

# Request for Proposals (RFP)

## Evaluation Services for IESC

<b>Issue Date:</b>	<b>02 December 2022</b>
<b>Closing Date For Proposals:</b>	<b>09 January 2023</b>
<b>Closing Time:</b>	<b>8:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)</b>
<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>Evaluation Services For IESC Trade Safe Project</b>
<b>RFP Reference Number:</b>	<b>IESC-TRASA-2022-002</b>
<b>Estimated Award Value:</b>	<b>Not To Exceed 340,000 USD</b>

### 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 implementor of the Food for Progress Trade Safe (TraSa) project in the Dominican Republic funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). IESC is seeking a third-party contractor to conduct the project's required mid-term and final evaluations during the life of the TraSa project.

IESC desires to receive proposals from companies (Offerors) to conduct the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation and TraSa Final Evaluation during the life of the project.

IESC plans to award one contract. IESC will award the contract for the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation with an option period for the TraSa Final Evaluation. IESC will award the option period award based on the performance of the previous evaluation and exercised by modification to the base contract.

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 making an award.

Note that proposal notification, award, and start dates are subject to change at USDA or IESC's discretion. Any activities under a final agreement are subject to and will be carried

out in accordance with the regulations promulgated by the donor under the Office of Management and Budget guidance at 2 CFR part 200, as supplemented by 2 CFR part 400 and 7 CFR part 1499, other regulations that are generally applicable to grants and cooperative agreements of USDA, including the applicable regulations set forth in 2 CFR chapter I, II, and IV, and any other subsequently published rule or regulation governing the project.

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 contract resulting from this RFP will be a cost-plus fixed-fee contract. IESC's estimated cost for each evaluation is \$120,000 to \$170,000.

## **2. Background**

IESC is a leading U.S. nonprofit organization that fosters private sector development in the economically developing world. Since 1964, we have delivered lasting solutions that have resulted in more than 1.5 million jobs in 137 countries. We partner with businesses, cooperatives, entrepreneurs, jobseekers, and governments to sustainably build capacity, create jobs, and grow enterprises, sharing proven skills and experience that improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the world. Our major funders today are the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), among others.

TraSa is improving the efficiency, coordination, and transparency of the trade, commercialization, and safety of food and agricultural products. TraSa is facilitating these improvements by supporting the implementation of science and risk-based sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, standards, and regulations. SPS and food safety issues are a significant barrier to the DR's access to high-value markets, a major factor limiting agricultural production, and a risk to consumer health. By addressing these issues, the project expands the DR's local, regional, and international trade in agricultural products; increases agricultural productivity; and improves consumer access to safe foods. To achieve these objectives, TraSa is building farm and institutional capacity in SPS, improving the application of the SPS risk management system at the border, and leveraging \$2.28 million in private sector investment to further develop cold chain systems.

With an estimated value of \$13.7 million in technical and management funds, the 5-year project runs from October 2020 through September 2025. TraSa identified four key

activities that together address the needs, challenges, and constraints in the import and export processes. These activities are summarized as follows:

**Activity 1: Capacity Building: Promote Improved Policy and Regulatory**

**Framework.** IESC builds the capacity of Dominican government institutions to develop a modernized SPS and food safety related policy and regulatory framework to respond to the needs of the Dominican Republic's trade agreements and international best practices. IESC is assessing the legal and institutional framework for SPS policy; building the capacity of the National SPS Committee, supporting the National SPS Committee address priority issues; and, providing technical assistance, including the delivery of training, to National SPS Committee members to facilitate SPS-related process reforms. IESC also supports the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in the development of policies required to implement the SPS-related aspects of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement including test procedures, risk management systems, border agency cooperation, and trade in perishable goods (including cold chain). IESC is building public sector capacity to effectively engage the private sector and other stakeholders in policy reform initiatives and knowledge sharing. For this activity, beneficiaries include national public-private coordinating committees, government agencies, universities, and trade associations.

**Activity 2: Capacity Building: Government Institutions.** IESC is building the capacity of government institutions to implement science and risk-based SPS and food safety measures, standards, and regulations to facilitate trade in food and agricultural products. While the beneficiary focus for this Activity is with government institutions, IESC engages and leverages private organizations in the development of evidence based applied research and other products to build and sustain this effort and encourage collaboration. IESC is assessing government institutional capacity in SPS; providing training to public sector employees, including lab technicians, on implementation of SPS and food safety systems; and supporting the public sector in implementing plans to address national priorities. IESC will work with the Dominican Government to improve the single window into a more fully integrated risk management system at the interagency level to result in increased efficiency and transparency of trade. IESC is also developing a research collaboration and professional development initiative between government institutions and university systems to build a sustainable community of practice around SPS issues and support the public sector. IESC provides technical assistance and training to Customs, the Ministry of Agriculture, and other ministries, agencies, and border agencies as appropriate to implement SPS-related risk management systems at the border and maintain cold chain while conducting inspections. For this activity, beneficiaries include public institutions and public sector employees involved in SPS, food safety, and trade facilitation.

**Activity 3: Cold Chain Improvement.** IESC manages sub grants for the development of cold chain infrastructure to enable implementation of SPS and food safety standards. IESC has assessed market opportunities for cold chain investments, facilitated public private partnerships to catalyze market driven investment in cold chain systems while also targeting pragmatic low-cost solutions for farmers. This includes small equipment grants for farmer cooperatives and small businesses, awarded through a competitive process. IESC provides training in cold chain technologies and practices, as well as supports cold

chain traceability systems. Beneficiaries of this activity are in the private sector, including airport and seaport operators, transportation and logistics companies, warehousing and storage facility operators, importers, exporters, wholesalers, major retailers, aggregators, producer cooperatives, and farmers.

**Activity 4: Training: Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards.** IESC provides training to private sector firms, farmers, labs, and consumers. The activity supports the private sector's understanding of and compliance with international SPS and food safety standards. The training to farmers and firms includes SPS and food safety practices, such as integrated pest management, post-harvest handling, and good agricultural practices/good manufacturing practices, as well as use of traceability technology and the single window (VUCE) and other applicable systems. IESC also provides technical assistance to private labs conducting SPS and food safety testing in accordance with international standards as well as other applicable systems. IESC raises consumer awareness of food safety through media campaigns. Beneficiaries of this activity include producers, firms, private labs, and consumers.

Private sector beneficiaries of Activities 3 and 4 are primarily, but not limited to, producers, transporters, aggregators, exporters, and other enterprises involved with the following priority value chains: tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, avocado, papaya, eggplant, pineapple, limes, poultry, and swine.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

TraSa's theory of change is **if** Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and food safety policies across government agencies and the private sector are prioritized and coordinated by technically strengthened national organizing bodies; and **if** key agencies in government institutions have increased technical and managerial capacity to implement a science- and risk-based SPS and food safety system; and **if** appropriate cold chain infrastructure for enforcement of and compliance with SPS and food safety is in place; and **if** firms and farmers consistently apply knowledge gained from SPS-related training and technical assistance, **then** the safety of food and agricultural products and efficiencies in trade are improved and result in expanded domestic, regional, and international trade in agricultural products as well as increased agricultural productivity.

