

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Post-Monetization Market Assessment

Issue Date:	February 9, 2024
Closing Date For Proposals:	February 29, 2024
Closing Time:	5:00 pm (EST)
Project Title:	Agricultural Trade and Climate Smart Agriculture (ATraCSI)
RFP Reference Number:	POST-MONETIZATION ASSESSMENT RFP-001-2024)
ESTIMATED AWARD VALUE:	FROM \$56,000 to \$66,000

1. Disclaimer

The information contained in this request for proposals (hereinafter referred to as RFP) document is provided to the Offeror(s) by the Improving Economies for Stronger Communities (IESC) in anticipation of IESC's proposal in response to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) FCC-NCAR-2022/016-00 - Agricultural Trade and Climate Smart Agriculture (ATraCSI) Project.

IESC desires to receive proposals from companies (Offerors) to serve as an independent evaluator to conduct a post-monetization market assessment.

IESC plans to award one fixed-priced deliverables-based 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. Activities are anticipated to begin in February, 2024.

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 program.

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 fixed-price deliverables-based contract.

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.

The five-year, \$30.8 million USDA-Food for Progress funded Agricultural Trade and Climate Smart Innovations (ATraCSI) project will help address root causes of migration via a holistic approach to trade via the horticulture sector. The project will focus on implementing international and risk-based Sanitary and Phytosanitary Regulations (SPS) measures, implement measures under the existing World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreements (TFA), and assist in strengthening Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) through development and transfer of agriculture technologies that focus on effective, sustainable, and environmentally friendly use of agricultural resources which focus on the high-value horticulture value chains in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

To fully fund the ATraCSI program, IESC monetized approximately 60,500 MT of soybean meal, advertising the sale in Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. After receiving offers, IESC selected the winning bidders and USDA approved them. IESC sold the commodity to buyers in Dominican Republic and Honduras. The commodity was monetized over two tranches. The first tranche was completed in October 2023 and the second in January 2024.

3. Period of Performance

The anticipated period of performance, should the offeror be selected, will be February, 2024 until July, 2025.

4. Scope Statement

The selected offeror will conduct an in-depth assessment of the impact of monetization on Dominican Republic and Honduras' local economy, including both desk-based and in-country studies. Since this is a regional monetization with multiple bidders in multiple countries, the study will need to be large enough to capture the scale of that approach. Data should be collected from both primary and secondary sources of information, and the assessment should use a mixed-methods approach that applies qualitative and quantitative techniques and triangulates information from different methods to enhance the reliability of the findings. All quotations must be valid for sixty (60) days.

5. Statement Of Work

5.1. Schedule of Authorities

The contractor will report to the (IESC Home-Office Director, Trade and Enterprise).

5.2. Activities

The contractor is expected to undertake the following tasks:

1. Review the project's approved monetization plan and related sales documents;
2. Monitor and assess the soybean meal market in the region;
3. Collect data from both primary and secondary sources of information related to the commodity and commodity market;
4. Monitor the commodity market to understand the pricing trends related to the operating environment, compare against historic data, and global data points. Monthly pricing data should also be collected for at least five years before the start of monetization for a period of eighteen months after the arrival of the last tranche;
5. Prepare post-monetization market assessment for dissemination to IESC and USDA; and
6. Travel throughout Dominican Republic and Honduras as necessary to conduct field research and market analysis, including primary data gathering and interviews with market actors.

5.3. Deliverables

1. Agricultural Trade Facilitation and Climate Smart Innovation (ATraCSI) Project Post-Monetization Evaluation Workplan
2. ATraCSI Quality Assurance Plan and Data Collection Strategy with Associated Tools
3. ATraCSI Post-Monetization Data Sets (clean versions)
4. Draft ATraCSI Post-Monetization Market Assessment Report (approximate 40-50 pages not including annexes). IESC and USDA will review the draft report and provide written comments and feedback. The contractor will address the relevant evaluation questions (from the example list of questions below) during the duration of the assessment.

Examples of ATraCSI Monetization Assessment evaluation questions:

- To what extent did monetization affect local or regional production and consumption in the short - (few months after monetization), medium- (marketing year after monetization), and long-term (subsequent marketing year)?
- To what extent did monetization displace commercial trade in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term?
- Are there any substitutes for the selected commodity? If so, did the monetization of the selected commodity impact production/marketing of those substitutes?
- Was the timing and volume of the sale appropriate?
- Did sales occur as intended or was there a lag because of unforeseen conditions in the market?
- What were the initial estimates for price and quantity? What were the actual prices and quantities of the commodities sold?
- To what extent was in-country storage utilization affected?
- Did monetized commodities crowd-out commercial or local commodities in competition for storage facilities?
- Did the cost for storage change due to the monetized commodity coming into the warehousing market?
- Was the transportation infrastructure affected? How?
- Were buying patterns of local and international actors affected? If so, what was the magnitude and length of the change?
- Was there an effect on prices? If so, how? Do price trends in the market parallel overall global trends or are there circumstances unique to that particular market?

- What happened to local and international prices during this period? (Were there any sudden price shocks that differed from other years)?
- Do price fluctuations follow a global, regional, or particular local pattern?
- Were there any other market factors that could have impacted prices during that time? (For example, adverse weather affecting production, the one corn processor had their mill damaged/prolonged power outage and stopped buying corn (which may have caused lower local prices for farmers), etc.)

