

WEST AFRICA
**TRADE &
INVESTMENT
HUB**

Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) Number: RFA-WATIH-643
Title of Opportunity: The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub: Supporting Sourcing, Agricultural and Non-agricultural Exports and Agricultural Supply Chains affected by COVID-19 in West Africa.
Issue Date: May 13, 2020
Deadline for Questions: May 27, 2020 5:30 PM Local Time
Closing Date: June 24, 2020 5:30 PM Local Time

The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (hereinafter referred to as the Trade Hub) is seeking applications from eligible applicants to fund a program entitled "*The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub: Supporting Sourcing, Agricultural and Non-agricultural Exports and Agricultural Supply Chains affected by COVID-19 in West Africa*". Funding is provided by Prosper Africa, a U.S. government initiative to substantially increase trade and investment between the United States and Africa, as well as other USAID regional and bilateral funding. See Section C of Attachment 1 for eligibility requirements. To be eligible for award, the applicant must meet these requirements and provide all information as required in this RFA. An award(s) will be made to the eligible and responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meet(s) the program objectives and selection criteria contained in Sections A and E of Attachment 1 respectively.

An eligible organization interested in applying for funding under this opportunity is encouraged to read this RFA thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements, and evaluation process. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has received the RFA from the internet in its entirety. The Trade Hub bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from the transmission or conversion process.

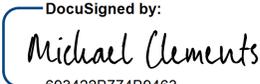
An application must be submitted directly to the Trade Hub using one of the following methods: a) electronically via the Activity's online grants management portal (<https://smart.fluxx.io>), b) electronically via email at grants@westafricatih.com. Applications must be received no later than the deadline for applications stated above. Any questions concerning this RFA also must be submitted in writing to grants@westafricatih.com. All questions must be received no later than the deadline for questions stated above.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Trade Hub nor does it commit the Trade Hub to pay for any costs incurred by a potential applicant while preparing/submitting questions or an application. All preparation/submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Applicants are hereby informed that the Trade Hub does not, under any circumstances, appoint agents to act on its behalf. Any engagement by Applicants with anybody purporting to be a Trade Hub agent is entirely at the Applicant's own cost and risk.

Thank you for your interest in this opportunity.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

693422B774B9463
Michael Clements
Chief of Party
West Africa Trade and Investment Hub

Attachments

Attachment 1: Request for Applications

Attachment 2: Technical Application Template

Attachment 3: Technical Application Budget Template

Attachment 4: Provisions

Attachment 5: Certifications

Attachment 6: Trade Hub Performance Indicators Table

Attachment 7: Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants

Attachment 1: Request for Applications (RFA)

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Trade Hub activity is to promote and expand employment, trade and investment opportunities, both within West Africa sub-region and international markets.

2. Background

The USAID-funded Trade Hub activity is a five-year trade and investment facilitation intervention that seeks to improve private sector productivity, profitability, and competitiveness in West Africa. By co-investing with the private sector and other organizations through a grant fund of \$60 million, the Trade Hub will encourage an additional \$300 million of private-sector investment and, growth in strategic sectors including, but not limited to, agriculture, services, water/sanitation, clean renewable energy, and light manufacturing.

Economic models predict that the COVID-19 global pandemic will derail economic growth in Africa, compromise livelihoods, increase the costs of food and basic services, disrupt logistics and consumer markets, and reduce private sector investment. Rapid response is essential given the deteriorating financial positions of firms and the difficult decisions they face on retaining their employees and adapting their supply chains and factory operations in West Africa. The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub, with an established grant facility to inject financing directly into companies and physical presence in West Africa, is uniquely positioned to rapidly identify and support U.S. and West African firms and their local and regional business partners working in labor-intensive and women-dominated sectors disproportionately impacted by the crisis including the agriculture, apparel, manufacturing and export and import sectors.

The Trade Hub will rapidly review and disburse direct grants averaging between \$200,000 and \$500,000 to U.S. companies under Prosper Africa focused on ensuring that employment is sustained, and coronavirus-related supply chain disruptions are mitigated. Grant sizes of smaller or larger amounts may be considered should the proposed activity meet the objectives of the RFA. The Trade Hub will structure grants requiring co-investment by U.S. companies, but with their contributions timed later in the grant period once markets and trade start to recover to provide working capital relief.