## PROJECT PARTICIPANTS/BENEFICIARIES

TraSa has a life of project target of 7,111 participants and/or beneficiaries directly participating USDA-funded interventions, including those the project reaches directly, those reached as part of a deliberate service strategy, and those participating in the markets the project strengthens. Please see below the disaggregation of the type of individuals.

Type of Participant/Beneficiary	Number of Individuals
People in Government	1,393
Proprietors	1,405

<b>People in Civil Society</b>	97
<b>Laborers</b>	1,124
<b>Non-Smallholder producers</b>	3,092
<b>Total Number of individuals participating in USDA food security projects</b>	<b>7,111</b>

TraSa operates at the national level and beneficiaries are from across the country. The most intensive work is with national government agencies located in Santo Domingo. TraSa also engages in work related to cold chain market opportunities and/or application of risk-based inspections at key points of entry, including but not limited to the seaports of Haina, Caucedo, and Manzanillo, the airports of Santo Domingo, Punta Cana, and Santiago, and border-crossing with Haiti at Dajabon and Independencia.

The provinces where the producers and harvesters of priority crops for exporting are located are San Juan, Santiago, La Vega, Espaillat, Valverde, Hermanas Mirabal, Peravia, Sanchez Ramirez, San Cristobal, Monseñor Nouel, Monte Plata, and San José de Ocoa. The slaughterhouses where the poultry and pork/swine are processed for domestic trade are primarily located in Santiago, Espaillat, Hermanas Mirabal, Valverde, La Vega, Monseñor Nouel, Santo Domingo, Monte Plata, San Juan, and la Romana.

### 3. Period of Performance

IESC is seeking a third-party contractor (contractor) to conduct two required evaluations during the life of the project as referenced above. IESC will award the contract for the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation with an option period for final evaluation. The anticipated dates of the TraSa Mid-Term and Final Evaluations are as follows:

- TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation due March 30, 2023, conducted over the period of January to March 2023; and
- TraSa Final Evaluation, due June 30, 2025, conducted over the period of May to July 2025.

The period of performance of any contract resulting from this solicitation is anticipated to begin on or about January 3, 2023, but is dependent upon USDA’s approval of the contract award. The duration of the contract is until the TraSa project ends in September 2025, unless the option period is not exercised.

#### Anticipated Timeline:

<b>Evaluation Stage &amp; Deliverables</b>	<b>Evaluation Timeline</b>	<b>Deliverable Due Date</b>
<b>TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation</b>	<b>February – May 2023</b>	<b>May 15, 2023</b>
1. Desk Research and methodology development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplan</li> </ul>	February 1 – 14, 2023	January 14, 2023

Evaluation Stage & Deliverables	Evaluation Timeline	Deliverable Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In country travel schedule</li> </ul>		January 14, 2023
2. Design, pilot and finalize field research tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft data collection tools</li> <li>Final data collection tools</li> </ul>	February 14 – 30, 2023	January 20, 2023 January 30, 2023
3. Recruit and train enumerators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment completed</li> <li>Training completed</li> </ul>	February 14 – March 7, 2023	January 30, 2023 February 7, 2023
4. Field research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trip report</li> </ul>	March 8 – April 8, 2023	March 15, 2023
5. Data analysis	April 9 – 15, 2023	
6. Draft Evaluation Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit draft to IESC</li> <li>Address IESC Comments (Potential 2 or 3 rounds of comments)</li> <li>Draft submitted to USDA</li> </ul>	April 9 – May 5, 2023	March 30, 2023  April 15, 2023
7. Finalize Evaluation Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MS PowerPoint slides and handouts</li> <li>Final clean data set including personally identifiable information (PII)</li> <li>Final clean data set excluding PII</li> <li>Address USDA and IESC comments (potential multiple rounds of comments)</li> <li>Final internal and public versions of evaluation report submitted to USDA</li> </ul>	May 5 – May 15, 2023	May 15, 2023 May 15, 2023 May 15, 2023  May 15, 2023*
<b>TraSa Final Evaluation</b>	<b>March 2025 – June 2025</b>	<b>June 30, 2025</b>
1. Desk Research and methodology development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workplan</li> <li>In country travel schedule</li> </ul>	March 1 – 14, 2025	March 14, 2025 March 14, 2025
2. Design, pilot and finalize field research tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft data collection tools</li> <li>Final data collection tools</li> </ul>	March 14 – 31, 2025	March 24, 2025 March 31, 2025
3. Recruit and train enumerators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment completed</li> <li>Training completed</li> </ul>	March 14 – April 7	March 31, 2025 April 7, 2025
4. Field research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trip report</li> </ul>	April 7 – April 25, 2025	April 25, 2025
5. Data analysis	April 25 – May 2, 2025	
6. Draft Evaluation Report	May 2 – June 6, 2025	

Evaluation Stage & Deliverables	Evaluation Timeline	Deliverable Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit draft to IESC</li> <li>• Address IESC Comments (Potential 2 or 3 rounds of comments)</li> <li>• Draft submitted to USDA</li> </ul>		May 23, 2025  June 6, 2025
7. Finalize Evaluation Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MS PowerPoint slides and handouts</li> <li>• Final clean data set including PII</li> <li>• Final clean data set excluding PII</li> <li>• Address USDA and IESC comments (potential multiple rounds of comments)</li> <li>• Final internal and public versions of evaluation report submitted to USDA</li> </ul>	June 6 - 30, 2025	June 30, 2025 June 30, 2025 June 30, 2025  June 30, 2025*

*\* This date is illustrative and may be extended based on timing of receipt of USDA comments on draft report.*

The successful contractor will be tasked with planning and generating the TraSa Final Evaluation provided the prior evaluation was delivered on time and with the quality expected by IESC and USDA.

The contractor will conduct the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation close to the project’s midpoint. The contractor must be prepared for at least 2 to 3 rounds of comments on the draft Mid-Term Evaluation report<sup>1</sup> from IESC and USDA. IESC will submit the final mid-term evaluation report to USDA.

#### **4. Evaluation Objectives and Scope Statement**

In compliance with USDA’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy, IESC TraSa’s contractor will conduct the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation and Final Evaluation. The overall objectives of the TraSa evaluations are to impartially evaluate the TraSa project performance plan indicators and progress against indicator-related baselines and targets.

The TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation will critically and objectively review and take stock of the project’s implementing experience and environment, assess whether targeted

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<sup>1</sup> The contractor is expected to produce two versions of the evaluation reports: 1) an internal copy which may include sensitive yet relevant information, and 2) a public version free of PII and proprietary information.

beneficiaries are receiving services as expected, assess to what extent the project is on track to achieve its stated goals and objectives, review the results frameworks (Annex A) and assumptions, document initial lessons learned, and discuss necessary modifications or mid-course corrections that may be necessary to effectively and efficiently meet the stated goals and objectives. The evaluation will examine both administrative and programmatic aspects of TraSa related to data capture, measurement, and intervention impact.

The purpose of the TraSa Final Evaluation is to assess whether the project has achieved the expected results as outlined in the results frameworks. The scope will include evaluating the TraSa project design, implementation, management, and replicability; documenting lessons learned and recommendations within the TraSa project's scope of work for USDA, project participants, and other key stakeholders for future projects; assessing the quality of MEL data reported, and revisiting some of the mid-term evaluation questions, including assessing (in)direct, (un)intended, and positive/negative impacts.

