

Request for Proposals

[All changes are highlighted in yellow]

Final Evaluation Services for IESC – Revised January 16, 2024

Issue Date:	December 20, 2023
Closing Date For Proposals:	February 15, 2024
Closing Time:	10:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST)
Project Title:	Market-Oriented Dairy (MOD)
Offer Reference Number:	RFP-MOD-001-2023

1. Disclaimer

The information contained in this request for proposals (hereinafter referred to as RFP) document is provided to the Offeror(s) by Improving Economies for Stronger Communities (IESC). IESC is the prime implementer of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food for Progress (FFPr) funded Market Oriented Dairy (MOD) Project (September 2017 to September 2024) in Sri Lanka. IESC is seeking a third-party contractor (firm) to conduct the Final Evaluation for the MOD 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 MOD senior manager determines proposal notification, award, and start dates, and they are subject to change at USDA's or IESC's discretion.

Any activities under a final agreement are subject to and shall 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. The estimated value of this contract is between \$125,000- \$150,000 USD.

2. MOD 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 139 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.

The seven-year Market-Oriented Dairy (MOD) Project, funded by the USDA's Food for Progress program, supports farmers and enterprises to meet the increased demand for dairy and aims to catalyze sustainable growth in Sri Lanka's dairy sector. In partnership with the private and public sector, the Project will increase milk production of participating farmers, expand domestic trade of milk and milk products, and enable farmers to earn price premiums based on quality.

Sri Lankan domestic annual milk production reached 506 million liters in 2022, however, currently this volume only fulfills 40 percent of the demand for milk domestically. The remaining of the market need is being imported from abroad, requiring a significant amount of the country's income.¹ Therefore, the country can greatly benefit from growing and developing their domestic dairy industry. The potential to increase milk production and establish a viable domestic milk dairy industry remains untapped due to the lack of knowledge and resources of farmers and the minimal adoption of modernized technology.

During the life span of MOD, the program has engaged more than 26,000 dairy farmers, input suppliers and fodder cultivators through various training and capacity building interventions. These interventions have contributed to an increase from 38.52 million liters to nearly 88 million liters of milk produced, with an estimated value of nearly 33,000,000 USD.

Program activities include the following:

- Activity 1 – Capacity Building: Agricultural Extension Agents/Services
 - Train extension officers and beneficiary farmers in best practices for productivity
 - Improve artificial insemination services
 - Develop and roll-out mobile extension services

¹ <https://www.industry.gov.lk/web/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Sector-overview-milk-and-milk-based-products-.pdf>

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- Conduct training on dairy farming as a business to develop capacity of dairy entrepreneurs
- Assist public and private sector partners to improve their dairy extension services
- Develop climate smart practices to be incorporated into extension training materials for local extension service providers
- Activity 2 – Inputs: Develop Agrodealers and/or Input Suppliers
 - Assist formalization of breeder programs targeting medium and large-scale farms
 - Develop capacity of private input retail operations
 - Develop fodder and silage enterprises
 - Establish an input voucher program to expand access to inputs for fodder production, silage making, and/or dairy production
- Activity 3 – Financial Services: Leverage Private and/or Public Sector Investment
 - Develop a Lessons Learned report detailing the practical considerations to establish and investment fund and identify and negotiate investment deals in the dairy sector in Sri Lanka
 - Increase local financial institutions interest to lend to the dairy sector
- Activity 4 – Market Access: Facilitate Buyer-Seller Relationships
 - Develop and implement mobile applications to facilitate the exchange of inputs
 - Connect informal producers to formal markets
- Activity 5 – Training: Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
 - Train farmers on best practices in milk quality
 - Quality and safety campaigns for consumers
 - Promote quality-based payments for milk producers
- Activity 6 – Capacity Building: Trade Associations
 - Strengthen the National Dairy Association
 - Develop a national dairy strategy

IESC discontinued Activity 5 from Year 5 onwards and focused on integrating milk quality/safety training into local extension services under Activity 1 and strengthening the All Island Dairy Association (AIDA) capacity to promote national milk safety standards under Activity 6.