Applications will be considered under three separate objectives as follows:

3. Objectives

The Trade Hub's COVID 19 response is based on three primary objectives:

- To overcome disruptions in export-oriented supply-chains

- To support domestic food security initiatives and prevention of job losses
- To scale up production and service capabilities of companies engaged in COVID-19 response on a case by case basis.

Objective 1: Grants to support U.S. firms with operations in West Africa and firms that export from West Africa to the U.S. market that are affected by COVID-19. The Grants is open to all sectors, including agriculture, apparel, light manufacturing, and import and export sectors.

COVID 19 has significantly disrupted the production, processing, transport and distribution of export commodities. There is no certainty if or when or to what extent these disruptions will return to normal. Primary producers, manufacturers, and distributors therefore urgently need to identify and implement new or modified business processes that will enable the export of fresh produce and their access to markets. The Trade Hub is therefore offering grants for this purpose.

This funding is intended to help U.S. firms stabilize and maintain continuity of their supply chains and factory operations in West Africa in response to Covid-19 **or adapt to retain workforce and sourcing operations.**

Grant applications should take into account at least the following:

- Must propose actions and solutions that help maintain workforce during slowdown.
- Must propose actions and solutions that help stabilize operations to ensure continuous provisions of products and services.
- Must propose practical and rapidly implementable solutions to preserve continuity of operations.
- Must be a U.S. firm or a firm exporting to the U.S. market.
- Both individual and joint applications, between U.S. and local or regional firms are accepted.
- Must propose a co-investment fund of at least 1:1 using public/private funding, but co-investments up to a 5:1 leverage ratio or higher are preferred.
- Seek a grant size of between \$200,000 and \$500,000 for an implementation project with no more than a 24-month time horizon. Grant sizes of smaller or larger amounts may be considered
- Must be an eligible organization as described under Section C.1: Eligible Applicants.

Here are a few examples of activities that could be eligible:

- Adoption of warehousing and cold chain infrastructures to reduce post-harvest losses of fruits, vegetables, and nuts intended for exports that may use U.S. technologies.

- Support to fruit or vegetable processors to double their processing capacity, or to double the utilization of fresh fruit and nuts processors to reduce post-harvest losses and their existing processing capacity, for example from 8 hours per day to 16 hours per day that may use U.S. technologies and services.
- Lengthen shelf life of fruit-based food items such as dried fruits and juices, and processed nuts of any exportable food type.
- Subsidize the procurement of export agriculture products that are impacted by Covid-19 to absorb surpluses and mitigate losses of perishable products for producers, such as cacao, cashew, coffee, shea, beeswax, fonio, and processed fruits.
- Subsidize and facilitate access to inputs, including supply of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, feeds, diesel, tools and machines to ensure supply chains continuity post Covid-19.
- Extend fast-track trade financing, working capital support and medium-term financing to farmers, off-takers, and local processors with business links to the U.S. market and U.S. businesses through U.S., local and regional financial institutions
- Provide temporary wage subsidy programs to employees
- Provide temporary cash transfer programs to farmers
- Encourage investment in hydroponic or solar-powered green-house production for export

Objective 2: Grants to support food security crops.

COVID-19 is likely to disrupt the 2020/2021 crop season in West Africa. Many farmers are unable to purchase seeds due to shrinking of the labor market caused by curtailed movement. Similarly, aggregators, processors, input suppliers and other companies in the agricultural value chains face supply constraints. Farmers' earnings from casual labor to buy seeds and fertilizer have been significantly constrained due to strict movement requirements and closure of businesses. These multiple constraints have the potential to drastically decrease agricultural production throughout the region and worsen food insecurity for many households. The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub is uniquely positioned to support various actors, especially smallholder farmers, agribusinesses involved in the domestic and export markets during this crisis through U.S. firms.

Under this objective, the Trade Hub is soliciting applications from U.S. and African private sector companies (e.g. large scale farms, input & mechanization suppliers, large-scale agribusinesses, out grower schemes, warehousing/logistics companies), farmer cooperatives, non-governmental organizations, and public organizations who have the ability to bolster the food supply, retain jobs in the food commodity processing, and logistics sectors hit by the COVID-19 crisis; assist at-risk farmers and input suppliers to diversify incomes; respond to immediate COVID-19 requirements for supplies and services. This opportunity is targeted at the U.S. and West African companies that have significant upstream and downstream impacts on employment in

support of food production, trade and related services to rebound when markets begin to reopen.