The successful offeror must demonstrate its ability to the following:

- Undertake a comprehensive approach to evaluating project performance and impact, including proposing key evaluation questions that aim to assess sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, standards, and regulations. Propose, design, and manage data collection methodologies and approach to data analysis; and
- Highlight learning as a key focus for the project and demonstrate how TraSa will build evidence to help answer at least two key learning questions from the FFPr Learning Agenda<sup>2</sup>, which may include but not be limited to the questions below. Final list and number must be determined by IESC with input from USDA in advance of each evaluation.
  - **Priority Learning Question #3:** What models of collaboration among local and international actors, including donors, private sector partners, academic institutions, and NGOs, are effective in supporting policy change [and associated institutional capacity development]?
  - **Priority Learning Question #22:** What policies or actions are effective in enforcing food safety standards to ensure public health?

The contractor's evaluation team for each evaluation will include various positions, all of which will have a detailed scope of work. The positions and relevant qualifications for each

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<sup>2</sup> The FFPr Learning Agenda can be found at the following link:  
[https://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/learning\\_agenda\\_final.pdf](https://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/learning_agenda_final.pdf)

are described below under Section 8, Qualifications and Technical Criteria Requirements. 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.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.1. Audience and Key Stakeholders**

Since organizational learning is a key focus of evaluations at USDA, as well as at IESC, the primary audience of the mid-term and final evaluations is USDA staff, IESC's TraSa staff, key government agency staff—including those at the National SPS Committee, the NTFC, DIA, Department of Plant Health, Department of Animal Health, DIGEMAPS, DECA, and Customs and other border agencies; private sector participants and beneficiaries, e.g., farmers, packinghouses, slaughterhouses, importers, research universities, trade associations, and private sector testing labs; partners (WFLO-GCCA, Purdue University, LixCap, CEDAF); other implementers, e.g., IDB-funded Agricultural Health and Innovation project; IESC worldwide; and the development community in general.

USDA will make all final versions of the evaluation reports publicly available. IESC and the contractor will ensure public copies of the evaluation reports are free of personally identifiable information (PII) and proprietary information.

### **5. Statement Of Work**

#### **5.1. Schedule of Authorities**

The contractor will report to the IESC associate vice president (AVP). The HO MEL Director will be engaged in quality control of all aspects of the evaluations. The TraSa senior management team and staff will support the contractor as required. This includes the TraSa chief of party, and TraSa monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) director and technical Leads on all activities as required.

#### **5.2. Activities**

The IESC TraSa contractor will operate according to the approved TraSa Evaluation Plan. The evaluations will employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods (surveys, focus group discussions with and direct observation of target beneficiaries, and key informant interviews with government officials and relevant public/private stakeholders, as well as IESC TraSa project staff and USDA representatives).

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<sup>3</sup> For additional guidance, interested parties should review American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators: <https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>

The mid-term evaluation methodology and tools for collection of key data should be designed to ensure that the mid-term evaluation results can be compared to the baseline<sup>4</sup> and monitoring data where possible. The final evaluation methodology and tools for collection of key data should be designed to ensure that the final evaluation results can be compared to the baseline and mid-term evaluations and monitoring data where possible.

The contractor will finalize survey design and interview questions in conjunction with IESC TraSa. An overview of the methodology for each of the evaluations are as follows:

### **5.2.1 MID-TERM EVALUATION**

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to critically and objectively assess TraSa's implementing experience and the implementing environment; determine whether targeted beneficiaries are receiving services as expected; determine whether TraSa is on track to meet its stated goals and objectives; review the project-level results frameworks and assumptions; assess the quality of data submitted to USDA; document initial lessons learned; and discuss necessary modifications or mid-course corrections. The scope of the evaluation will assess the relevance of interventions, provide an early signal of the effectiveness of interventions, and assess sustainability.

The TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation objectives are as follows:

1. Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of service delivery, the strengths and weaknesses of project implementation and management, and the quality of outputs, in terms of adherence to terms agreed to by USDA, and of their acceptability and perceived value to target partners, identifying factors that appear to enhance or detract from the quality, acceptability, and usefulness of implementation, outputs and outcomes;
2. Present evidence of changes (intended and unintended, positive and negative) associated with project interventions and outputs, assess how well the observed changes reflect the theory of change and results framework, identify factors in the implementation or context that impede or promote the observed and intended changes; and
3. Recommend adjustments, if and as necessary, to the theory of change or results framework, activity design, resource allocation, activity management, M&E plan, or implementation that could improve the likelihood of achieving desired results by the project's end, based on the evidence collected and conclusions drawn for the evaluation objectives above.

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<sup>4</sup> TraSa Baseline Study is available at the following link: [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00ZK3D.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZK3D.pdf)

The TraSa Mid-term Evaluation will answer the following preliminary key evaluation questions related to the USDA standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. A final list of questions will be developed in consultation with the project's senior leadership and USDA prior to the commencement of the evaluation field work:

Research Questions	Project Participants / Source of Data	Suggested Data Collection Method
<p><b>Relevance:</b> To what extent have TraSa activities to date addressed the core issues of target beneficiaries?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify TraSa related core issues of participants</li> <li>2. How successful were TraSa activities</li> <li>3. How have activities impacted core issues identified for each group of TraSa participants</li> </ol>	<p>1 - 3                      People in Govt;                      Proprietors;                      People in Civil Society;                      Laborers;                      Non-smallholder Producers</p>	<p>1 - 3                      KII                      Survey                      FGD</p>
<p><b>Effectiveness:</b> Is TraSa on track to achieve the specific targets and results established? Which activity or combination of activities has/have the highest potential to be the most effective approach to achieve TraSa's higher-level result of expanded trade through an advanced SPS and food safety system? How effective is TraSa at reaching women beneficiaries and what more could be done to improve women's engagement?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data quality assessment and assessment of progress against targets</li> <li>2. Have (specific) activities been effective in achievement of TraSa's higher-level result of expanded trade through an advanced SPS and food safety system?</li> <li>3. What political considerations have impacted the effectiveness of TraSa activities?</li> <li>4. What percentage of female beneficiaries is TraSa reaching and what could be done to improve female engagement?</li> </ol>	<p>1 - TraSa MEL team and document review;                      2 - 3                      People in Govt;                      Proprietors;                      People in Civil Society;                      Laborers;                      Non-smallholder Producers</p>	<p>1 - Desk Review                      2 - 3                      KII                      Survey                      FGD</p>
<p><b>Efficiency:</b> To what extent are staffing, management, and oversight costs suitable given the number/scope of activities carried out?</p>	<p>Evaluation team assessment based on budget and activity review</p>	<p>Desk Review</p>
<p><b>Sustainability:</b> What factors contribute toward the sustainability of TraSa results and how has TraSa focused on these to date?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What activities are most likely to be sustained past the end of TraSa?</li> </ol>	<p>1 - 4                      People in Govt                      Proprietors</p>	<p>1 - 4                      KII                      Survey</p>

Research Questions	Project Participants / Source of Data	Suggested Data Collection Method
2. What has TraSa done to improve the sustainability of results? 3. What can TraSa do to improve the sustainability of results? 4. What external factors have influenced the sustainability of Trasa results?	People in Civil Society Laborers Non-smallholder Producers	FGD
<b>Impact:</b> What are the immediate-, medium-, and long-term effects, both intended and unintended as well as positive and negative, of TraSa to-date? 1. Examine by activity	People in Govt Proprietors People in Civil Society Laborers Non-smallholder	FGD
<b>Other:</b> To what extent have COVID-19-related restrictions or protocols, both domestic and international, affected TraSa implementation?	People in Govt Proprietors People in Civil Society Laborers Non-smallholder	KII Survey

The mid-term evaluation contractor will be encouraged to use a mixed methods approach,<sup>5</sup> including but not limited to quantitative surveys, focus group discussions with and direct observation of target beneficiaries, and interviews with government officials and relevant public/private stakeholders, including project staff and USDA. Although COVID-19 related-risks have decreased, the evaluation contractor must assess the situation and include any COVID-19 considerations in its data collection methodology.