MOD is monitoring a total of 24 results and activity indicators. Baseline values were established through a detailed baseline study conducted during the project's early stages. To view MOD's baseline evaluation, click [here](#). An extensive mid-term evaluation was carried out to understand the progress made against the baseline and if any derivations from the original plan occurred. Recommendations from the mid-term evaluation were

incorporated into the implementation plan moving forward. Click [here](#) to view MOD’s midterm evaluation. IESC will provide the MOD program-level results framework and indicator table to interested applicants upon request.

Program Participants/Beneficiaries: MOD has a life of project target of 30,000 direct beneficiaries from USDA-funded interventions.

3. Period of Performance

The contractor will perform the MOD Final Evaluation conducted over the period of **March 8** to August 1, 2024. The anticipated due date is August 1, 2024 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 **March 8**, 2024 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 MOD Project close in September 2024. The tentative timeline is shown below.

Stage	Deliverables	Timeline	Level of Effort (days)
I. Desk Research Review Existing Documentation	Completed work plan	March 8 - 31, 2024	10
II. Preparation of Field Research Tools	Field visit itinerary: quantitative and qualitative tools completed; sampling method established; Translated data collection tools; Local surveyor(s) identified;	April 1 - 30, 2024	15
III. Field Research Data Collection	Surveyors trained; Respondents selected per sampling method; Quantitative data sets gathered; Qualitative data notes gathered; Meetings/contacts listed	May 1 – June 31, 2024	45 (15 days x 3 team members)
VI. Data Analysis and Report Preparation	Report Draft submitted to IESC, IESC reviews and provides comments for revision to evaluation firm. Final draft submitted to IESC.	July 1 - 30, 2024	

VII. Final Submission to USDA	Final Report to IESC	August 1, 2024	25 (evaluator) 5 (data coordinator)
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4. MOD Final Evaluation Objectives and Scope Statement

The purpose of the MOD 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 include MOD’s project design, implementation, management, and replicability; assessing both intended and unintended impacts as well as lessons learned and recommendations for USDA, dairy sector stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture and Health (DAPH), processor companies, and other potential actors of similar ongoing or future interventions. In addition, the Final Evaluation scope will cover the follow up actions from the midterm evaluation’s findings and recommendations and how effectively those recommendations were built into the post-mid-term phase of the project.

The contractor will conduct the MOD Final Evaluation in compliance with USDA’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy and the approved MOD Evaluation Plan. The evaluation will examine both administrative and programmatic aspects of MOD 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.

Independence of the evaluation function from project implementation and management is a core principle of USDA evaluation. Independence helps to ensure both credible and objective evaluations. USDA-supported evaluations should be conducted by people who are not involved in the implementation and management of the project, and the evaluation process must be free from political influence and organizational pressure. For this external evaluation, all of the contractor’s evaluation team members will provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or disclosing any real or potential conflicts of interest.

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. The Contractor is responsible for applying ethical principles in all stages of the evaluations, and for raising and clarifying ethical matters with stakeholders during the evaluations.

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 the growth of the dairy industry in Sri Lanka. 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 MOD will build evidence to help answer at least two key learning questions from the FFPr Learning Agenda², which may include but not limited to the questions below. The final list and number must be determined by IESC with input from USDA in advance of each evaluation.
 - How can market-driven public/private partnerships help ensure long-term sustainability of programs?
 - What interventions are effective in reducing risk to encourage adoption of innovative methods, practices, technologies and climate-smart agriculture?

The contractor's evaluation team will include various positions, all of which will have a detailed scope of work. The positions and relevant qualifications for each are described below under Section 10, Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements.

5. Evaluation Audience and Key Stakeholders

The audience and key stakeholders for the MOD Final Evaluation include:

- USDA
- MOD beneficiaries: a group of dairy farmers, commercial fodder cultivators, input suppliers, etc.
- IESC MOD program and administrative staff internally
- Project steering committee, which is comprised of project staff as well as representatives of the livestock division of Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Animal Production and Health.
- MOD partners: private sector milk processing companies, inputs suppliers and dairy sector associations, such as the All Island Dairy Association, etc.