The primary objective of this stream of funding is **to bolster the local food supply to ensure smallholders continue to have access to key inputs and pre-financing given the impacts of COVID-19 on farmer income, supply chains and other constraints.** Ultimately the goal is to increase agricultural productivity and profitability through targeted interventions that will scale up the production, dissemination, distribution, and marketing of crops produced by smallholder farmers, and to preserve jobs under current circumstances and to rapidly create new jobs once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Grant applications should take into account the following:

- In Nigeria, applicants must target one or more of the Trade Hub's five targeted value chains in Nigeria: maize, rice, soy, cowpea, and aquaculture; in Kebbi, Kaduna, Niger, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Benue states
- In other West African countries, applicants should target key food security crops (especially rice, maize, pulses and tubers)
- Must propose market-driven, improved technology or practice to increase agricultural/farmed fish yields & revenue within targeted market systems for smallholder farmers and/or agribusiness/value chain actor;
- Must propose rapid start up to meet current planting season for specific crops and agro-ecological zones
- Individual applications are allowed. In addition, joint application between private sector and research institutions/universities is encouraged;
- Must propose a co-investment fund of at least 1:1 using public/private funding, but co-investments up to a 5:1 leverage ratio or higher are preferred;
- Seek a grant size of between \$200,000 and \$500,000 for an implementation project with no more than a 24-month time horizon for rapid response. Grant sizes of smaller or larger amounts may be considered; and,
- Must be an eligible organization as described under Section C.1: Eligible Applicants.

Here are a few examples of activities that could be eligible:

- Subsidized seed and inputs for smallholder farmers in conjunction with anchor agribusiness offtake market, seed companies or out grower schemes linked to processors¹

¹ Given timing of 2020/2021 crop year, priority will be given to irrigated crops (such as rice) and seed multiplication for 2021/2022 season assuming successful award and beginning of implementation in August or September 2020

- Support aggregators, middlemen and other VC facilitators to make food items available in urban markets (distribution and marketing roles) through processors with existing out grower schemes and trusted network of establish aggregators
- Increased access to mechanized harvesters in maize/rice growing areas,
- Finance for maize/rice mills, flour producers & related products to increase production to hire more labor, buy necessary bagging equipment and increase storage,
- Mobile money transfers via MFIs/ to smallholders to pay for labor and improved harvesting tools
- Reduce PH losses and reduce aflatoxin levels in maize via targeted SH training in maize growing areas (pre-harvest, maize dryers power threshing, improved storage and maize milling).
- Finance for processors to hire more labor, buy necessary bagging equipment and increase storage,
- Support to rice producers for pre-harvest, finance transport to mills, power threshing, improved storage, drying and milling
- Financial support to fish farmers (especially women and youth) to increase ability to purchase quality feed, support to hatcheries, support to fish feed producers
- Financial support to cold chain suppliers, access to equipment, repair and maintain chillers, financing for transporters w/reefers

Objective 3: Grants to scale up production and service capabilities of companies engaged in COVID-19 response

The Trade Hub will consider applications to assist companies in different sectors that play essential roles in COVID-19 response on a case by case basis. The Grant is open to a broad range of sectors, but priority will be given to U.S. and West African companies operating in the region with existing capacity to expand production or services to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grant applications should take into account at least the following:

- Must propose actions and solutions that expand goods or services related directly to COVID-19 response
- Must propose actions and solutions that can meet appropriate standards required for responding to COVID-19 needs
- Must propose practical and rapidly implementable solutions to service demand
- Must be a U.S. or West African firm operating in the region
- Both individual and joint applications, between U.S. and West African firms are accepted.
- Must propose a co-investment fund of at least 1:1 using public/private funding, but co-investments up to a 5:1 leverage ratio or higher are preferred.

- Must seek a grant size of between \$200,000 and \$500,000 for an implementation project with no more than a 24-month time horizon. Grant sizes of smaller or larger amounts may be considered; and
- Must be an eligible organization as described under Section C.1: Eligible Applicants.