The final mid-term evaluation design will be developed with the evaluation contractor and will use the most rigorous but appropriate and feasible methodology.

The stages of the mid-term evaluation include the following:

1. Desk Research
2. Design, pilot and finalize field research tools
3. Recruit and train enumerators
4. Field research
5. Data analysis
6. Draft Evaluation Report
7. Finalize Evaluation Report

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<sup>5</sup> USDA FAS –FAD M&E policy page 7 states “Mixed methods approaches should most often be used including both qualitative and quantitative methods to the extent possible and practical.”

The contractor will develop and operate according to a pre-defined and approved work plan and will employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, which will include review of secondary data from international organizations and government of DR sources. In addition to existing secondary data, the contractor will employ quantitative surveys, focused group discussions, direct observation, and key informant interviews of key stakeholders including USDA representatives, TraSa project team, key government officials, and representatives of relevant private organizations.

The tools for collection of key data will consist of closed and open-ended instruments. The quantitative sample size of beneficiaries will be designed to reflect the project population of beneficiaries for each of the activities and will ensure a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent margin of error. Estimated sample size for each beneficiary group are provided in the table below.

Type of Participant/Beneficiary	Number of Individuals	Estimated Sample size
<b>People in Government Proprietors</b>	1,393	302
<b>People in Civil Society</b>	1,405	302
<b>Laborers</b>	97	78
<b>Non-Smallholder producers</b>	1,124	287
<b>Total Number of individuals participating in USDA food security projects</b>	3,092	342
	<b>7,111</b>	

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., project annual work plans, performance monitoring plan (PMP), evaluation plan (EP), baseline study, and semi-annual reports. The contractor will assess the situation and include any COVID-19 considerations in its data collection methodology as needed. The contractor is expected to follow any IESC and DR public health protocols related to COVID-19 as or if applicable during the time of the respective evaluation.

TraSa project staff will assist with site visit coordination once the contractor determines the sample of beneficiaries to visit, including providing contact data of beneficiaries and sensitizing beneficiaries to the evaluation (telling them that they may be contacted by evaluators, that IESC and USDA support the evaluation, and to be open and candid with evaluators). The contractor, through their local consultants, will reach all targeted collaborating organizations and a minimum stratified sample size calculated based on the total anticipated beneficiary population. This is a performance evaluation and is intended to verify contributions and plausible links between impact/effect and TraSa activities

through contribution analysis rather than scientific attribution through randomized impact evaluations.

The concept of plausible association does not mean X input equals Y output. Rather, it means a case can be made that X input has materially affected Y output. 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 TraSa is making to the observed results through an increased understanding of why the observed results have occurred (or not) and the roles played by TraSa 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 TraSa 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 project'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.

The sampling methodology should mirror the methodology at baseline to the extent possible. The estimated sample size will be designed to reflect a representative sample for each type of beneficiary population. It will ensure a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 to 10 percent margin of error.

### **5.2.2 FINAL EVALUATION**

In addition to the purpose and scope described in section 3, the TraSa Final Evaluation must also determine whether recommendations from the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation were incorporated into the project and if not, why not? This TOR will be updated and reviewed by USDA before the final evaluation begins.

The TraSa Final Evaluation will answer the following preliminary key evaluation 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 project's senior leadership and USDA prior to the commencement of the evaluation field work:

**Relevance:** To what extent did the TraSa project design address the core issues of target beneficiaries? How were existing relevant USDA and U.S. government activities leveraged?

**Effectiveness:** To what extent did TraSa achieve the specific targets and results established? Which activity or combination of activities proved to be the most effective approach to achieve the TraSa's higher-level results (expanded local, regional, and international trade)? To what extent did TraSa activities influence women and youth involvement in the SPS, food safety, and trade facilitation space?

**Efficiency:** To what extent did the level of TraSa resources lead to the achievement of results? Could the same results be achieved with fewer resources?

**Sustainability:** What is the likelihood that TraSa benefits will endure over time after TraSa ends? To what extent has TraSa 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 TraSa's results?

The TraSa Final Evaluation questions will be finalized with the IESC TraSa project team and USDA prior to the commencement of the evaluation.

The methodology for the TraSa Final Evaluation includes a combination of quantitative surveys; focus group discussions with, and direct observation of target beneficiaries; and key informant interviews with government officials and relevant public and private stakeholders including IESC TraSa staff and USDA. As in the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation, the evaluation contractor will assess the situation at that time and include any COVID-19 considerations in its data collection methodology as needed. The details around survey design, interview questions, and sampling will be confirmed in conjunction with the evaluation contractor. The Final Evaluation will seek to assess impact by establishing *plausible association* through **contribution analysis** rather than scientific attribution

through randomized impact evaluations. TraSa 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.

The TraSa Final Evaluation will be planned at least six months prior to completion of the project with a tentative final due date of June 30, 2025, barring any extension, with the draft terms of reference submitted to USDA, through IESC, at least three months prior to the start of the evaluation. IESC will confirm the timing of the TraSa Final Evaluation with USDA at the start of the project Year 5 (October 2024). IESC will update this TOR and submit it to USDA for approval before the final evaluation commences. IESC will include the final approved terms of reference as part of the extension modification.

### 5.3. Deliverables

#### 5.3.1 TRASA MID-TERM EVALUATION

The TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation deliverables from the contractor include but are not limited to the following:

- i. **TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation Work Plan**, which details the methodology, quality control plan, communication protocol, timeline, and Gantt chart.
  - a. Understanding of the project based on desk review and kick-off meeting.
  - b. TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation methodology including detailed sampling plan, field work plan, and any limitations of the proposed approach.
  - c. Planned quality control measures.
  - d. 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.
  - e. Final timeline.
  - f. A Gantt chart reflective of the narrative that includes an action timeline by week, output, and team owner, as well as IESC support if required.
- ii. **Electronic copies of draft data collection tools in English**, for review and comment.
  - a. Tools will be accompanied by a matrix highlighting all research questions, groups of beneficiaries and actual survey questions.
- iii. **Electronic copies of all clean and final versions of data collection tools in English**, which must incorporate IESC comments.
- iv. **In-country travel schedule** including, but not limited to, local travel dates and locations and planned meeting descriptions with potential participants.
- v. **TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation Stand-Alone Brief** describing the evaluation design, key findings, and other relevant considerations. The brief, which should be two-to-three pages in length, will serve to inform any interested stakeholders of the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation, and should be written in language that is easy to understand by non-evaluators and with appropriate graphics and tables.