The MOD 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 MOD Final Evaluation

The evaluation will employ a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods including desk research, quantitative surveys, individual beneficiary 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 MOD staff and USDA representatives. IESC will confirm details around survey design, interview questions, and sampling in conjunction with the contractor well before the field data collection begins.

² The USDA Learning Agenda can be found here: https://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/learning_agenda_final.pdf

Following desk research, the evaluation is expected to take place with one-on-one interactions with the beneficiaries and other target audiences through a participatory approach. In unavoidable circumstances, subject to prior approval by IESC, virtual data collection methods including phone calls or video conference interviews, surveys conducted by emails, and online surveys using various platforms can be adapted. The final data collection methods will be discussed and confirmed with the selected contractor in the workplan deliverable.

The MOD Final Evaluation will not attempt to confirm attribution of impact but, rather, verify contributions and plausible links between changes occurring in the target audience and MOD activities. The MOD Final Evaluation must also determine whether recommendations from the MOD Midterm Evaluation were incorporated into the project and if not, identify the reasons why.

As in the MOD 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. MOD 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 the dairy value chain across most of the regions of Sri Lanka.

The MOD 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 IESC and USDA staff prior to the commencement of the evaluation field work, similar to the following:

- **Relevance:** To what extent did the MOD 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 MOD 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, farmer capacity building on training in best practices, mentoring and monitoring visits through extensions staff, facilitation of financial services for investments and provision of inputs through cost shared initiative, capacity building of the extensions arms of private sector and DAPH, strengthening supply chain such as inputs suppliers and fodder cultivators, introduction of new technology etc. In addition, activities carried out at a policy making and implementation level, capacity building at large farms, introduction of climate smart agriculture model etc. should be evaluated in terms effectiveness.
- **Efficiency:** To what extent did the level of project resources lead to the 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 MOD ends? To what extent has MOD developed local ownership and the capacity of both government and private sector partners to continue the changes introduced by MOD?

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- **Impact:** What are the immediate-, medium-, and long-term effects, intended and unintended, positive and negative, of the project after nearly 7 years of implementation?
- **Other:** What was the overall impact of COVID-19 restrictions/protocols, and the current economic crisis on project results?

In addition, the contractor is expected to explore following areas and report on the following during the evaluation:

- To what extent were the recommendations from the midterm evaluation implemented?
- What were the most significant constraints and/or difficulties encountered while implementing the project and, where appropriate, how did IESC overcome them?
- What is the perspective of beneficiaries with regards to the services provided under the Food for Progress project?
- What are lessons learned from this project? What implications for future Food for Progress activities can be extracted from those lessons learned?
- What specific future needs can be prioritized for future projects? Of activities in the current Food for Progress project, which areas would benefit from additional support in the future?
- A brief evaluation of the quality of MOD data reported to USDA against the criteria of validity, reliability, integrity, precision and timeliness.

7. Statement of Work

The contractor will conduct the MOD Final Evaluation in compliance with USDA's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy and the approved MOD Evaluation Plan. The evaluation will examine both administrative and programmatic aspects of MOD 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 scope of the evaluation will include MOD's project design, implementation, management, and replicability; assessing both intended and unintended impacts as well as lessons learned and recommendations for USDA, dairy sector stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture and Health (DAPH), processor companies, and other potential actors of similar ongoing or future interventions. In addition, the Final Evaluation scope will cover the follow up actions from the midterm evaluation's findings and recommendations and how effectively those recommendations were built into the post-mid-term phase of the project.

7.1. Schedule of Authorities

The contractor will report to the IESC senior manager, MOD Chief of Party, and IESC home-office monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) director.