Suggested outline for the post-monetization assessment report:

- Executive Summary;
- Market context and Background;
- ATraCSI Monetization Process
- Price Analysis
- Conclusions
- Annexes

The assessment report should include the following information:

- a) Market context – how the commodity is produced, consumed/processed, traded, marketed generally in the context of this region. What is the structure of the local market. Is it competitive or dominated by a few players? Does this affect pricing? This would also include a discussion of relevant country or regional policies and regulations that impact the market dynamics of the commodity.
- b) Prices (local and international – ideally wholesale prices if the commodity is a processed product) –if prices are in the local currency, there should be some discussion about the local currency vs the U.S. dollar over the time period.
- c) Commodity supply and demand balance sheet for a few years prior and current year (i.e. similar to USDA’s PSD or Production, Supply, and Distribution) for the commodity and country/region. Evaluators may use USDA PSD balance sheets for a commodity and country/region if they are available. USDA PSD estimates should be compared with information from local/regional market sources and discrepancies should be noted and discussed in the Market Assessment. A supply and demand balance sheet includes estimates for the following and balances (i.e., Supply equals Demand):
 - i. Supply:
 - Beginning Stocks (this is different than storage capacity);

- Production (including estimates of acreage planted and harvested and yield); and
 - Imports
- ii. Demand:
- Consumption [human, for feeding animals (if applicable), residual];
 - Exports; and
 - Ending stocks.

IESC's monetization agent as well as the USDA's commodity management staff will be key informants.

5. Final ATraCSI Post-Monetization Market Assessment that addresses comments from the draft reviewed by IESC and by USDA.
6. ATraCSI Post-Monetization Brief. The brief is two to three pages, which serves as a stand-alone summary of the effort written in plain language. The brief will include the following:
 - i. Description of evaluation design;
 - ii. Key findings; and
 - iii. Other relevant considerations.

6. Contract Type

The contract is anticipated to be a fixed-price contract to be paid based on deliverables.

Instructions to Offerors

6.1. Submission

- 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: Global Awards globalawards@iesc.org.

6.2. Clarification and Amendments

Offerors may request clarifications via email to Global Awards globalawards@iesc.org not later than **5:00 p.m., Washington DC Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) time, on Thursday, February 15, 2024**. 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 **Tuesday, February 20, 2024**. 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.

6.3. 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 that Company's representative
- 7) Telephone #, Cellular/Mobile Phone #, Email address
- 8) Duration of Validity of proposal
- 9) Payment terms
- 10) SAM.gov **Unique Entity ID #** (Applies to companies, not to individuals)
- 11) Total Proposed Price (**cover page of cost proposal only**)
- 12) Signature, date, and time

7. Eligibility Requirements

Offeror may be required to present a business license and must have experience in working on market assessments and market/trade analysis; familiarity with commodity monetization schemes preferred but not required; extensive experience with quantitative and qualitative data collections techniques; experience preparing high quality evaluative reports for similar types of market assessments. Offerors who have conducted monetization sales for IESC in the past are not eligible to apply. Offerors may need to obtain a DUNS number and an eligibility notice prior to receiving any award. Award may be contingent upon USDA final approval.

8. Basis for Award

IESC anticipates that the 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 ATraCSI program, price, and other factors considered. The winning proposal must conform to all solicitation requirements.

To determine the successful offer, 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.

9. 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 **9.1 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.

9.1. Technical Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria. 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.

[1] Technical and management approach: 5 pg. limit (not including the requested Gantt chart); possible points 50

Proposals will be scored on the effectiveness of the proposal to meet the requirements of the post-monetization market assessment for the program, as outlined in **Section 5.2 Activities**.

Proposals will be scored based on the following:

- Clear description of activities to be undertaken to achieve the tasks from the scope of work. The proposal should include a description of the offeror's approach to

securing, analyzing, and presenting market data. The approach should be detailed per task with timeline, actions, and outputs. A one-page Gantt chart is required as an annex that demonstrates implementation plan (task number; task; month/week; owner; output).

- Description of secondary sources of information from which information will be collected.

[2] Offeror's past performance and references: 3 pg. limit (not including 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 post-monetization assessments for Food Aid Programs. Offerors should provide experience in general, and specifically include experience in the Latin-American markets.

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 (Experience working on market assessments and market/trade analysis; extensive experience with quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques; familiarity with commodity monetization schemes preferred, but not required).

Offerors should provide a minimum of three (3) references for past and present programs, 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. References information will not be included in the page limit.

[3] Offeror's Personnel Experience and Capacities: 3 pg. limit (not including resumes or CVs, which are attachments); possible points 20

The technical proposal must include a description (biographical sketch acceptable) of a minimum of one, but not more than two, senior management personnel, who would directly work on the activities in the contract, as well as local market specialist to collect relevant primary and secondary data in the target market. 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.

This section will be marked on the extent to which the Offeror's, or its personnel have experience and qualifications in (master's degree in economics, agricultural economics, agrobusiness or related; Experience preparing high quality evaluative reports for similar

types of market assessments; Strong research writing skills; English fluency required and Spanish fluency a plus for international consultants and required for local market specialist).

10. Cost Proposal Evaluation

The Offeror will submit a separate cost proposal that complies in full with the (Post-Monetization Market Assessment) budget template at Annex B - Budget.

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](#))

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

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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-