- vi. **Detailed Trip Log** following international travel to the DR by the contractor for in-country data collection efforts. Trip log must include backup of reimbursable expenses, which could include the following:
  - a. Proof of compliance with "Fly America" regulations.<sup>6</sup>
  - b. Full receipts or other proof of lodging.
  - c. Proof of meals and incidental expenses rates using current U.S. State Department per diem rates for the DR.
- vii. **Draft TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation Report** in English, addressing all evaluation objectives and questions. The report will be in Microsoft Word in the USDA FAS IFAD Evaluation Template, which will be provided by IESC. The report is estimated to range from 30 to 60 pages excluding relevant annexes. It must include the following:
  - a. List of acronyms/abbreviations.
  - b. Table of contents.
  - c. Executive summary.
  - d. Background.
  - e. Detailed evaluation methodology.
  - f. Project Database Audit Findings.
  - g. Evaluation Findings.
  - h. IESC response to Findings (IESC to provide).
  - i. Suggestions and requests from beneficiaries.
  - j. Recommendations for the remainder of the project.
  - k. Annexed scope of work.
  - l. Annexed overview of performance for each indicator.
  - m. Annexed export statistics.
  - n. Annexed data collection instruments.
  - o. Annexed org chart.
  - p. Annexed CV of team leader.
  - q. Annexed photographs from meetings.
- viii. **PowerPoint Slides and any applicable electronic handouts** summarizing the evaluation findings in the IESC TraSa template. The contractor will make an oral presentation of this deliverable to USDA and IESC TraSa senior management. The presentation should be an hour and include 20 to 25 slides. An initial review shall be completed in-country at the completion of the field assignment, the final presentation delivered at the completion of the report.
- ix. **20 to 30 high-quality pictures** of the process, which are dated and time stamped. Written consent must be provided for all photographed persons and the photographer.
- x. **Clean and Final Version of All Quantitative Datasets and Qualitative Data** in an agreed upon format as appropriate, presented as an annex to the draft report.
- xi. **Clean and Final Version of All Quantitative Datasets and Qualitative Data** in an agreed upon format as appropriate, presented as an annex to the draft report with all PII removed.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/travel-management-policy/fly-america-act>

- xii. **Final TraSa Internal Mid-Term Evaluation Report** in English in PDF and MS Word for internal IESC use. The report should include but is not limited to the elements described under deliverable vii. Draft TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation Report. Note: The report might go through a series of reviews by USDA. The contractor should be prepared to respond to USDA's comments, for potentially multiple rounds of review and comment, before IESC approves the report as final.
- xiii. **Final TraSa Public Mid-Term Evaluation Report** in English in PDF and MS Word for public distribution. This version must not contain any proprietary information owned by third parties; information that could put individual safety at risk; and PII. PII is information that can be used to reasonably infer the identity of an individual, directly or indirectly.
  - a. The public version of the evaluation report should be accessible to persons with disabilities.<sup>7</sup> The report should include but is not limited to the elements described under deliverable vii. Draft TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation Report. Note: The report might go through a series of reviews by USDA. The contractor should be prepared to respond to USDA's comments, for potentially multiple rounds of review and comment, before IESC approves the report as final.

The final version of the evaluation report will be made publicly available. Final versions of evaluation reports ready for publication should be accessible to persons with disabilities.<sup>8</sup> The contractor is expected to produce an internal copy of the mid-term evaluation report, which may include sensitive yet relevant information, as well as a public version free of PII and proprietary information.

### 5.3.2 TRASA FINAL EVALUATION

Note: Deliverables beyond the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation section are subject to the contract extension period represented as an option period exercised at IESC's discretion and based on the contractor's performance on the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation.

The TraSa Final Evaluation deliverables from the contractor include but are not limited to the following:

- i. **TraSa Final Evaluation Work Plan**, which details the methodology, quality control plan, communication protocol, timeline, and Gantt chart. The TraSa Final Evaluation work plan must describe the following:

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<sup>7</sup> For guidance on creating documents accessible to persons with disabilities, please see the following resources: <https://www.section508.gov/create/documents>  
<https://www.section508.gov/create/pdfs>

<sup>8</sup> For guidance on creating documents accessible to persons with disabilities, please see the following resources: <https://www.section508.gov/create/documents>  
<https://www.section508.gov/create/pdfs>

- a. Understanding of the project based on desk review and kick-off meeting.
  - b. Final evaluation methodology, including detailed sampling plan, field work plan, and any limitations of the proposed approach.
  - c. Description of planned quality control measures.
  - d. 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.
  - e. Final timeline.
  - f. A Gantt chart reflective of the narrative that includes an action timeline by week, output, and team owner, as well as IESC support if required.
- ii. **Electronic copies of draft data collection tools in English**, for review and comment.
    - a. Tools will be accompanied by a matrix highlighting all research questions, groups of beneficiaries and actual survey questions.
  - iii. **Electronic copies of all clean and final versions of data collection tools in English**, which must incorporate IESC comments.
  - iv. **In-country travel schedule** including, but not limited to, local travel dates and locations and planned meeting descriptions with potential participants.
  - v. **TraSa Final Evaluation Stand-Alone Brief** describing the evaluation design, key findings, and other relevant considerations. The brief will serve to inform any interested stakeholders of the TraSa Final Evaluation, and the contractor must write in language easy to understand for non-evaluators and with appropriate infographics and tables.
  - vi. **Detailed Trip Log** following international travel to the DR by the contractor for in-country data collection efforts. Trip log must include backup of reimbursable expenses, which could include the following:
    - a. Proof of compliance with "Fly America" regulations.<sup>9</sup>
    - b. Full receipts or other proof of lodging.
    - c. Proof of meals and incidental expenses rates using current U.S. State Department per diem rates for the DR.
  - vii. **Draft TraSa Final Evaluation Report in English**, addressing all evaluation objectives and questions. The report will be in Microsoft Word in the USDA report template, which will be provided by IESC. The report is estimated to range from 60 to 90 pages excluding relevant annexes. It must include the following:
    - a. List of acronyms/abbreviations.
    - b. Table of contents.
    - c. Executive summary.
    - d. Background.
    - e. Detailed evaluation methodology.
    - f. Project Database Audit Findings.
    - g. Evaluation Findings.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/travel-management-policy/fly-america-act>