7.2. Deliverables

To complete the MOD 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 (Excel);
- 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 MOD Final Evaluation, and should be written in language easy to understand by non-evaluators and with appropriate graphics and tables;
- 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 MOD Final Evaluation report in PDF and Word. The report is estimated to range from 50 to 60 pages excluding relevant annexes. The report should include, but is not limited to:
 - List of acronyms/abbreviations;
 - Table of contents;
 - Executive summary;
 - Background;
 - Project database Audit findings;
 - Detailed evaluation methodology;
 - Evaluation Findings;
 - Final indicator data for all indicators;
 - Lessons Learned;
 - Recommendations for USDA, participants, and key stakeholders;
 - Annexed scope of work;

- Indicator table with final data;
 - Annexed Comments from IESC and Evaluator responses
 - Annexed data collection instruments;
 - Annexed organizational chart;
 - Annexed CVs of Team (Max 2 pages each);
 - Annexed clean final data sets (Qualitative and quantitative in Excel with PII removed and with code sheets) and,
 - Annexed photo montage.
- **Final MOD Internal 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 MOD 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.
 - **Final MOD Public Final 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.
 - The public version of the evaluation report should be accessible to persons with disabilities. The report should include but is not limited to the elements described under deliverable vii. Draft MOD Final 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.

8. Contract Type

The contract is anticipated to be cost plus fixed fee.

9. Instructions to Offerors

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

9.1. Submission

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 MOD Final Evaluation;
- A description of the recommended evaluation methodology that demonstrates an understanding of MOD's expected impact and implementation approach;

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- 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;
- Experience in evaluating the agriculture sector, specifically dairy and the dairy value chain;
- 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,
- Past Performance: 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 A, posted on the IESC website as Attachment A – Evaluation Budget Template_ RFP-MOD-001-2023. Costs should be broken out to include labor, supplies, travel, subcontracts (if any), indirect costs (if any), fee/profit (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 Annex A), demonstrating clear delineation between prime and subcontractor costs. Offerors must include a detailed budget for any subcontract proposed; this budget and narrative must adhere to the same budgeting format requirements (per Attachment A – Evaluation Budget Template) herein for prime offerors, including cost narratives.

For indirect costs proposed, please include a copy of your organization's U.S. Government approved 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 minimis 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 costs.

Offerors must submit their proposals by the closing date and time, as listed on page one, to the following: Daniel Schlingman, Senior Associate, at globalawards@iesc.org.

9.2. Appendices: Not included in the technical proposal's seven (7) page limit

- CVs of the contractor team, outlining previous evaluation experience and accomplishments as it relates to demonstrating the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill the requirements of the RFP (CVs must be in English);
- Demonstrated financial and administrative capacity to manage a contract of this size; and,
- 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.

9.3. Clarification and Amendments

Offerors may request clarification questions via email to globalawards@iesc.org no later than **5:00 p.m., Washington DC Eastern Standard Time (EST), on January 25, 2024**. 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 **January 30, 2024**. 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.

9.4. 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) UEI # (Applies to companies, not to individuals)
- 11) Total Proposed Price (***cover page of cost proposal only***)
- 12) Signature, date, and time

9.5. 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 A – Evaluation Budget Template)

10. Qualifications and Eligibility Requirements

A third-party contractor, per USDA's Food and Agricultural Services Food Assistance Division (FAD)

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, education, and nutrition;
- Uses acceptable analytical frameworks such as comparison with non-project areas, surveys, involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation, 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;
- Individual consultants are not eligible for consideration.

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.³ 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;

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

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- Proven ability to use quantitative, qualitative and participatory evaluation methods, with examples and references that can speak to this experience;
- 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 English required;
- Experience with USDA Food for Progress projects preferred; and,
- Previous experience in Sri Lanka 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 dairy sector 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 Sri Lanka or the region highly preferred; ability to travel when in country.
- **Researcher.** A local Sri Lankan 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 at least one of the local languages (Sinhala or Tamil).
- **Enumerators.** The contractor 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 Offeror whose proposal provides 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 MOD'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 agriculture and dairy production.
- 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.

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 level of effort to complete the tasks outlined 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.
- 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 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 baseline study first, and later satisfactory performance on the midterm evaluation. IESC reserves the right to cancel the contract in full or in part.

The independent 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 A – Evaluation Budget Template).

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

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

IESC will evaluate the cost proposals separately. The best value proposal is selected based on a combination of the technical score and reasonableness of the cost.

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 MOD 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) Requests for Proposal (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.

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