posted on the website, and simultaneously emailed to Offerors who have expressed interest.

9.3. Cover Page and Markings

In addition to the required proposal documents listed in sections 10 and 11 below, please include a cover page with your submission for the technical and the cost proposals (separate cover pages). The cover page should be on company letterhead and should contain the following information:

- 1) Project or Title (from the front page of this RFP document)
- 2) Offer Reference Number (from the front page of this RFP document)
- 3) Company Name
- 4) Company Address
- 5) Name of Company's authorized representative
- 6) Contact person if different than Company's representative
- 7) Telephone #, Cellular/Mobile Phone #, Email address
- 8) Duration of Validity of proposal
- 9) Payment terms
- 10) DUNS # (Applies to companies, not to individuals)
- 11) Total Proposed Price (**cover page of cost proposal only**)
- 12) Signature, date, and time

9.4. Table of Contents

Offeror must provide a Table of Contents and organize its proposal as such:

Technical Proposal

- 1) Company background (one [1] page limit)
- 2) Technical and Management Approach (two [2] page limit)
- 3) Past Performance (two [2] page limit)
- 4) Personnel Experience and Capacities (two [2] page limit)
- 5) Attachments, i.e., samples of work, references, and personnel CVs

Cost Proposal

- 1) Executive Summary (one [1] page limit)
- 2) Budget Narrative (three [3] page limit)

3) Budget (Attachment C – Evaluation Budget Template)

10. Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements

A third-party contractor, per USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service’s International Food Assistance Division (IFAD) **Monitoring and Evaluation Policy** (page 7, February 2019) is described below:

- Is financially and legally separate from the participant's organization;
- Has staff with demonstrated knowledge, analytical capability, language skills and experience in conducting evaluations of development projects involving agriculture and trade;
- Uses acceptable analytical frameworks such as comparison with non-project areas, surveys, involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation, data from previous program evaluations, and statistical analyses;
- Uses local consultants, as appropriate, to conduct portions of the evaluation; and,
- Provides a detailed outline of the evaluation, major tasks, and specific schedules prior to initiating the evaluation.

The contractor’s evaluation team, including enumerators, must ensure that the evaluation adheres to ethical guidelines as cited in the FAD Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.¹ Pages 7 to 8 of that policy states the following:

"Monitoring and evaluation activities should appropriately balance the desired creation of evidence with the protection of human subjects, including safeguarding the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants. Evaluators are responsible for applying ethical principles in all stages of the evaluation, and for raising and clarifying ethical matters with stakeholders during the course of the evaluation."

All interested parties will be assessed based on the following:

- Demonstrated knowledge, analytical capability, language skills, and prior experience conducting evaluations of development projects involving agriculture and trade development projects; (experience conducting value chain studies and agricultural diagnostic studies is preferred.)
- Proven ability to use quantitative, qualitative and participatory evaluation methods, with examples and references that can speak to this experience;

¹ For additional guidance, interested parties should review American Evaluation Association’s Guiding Principles for Evaluators: <https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>.

- Experience using of acceptable analytical frameworks such as surveys, stakeholder engagement, and statistical analyses;
- Experience using advanced quantitative and qualitative methodologies;
- Clarity of thought process and writing style, as evidenced in technical proposal;
- Can effectively navigate the required data collection methods considering COVID-19;
- Use local consultants, as appropriate, to conduct portions of the evaluation;
- Fluency in both English and Spanish required;
- Experience with USDA Food for Progress projects preferred; and,
- Previous experience in Dominican Republic preferred.

IESC is looking for the following team composition. IESC encourages offerors to include no more than three key team members in addition to any field support staff consultants:

- **Team Leader.** An experienced international expert with at least seven years of experience working on market assessments and market/trade analysis, and three of those years leading a team; with a Master's degree in economics, agricultural economics, agrobusiness, or related field; with extensive agricultural and/or import/export process research, analytic, and writing skills; with experience leading and conducting evaluations of international development projects and in preparing high quality evaluative reports for same with USDA Food for Progress projects preferred; experience in Dominican Republic or the region highly preferred; ability to travel when in country, COVID permitting; fluent in written and spoken English and Spanish.
- **Researcher.** A local Dominican with at least five years of relevant experience, and an agriculture and economics/statistical background with minimum Bachelor's degree and ability to support team leader; fluent in written and spoken English and Spanish.
- **Enumerators.** The team leader will have the option to hire local consultants to facilitate the fieldwork and translations. Local enumerators could assist with data collection and translation on a short-term, as needed basis and should have at least two years relevant work experience as an enumerator or in conducting/supporting assessments; strong attention to detail; IESC may support recruitment of local enumerators, but the hiring decision will be the responsibility of the contractor.

Note: The applicant may propose a different team composition with clear justification on how the new team composition will benefit the performance of this scope of work.

11. Basis for Award

IESC anticipates that award will be based on best-value principles. Accordingly, award will be made to the technically acceptable Offerors whose proposals provide the greatest overall value to IESC and the USDA FFPr project, price, and other factors considered. Should two or more offers be technically equivalent, IESC may use cost as the determining factor for award. The winning proposal must conform to all solicitation requirements.

To determine best value, proposals will be evaluated on the criteria below. The number of points assigned, totaling 100 points, indicates the relative importance of each individual criterion. Offerors should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant factors that Offerors should address in their proposals; and (b) set the standard against which all proposals will be evaluated.

12. Technical Proposal Evaluation

Please read carefully, the following are instructions for preparing proposals. Proposals must be organized into sections corresponding to the sections presented in **12.1 Technical Evaluation Criteria** and numbered accordingly. Only include the requested information and avoid submitting extra content. Any pages exceeding the page limitation for each section of the proposal may not be evaluated.