- h. Review and evaluation of corrective actions implemented by TraSa associated with Mid-term Evaluation recommendations.
  - i. IESC Response to Findings. (IESC to provide).
  - j. Lessons Learned.
  - k. Recommendations for USDA, participants, and key stakeholders.
  - l. Annexed scope of work.
  - m. Annexed overview of performance for each indicator.
  - n. Annexed export statistics.
  - o. Annexed data collection instruments.
  - p. Annexed org chart.
  - q. Annexed CV of team leader.
  - r. Annexed photographs from meetings.
- viii. **PowerPoint Slides and any applicable electronic handouts** summarizing the evaluation findings in the IESC TraSa template. The contractor will make an oral presentation of this deliverable to USDA and IESC TraSa senior management. The presentation should be an hour and include 20 to 25 slides. An initial review shall be completed in-country at the completion of the field assignment, the final presentation delivered at the completion of the report.
- ix. **20 to 30 high-quality pictures** of the process, which are date and time stamped. Written consent must be provided for all photographed persons and the photographer.
- x. **Clean and Final Version of All Quantitative Datasets and Qualitative Data** in an agreed upon format as appropriate, presented as an annex to the draft report.
- xi. **Final TraSa Internal and Public Final Evaluation Report** in English in PDF and MS Word for internal IESC use. The report should include but is not limited to the elements described under deliverable vii. Draft TraSa Final Evaluation.  
Note: The report might go through a series of reviews by USDA. The contractor should be prepared to respond to USDA's comments, for potentially multiple rounds of review and comment, before IESC approves the report as final.
- a. List of acronyms/abbreviations.
  - b. Table of contents.
  - c. Executive summary.
  - d. Background.
  - e. Detailed evaluation methodology.
  - f. Project Database Audit Findings.
  - g. Evaluation Findings.
  - h. Review and evaluation of corrective actions implemented by TraSa associated with Mid-term Evaluation recommendations.
  - i. IESC response to findings.
  - j. Lessons Learned.
  - k. Recommendations for USDA, participants, and key stakeholders.
  - l. Annexed scope of work.
  - m. Annexed overview of performance for each indicator.
  - n. Annexed export statistics.
  - o. Annexed data collection instruments.
  - p. Annexed org chart.
  - q. Annexed CV of team leader.
  - r. Annexed photographs from meetings.

USDA will publish the final public version on USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse

## 6. Contract Type

IESC intends to award a cost-plus fixed fee services contract, to be paid in stages based on deliverables.

## 7. Instructions to Offerors

### 7.1. Submission

Offerors must submit both a technical and cost proposal, as described below in sections 10 and 11.

- 1) Offers received after the closing date may not be considered.
- 2) Offers must be in U.S. Dollars.
- 3) Technical and cost proposals must be submitted as two separate documents. Cost information must not be included in the technical proposal.

Offerors must submit their proposals by the closing date and time, as listed on page one, to the following: [globalawards@iesc.org](mailto:globalawards@iesc.org).

### 7.2. Clarification and Amendments

Offerors may request clarifications via email to [globalawards@iesc.org](mailto:globalawards@iesc.org) not later than **9:00 a.m., Washington DC Eastern Daylight Time (EST) time, on Monday, December 12, 2022**. IESC will provide answers to these questions and requests for clarification asked by all Offerors simultaneously via email and posted on the IESC website with the RFP before the close of business on/or before **Thursday, December 15, 2022**. IESC may 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.

### 7.3. 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) SAM Unique Entity ID # (Applies to companies, not to individuals)
- 11) Total Proposed Price (**cover page of cost proposal only**)
- 12) Signature, date, and time

## 8. Eligibility Requirements

IESC will assess all interested parties based on the following:

- Demonstrated knowledge, analytical capability, language skills, and prior experience conducting evaluations of development projects involving agriculture and trade development projects and/or agricultural value chains;
- Proven ability to use quantitative, qualitative, and participatory evaluation methods, with examples and references that can speak to this experience;
- Experience using acceptable analytical frameworks such as surveys, stakeholder engagement, and statistical analyses;
- Experience using advanced quantitative and qualitative methodologies;
- Knowledge of SPS issues relating to the USA/DR, the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, and related economic impact studies and analyses;<sup>10</sup>
- Experience conducting evaluations of economic growth and trade projects;
- Experience with USDA Food for Progress projects (preferred);

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<sup>10</sup> These may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- WTO. (2015). *Speeding Up Trade: Benefits and Challenges of Implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement*.  
[https://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/booksp\\_e/world\\_trade\\_report15\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/world_trade_report15_e.pdf)
- OECD, WTO. (2019). *The Critical Role of Trade Facilitation in Supporting Economic Diversification and Structural Reforms*.  
[https://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/booksp\\_e/aid4trade19\\_chap6\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/aid4trade19_chap6_e.pdf)
- USAID. (2015). *A Comprehensive Approach to Trade Facilitation and Capacity Building: Connecting Developing Countries to Supply Chains*.  
[https://tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/case-studies/usaaid\\_a\\_comprehensive\\_approach\\_to\\_trade\\_facilitation\\_and\\_capacity\\_building\\_june\\_2015.pdf](https://tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/case-studies/usaaid_a_comprehensive_approach_to_trade_facilitation_and_capacity_building_june_2015.pdf)
- WB. (2019). *The Safe Food Imperative: Accelerating Progress in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30568>

- Fluency in both English and Spanish required;
- Clarity of thought process and writing style, as evidenced in technical proposal;
- Have in-country experience and can effectively navigate the required data collection methods considering COVID-19; and
- Use of local consultants, as appropriate, to conduct portions of the evaluation.

Offeror may be required to present a business license and must have experience conducting evaluations of development projects involving agriculture and trade development projects and/or agricultural value chains. Offerors may need to be registered on the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and obtain a SAM.gov Unique Entity ID number and an eligibility notice prior to receiving any award. Award is contingent upon USDA final approval.

## **9. 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 Food for Progress Trade Safe Project, price, and other factors considered. The winning proposal must conform to all solicitation requirements.

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, IESC will evaluate proposals against the criteria below:

- Evaluation Criteria One: Proposed Evaluative Approach (40 possible points), as described throughout Sections 3 through 6.
- Evaluation Criteria Two: Past Performance (30 possible points), which would demonstrate the knowledge, expertise, and work experiences required in Section 8. Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements.
- Evaluation Criteria Three: Staffing (20 possible points), as outlined in Section 8. Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements.
- Evaluation Criteria Four: Cost (10 possible points), based on best value.

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.

## **10. 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 **10.1 Technical Evaluation Criteria** and numbered accordingly. Please stay in the page limits given below. Only include the requested information and avoid submitting extra content. Any text or pages exceeding the page limitation for each section of the proposal may be redacted and not evaluated.

Proposals will be written in English with each page numbered consecutively. Cover pages, dividers, and tables of contents are not subject to the page limit.

**10.1. Technical Evaluation Criteria**

The following criteria will be used to evaluate and rank the proposals submitted.

Section	Points
<b>Proposed Evaluative Approach</b> (suitable to TraSa’s complex design and context, including methodology, general approach, and detailed approach to each study and evaluation. An implementation/Gantt chart plan should be included for the mid-term evaluation.)	40
<b>Past Performance</b> , related to a similar scope, e.g., evaluations related to trade, agriculture, and import/export processes and 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)	30
<b>Staffing</b> (team with knowledge and skills suitable for TraSa’s evaluation needs, including ability to communicate in English and Spanish)	20
<b>Cost</b> based on best value	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Points will also reflect the overall presentation of the proposal, which should be clear, complete, well organized, and well written. Most importantly, proposals should address all the requirements listed in this RFP.

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 with potential additional input from USDA and the initial agreement with the selected organization discussed and modified accordingly. Contract continuation will be determined upon satisfactory performance in the mid-term evaluation. IESC reserves the right to cancel the contract in full or in part.

The contractor with the winning proposal will be notified in writing. Applicants who are not selected will also be notified.

**[1] Technical approach: 7 pg. limit; possible points 40**

Proposals will be scored on the effectiveness of the proposal to meet the requirements of the TraSa Evaluations, as outlined in **Section 5.2 Activities**.

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

1. A cover letter summarizing the applicant's interest and capacity to implement the TraSa Mid-Term Evaluation and TraSa Final Evaluation;
2. A description of the recommended evaluation methodologies that demonstrates an understanding of TraSa's expected impact and implementation approach;
3. An implementation plan in the form of a one-page Gantt chart, must be included as an annex. The implementation plan must reflect the narrative. The implementation plan must include the action name, timeline by week, output/ milestone, team owner, and IESC support if required.
4. A demonstrated understanding of and experience in USDA Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning policies, guidelines, and practices;
5. Experience in evaluating the development sector, including areas such as
6. agricultural import, export, and goods in transit processes and systems; policy and regulatory reform related to trade facilitation, and global agricultural value chains;
7. Strong experience in applying different quantitative and qualitative methodologies (provide some details of specific assignments, challenges encountered and how the challenges were mitigated);
8. 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.

**[2] Offeror's past performance and references: 3 pg. limit (not including samples of previous work, which may be attachments and/or references); possible points 30**

The proposal must provide a detailed account of the Offeror's record in implementing similar activities to those outlined in the tasks and activities. The technical proposal will include a summary of past performance conducting evaluations of similar Food Aid Programs. Offerors should provide experience in general, and specifically include experience in the evaluation of trade capacity building projects.

This part should include sufficient information to demonstrate the Offeror's performance for the above tasks and activities and include how the overall approach, including problem

solving, is based on extensive prior experience conducting evaluations of development projects involving agriculture and trade development projects and/or agricultural value chains.

Offerors should provide a minimum of three (3) references for past and present projects, to include the contact information (daytime phone numbers and email addresses) of three prior or current employers or clients for which the Offeror has completed a similar evaluation. References must include contact information, which may be attached to the technical proposal and not included in the page limit.

**[3] Staffing: 2 pg. limit (not including resumes or CVs, which are attachments); possible points 20**

The proposal must demonstrate the team possess the knowledge and skills suitable for TraSa's evaluation needs, including ability to communicate in English and Spanish. IESC encourages offerors to include no more than three key team members in addition to any field support staff consultants. IESC is looking for the following team composition.

- **Team Leader**, an experienced international expert (at least ten years of relevant experience) with a background in economics or related field (PhD or Master's degree) with appropriate agricultural and/or import/export process evaluation, research, analytic, and excellent writing skills as well as leadership experience;
- **Food Safety and Trade Facilitation Specialist**, a resident economist or social science researcher (Master's degree preferred) with an analytical background in agricultural health and food safety. Knowledge and experience in evaluation, trade facilitation, food safety, and agricultural value chain processes and systems preferred. The specialist should have at least eight years of relevant experience; will support the team leader in the evaluation design, implementation of evaluation activities, and report preparation;
- **Researcher**, a resident with at least five years of relevant experience, an agriculture and economics/statistical background (Bachelors or master's degree), and ability to support team leader; and
- **Field support staff** (local consultants). The team leader will have the option to hire local support staff to facilitate the fieldwork and translations. Local enumerators could assist with data collection and translation on a short-term, as needed basis.

IESC may support recruitment of local enumerators, but the hiring decision and training 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. An

agricultural economist is considered important for the team. If the skill is not included with the team leader, offerors should ensure the skill is included with another team member.

The technical proposal must include a description of the individuals on the team. Resumes or CVs must be submitted as attachments for individuals submitted in this section and do not count within the page limitations of this section.

Every member of contractor's evaluation team must adhere to ethical guidelines as outlined in the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators. A summary of these guidelines is provided below:

- **Systematic Inquiry:** Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries.
- **Competence:** The evaluation team possesses the education, abilities, skills, and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the evaluation. Evaluators practice within the limits of their professional training and competence and decline to conduct evaluations that fall substantially outside those limits. The evaluation team collectively demonstrates cultural competence.
- **Integrity/Honesty:** Evaluators display honesty and integrity in their own behavior and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
- **Respect for People:** Evaluators respect the security, dignity, and self-worth of respondents, project participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders. Evaluators regard informed consent for participation in evaluation and inform participants and clients about the scope and limits of confidentiality.
- **Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare:** Evaluators articulate and consider the diversity of general and public interests and values that may be related to the evaluation.

Evaluation activities must not endanger the evaluation team, stakeholders, or public health.

This section will be marked on the extent to which the Offeror's personnel have experience in evaluation of trade capacity building projects.

## **11. Cost Proposal Evaluation; possible points 10**

The Offeror will submit a separate cost proposal that complies in full with the IESC-TraSa-2022-002 budget template at Annex B. All proposed costs must be in accordance with the U.S. Government Cost Principles under 2 CFR 200 Subpart E (found at: [2 CFR 200 Subpart E](#)).

The cost proposal must include a detailed budget for completion of the mid-term evaluation work plan and implementing the mid-term evaluation. 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, demonstrating clear delineation between prime and subcontractor costs. Offerors must include a detailed budget for any subcontract proposed, 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 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). Only incorporated businesses (501(c)(3), LLC, etc.) are eligible to charge and be reimbursed for indirect rates.

Additionally, as Offerors may be offered the option to extend, offerors should provide detailed budgets, including cost narratives, as the mid-term evaluation budget, for the final evaluation as well, including all critical assumptions informing estimations.

All quotations must be valid for sixty (60) days from the date of final submission

(Other)