The successful offeror must demonstrate its ability to:

- Assess whether the program has achieved the expected results as outlined in the results framework;
- Evaluate program design, implementation, management, and replicability;
- Document lessons learned and recommendations for USDA, program participants, and other key stakeholders for future programs;
- Revisit and aim to answer preliminary evaluation questions on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, including questions that aim to test causal linkages in the program's results framework;
- Assess direct/indirect and intended/unintended impacts.

Proposals shall be written in English with each page numbered consecutively.

12.1. Technical and Management Approach: 2-page limit; possible points 45

Proposals will be scored on their effectiveness to meet the requirements of the program, as outlined in Sections 4, 5, and 6 of this RFP. The technical and management approach is scored based on the following:

- Demonstrated knowledge of Exporting Quality's complex design and context.
- Clear approach to undertaking the requirements of the evaluation, including methodology.
- A detailed description of the approach to undertaking the tasks outlined in Section 7.2 Deliverables.

12.2. Offeror's past performance and references: 2-page limit. Does not include samples of previous work and references, which are submitted as attachments; possible points 30

Past performance is scored based on the following:

- Offeror's record in implementing similar activities to those outlined in Section 7.2 Deliverables, with emphasis on evaluations related to trade, agriculture, and production and post-harvest handling processes.
- Experience conducting research per the requirements of Sections 4, 5, and 6 of this RFP.
- Demonstrated knowledge and application of USDA M&E guidelines and related ethics as demonstrated in the applicant's proposal and based on the three provided professional reference checks.

Offerors should provide as an attachment, **not part of the 2-page limit for past performance**, the following:

- A minimum of three references for past and present work, to include the contact information of three prior or current employers or clients for which the Offeror has completed a similar task. References must include contact information and a brief summary of the relevant work undertaken.
- Samples of previous work.
- Optional: one example of an evaluation report recently completed or any other document that demonstrates strong writing ability. These documents will be handled with the utmost confidentiality.

12.3. Offeror's personnel experience and capacities (2 page limit). Does not include resumes or CVs, which are submitted as attachments; possible points 25

The Offeror must include a description (biographical sketch acceptable) of the individuals, or for companies a minimum of three personnel who would directly work on the activities in the contract. Offerors must submit resumes or CVs as attachments for individuals submitted in this section and **do not count within the page limitations of this section but should be limited to 3 pages per CV**. Additional roles must be identified and described as part of the application, but no CVs are required. Required CVs must be in English. The Offeror must have fluent English and Spanish writing and speaking capacity within the team. The level of effort to complete the tasks outline in Sections 4, 5, and 6 of this proposal shall be determined by the Offeror.

Personnel experience and capacities is scored on the following:

- Extent to which the Offeror or its personnel have the knowledge and skills suitable for the evaluation needs identified in Sections 4, 5, and 6 of this RFP, particularly agriculture experience, and experience with the type of beneficiary groups referenced in Section 6.
- Team Leader's ability to effectively manage small teams to produce outcomes.
- Each proposed individual's ability to work remotely with stakeholders.
- Presentation of the appropriate skills possessed by team as referenced in Section 10. Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements (p. 12, see team composition).

IESC reserves the right to award the contract to the consultant or firm whose proposal is deemed to be in the best interest of IESC and USDA. The specifics of the scope are subject to change in accordance to potential additional input from USDA and the initial agreement with the selected organization discussed and modified accordingly. IESC reserves the right to cancel the contract in full or in part.

The independent consultant or firm with the winning proposal will be notified in writing. Applicants who are not selected will also be notified.

13. Cost Proposal Evaluation Criteria: Must consist of an executive summary (1 page limit); a budget narrative (3 page limit); and budget using the IESC budget template (Attachment C – Evaluation Budget Template).

The Offeror shall submit a separate cost proposal, proposed in accordance with Provision 9.1 "Cost Proposal," to include the project cost of performing the evaluations.

All proposed costs must be in accordance with the U.S. Government Cost Principles under 2 CFR 200, or for for-profit firms Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31.

14. Deviations

IESC reserves the right to waive any deviations by offerors from the requirements of this solicitation that in IESC's opinion are considered not to be material defects requiring rejection or disqualification; or where such a waiver will promote increased competition.

15. Discrepancies

Please read the instructions carefully before submitting your proposal. Any discrepancy in following the instructions or contract provisions may disqualify your proposal without recourse or an appeal for reconsideration at any stage.

16. Conflict of Interest Declaration for the IESC Exporting Quality Final Evaluation Services

The following steps outline IESC's contract selection process and should be understood by all Offerors to ensure the transparency of awards and avoid conflict of interest.

- 1) Request for Proposals (RFPs) are posted on IESC's website. The offer is open to all qualified offerors;
- 2) Clarifications will be emailed to all offerors submitting questions, as well as posted on IESC's website, simultaneously;
- 3) Once the proposals are received, an evaluation committee scores them;
- 4) Cost proposals are evaluated for reasonableness, accuracy, and completeness;
- 5) The best value proposal is selected based on a combination of the technical score and the cost;
- 6) No activity can be started until both IESC and the awardee have signed a formal contract; and,
- 7) IESC policy against fraud and code of business ethics exists throughout the life of the subcontract and beyond. Even if the contract is closed, if any party is found guilty of fraud, IESC will make a full report to the USDA Office of Inspector General,

which may choose to investigate and prosecute guilty parties to the fullest extent of the law.

Any contracts awarded will be required to comply with all administrative standards and provisions required by USDA.

-END-