## **12. 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.

## **13. 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.

## **14. Conflict of Interest Declaration**

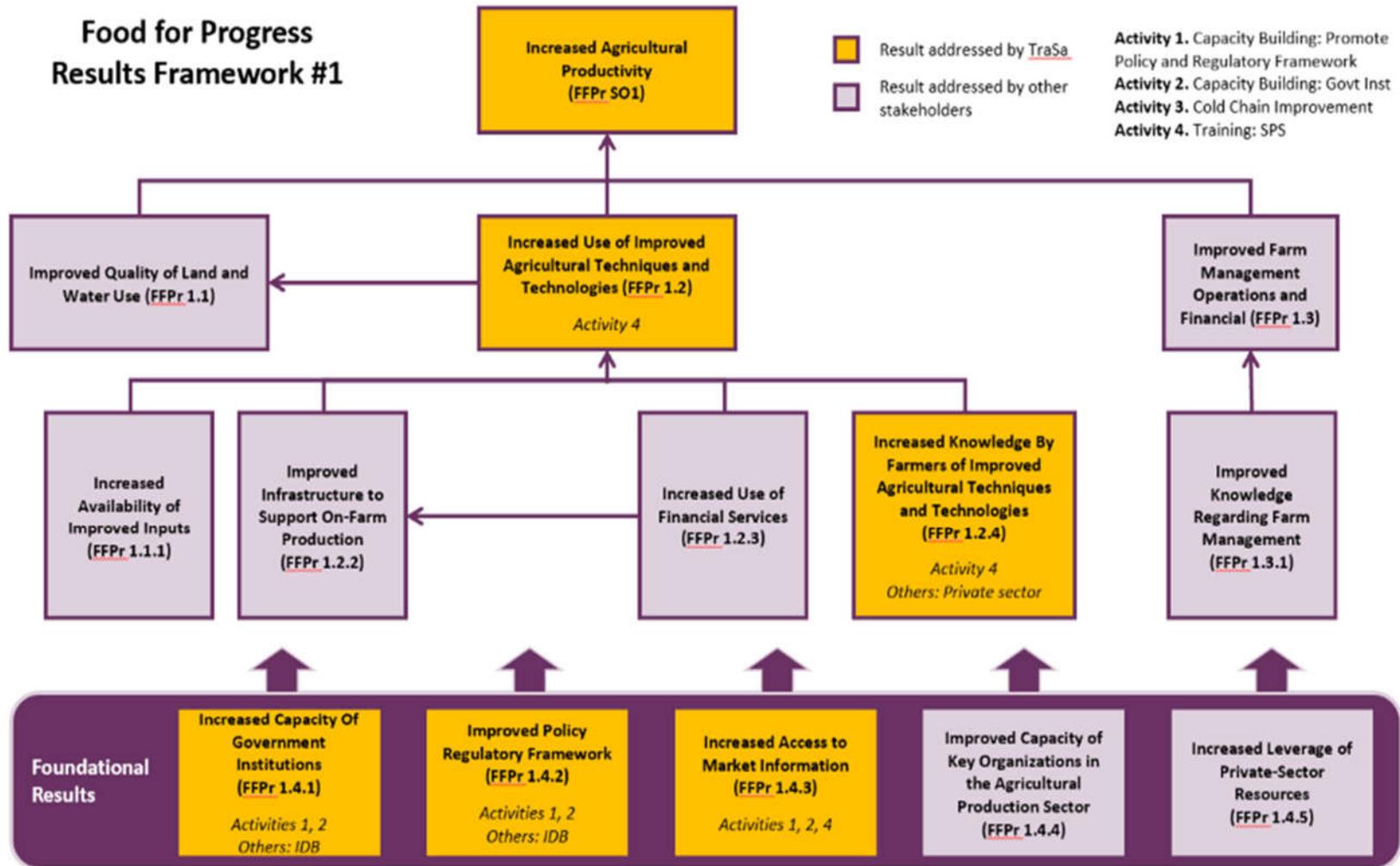
The following steps outline IESC's contract selection process and should be understood by all Offerors to ensure the transparency of awards and avoid conflict of interest.

- 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.

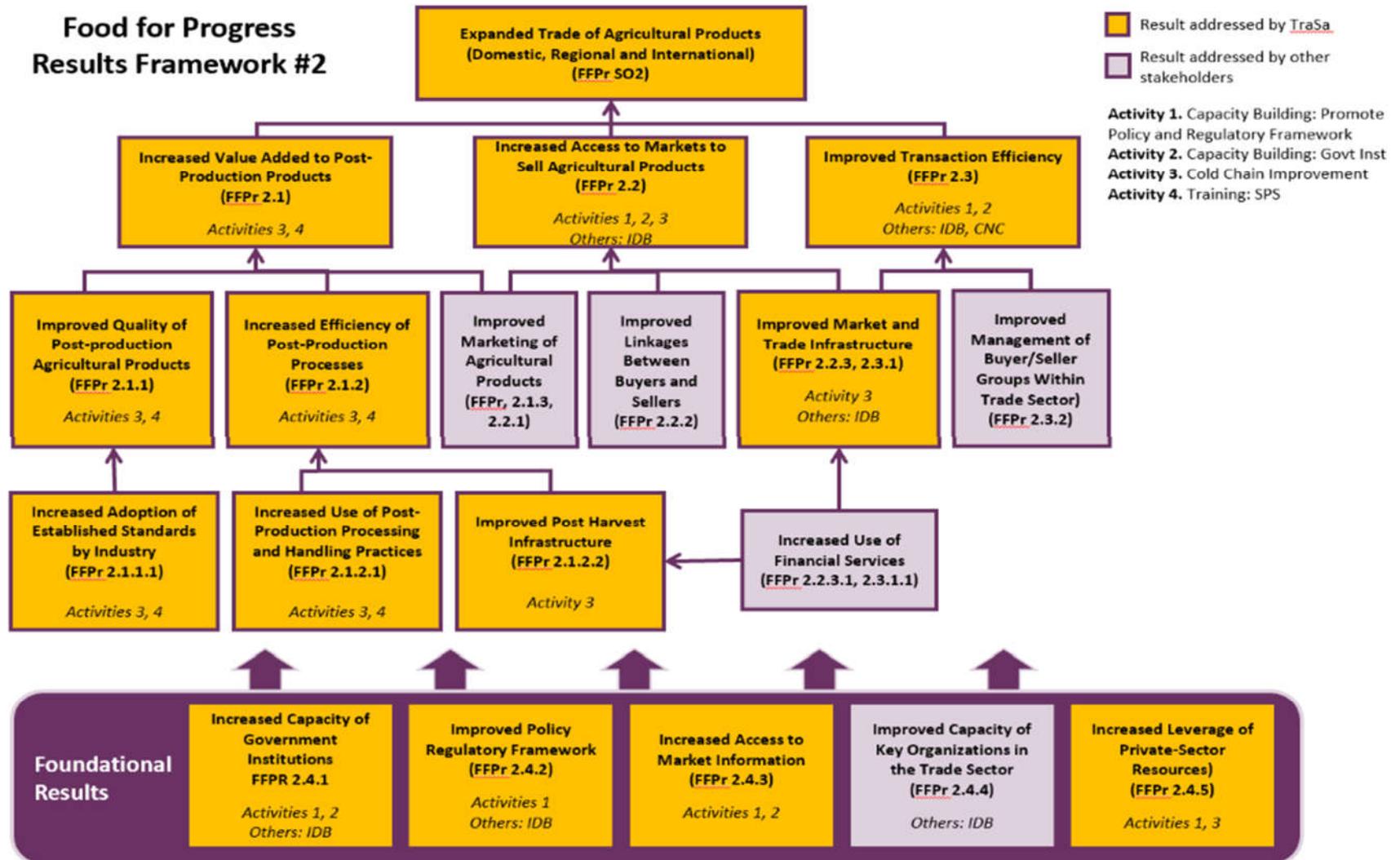
Any contracts awarded will be required to comply with all administrative standards and provisions required by the Award made from USDA.

-END-

**ANNEX A: PROJECT LEVEL RESULTS FRAMEWORKS**



## Food for Progress Results Framework #2



**ANNEX B: RFP IESC-TRASA-2022-002 BUDGET TEMPLATE**

Trade Safe (TraSa) IESC-TraSa-2022-002 <b>1. Summary Budget</b> International Executive Service Corps				
DESCRIPTION		Mid-Term Evaluation	Final Evaluation	TOTAL Proposed Budget
1.	Direct Labor	\$0	\$0	\$0
2.	Fringe Benefits	\$0	\$0	\$0
3.	Travel, Transportation, and Per Diem	\$0	\$0	\$0
4.	Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0
5.	Other Direct Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0
6.	Subcontracts	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COST</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
7.	Indirect Charges	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
8.	Fixed Fee	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST PLUS FIXED FEE</b>		<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>