4. Authorizing Legislation

Awards are authorized in accordance with Creative Associates International contract with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

5. Additional Information

- a. **Monitoring requirement:** Potential grantees will be required to detail how they will monitor the impact of their proposed activity, notably the resources that will be required to ensure a high standard of data is being recorded and reported based on set indicators in adherence to the Trade Hub’s Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. *(See attachment 6 for Trade Hub Indicators)*
- b. **Gender and youth:** Activities under the Trade Hub seek to reduce gender disparities in access to and benefits from investments. To that end, potential applicants will be expected to outline how their activities will increase access to technologies to improve production, expand access to and enhance women’s and youth skills and access to better paid opportunities. Applicants who demonstrate the potential for large scale impacts on women and youth (age 15 – 29) will be prioritized.
- c. **Environmental considerations:** All activities implemented under the Trade Hub must adhere to 22 CFR 216 on environmental compliance. Please refer to the following links for additional information:
 - Environmental compliance background information: https://www.usaid.gov/our_work/environment/compliance
 - Information on how the Agency will ensure environmental soundness and compliance in design and implementation when required by the 22 CFR 216 determination (ADS 204): <http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/agency-policy/series-200>
- d. **Source Nationality:** Grantees will be required to procure all commodities and services in accordance with 22 CFR 228 “Rules on Procurement of Commodities and Services Financed by USAID Federal Program Funds.” The authorized source for procurement is Geographic Code 937, which means that the procurement of commodities and/or services can be from the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a

prohibited source. See ADS 310 for further details

(<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1876/310.pdf>)

B. AWARD INFORMATION

1. Application Process

The Trade Hub will review applications under this RFA on a rolling basis from the date of release up until the date of closure.

- a. Questions on the RFA can be submitted at any time to grants@westafricatih.com no later than May 27, 2020.
- b. Applicants interested in submitting an application must first register via Creative's grants management system, SMART, at <https://smart.fluxx.io/apply/watih>.
- c. After registering, applicants should contact the Lead Grants Manager, at grants@westafricatih.com with a notification of intent to submit application for this RFA.
- d. If applicant has previously registered on Creative's grants management system, SMART, **PLEASE DO NOT** register again. However, such applicant should contact the Lead Grants Manager, at grants@westafricatih.com with a notification of intent to submit application for this RFA.
- e. After a new applicant's registration has been accepted or a previous registered applicant's notification is received, they will be connected to the RFA in SMART and only then will they be able to submit application at any time while the RFA is open. All applications must be submitted via SMART unless noted otherwise.
- f. After receipt of an application, the Trade Hub will determine if the application is compliant with the RFA instructions. Applications that do not comply are subject to rejection.
- g. Applications that comply with the instructions will be evaluated against the criteria listed in Section E.1 below.
- h. After evaluation, the Trade Hub will conduct pre-award assessment/due diligence on the applicant.
- i. After pre-award assessment/due diligence, the Trade Hub will then work with USAID to make a determination on whether to award a grant agreement.

2. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

Subject to the availability of funds, the Trade Hub plans to issue multiple awards under this RFA. The total value of each award is estimated to range from \$200,000 to \$500,000. As the amount of an award is subject to negotiation, a negotiated award amount may or may not fall within this range. Furthermore, the Trade Hub is not obligated to issue awards/an award up to the amount of funds available. Grantees must cover a minimum of 1:1 cost share/leverage ratio (with higher leverage ratios preferred) as further outlined below.

The Trade Hub reserves the right to fund one, some or none of the applications submitted.

3. Period of Performance

This RFA will be active from the date of release to the date of closure as stated on the cover page but may be reissued or extended.

The estimated start date will be upon signature of award, on or about. The anticipated duration of the Trade Hub's support is negotiable but expected to be for 24 month(s).

4. Award Mechanisms

It is expected that all grants awarded under this RFA will be performance-based with an appropriate means of verification for agreed upon milestones. These milestones will be determined in collaboration with the applicant prior to signing the grant agreement.

The Trade Hub's final determination on award mechanism will be based on its assessment of an applicant's risk prior to award. If this assessment identifies weaknesses or deficiencies that call into question the applicant's ability to manage an award, the Trade Hub may elect to remove the applicant from consideration under this funding opportunity or select a mechanism more appropriate for the applicant's current capacity.

The most common award mechanism issued by the Activity is fixed amount awards (FAAs). Under FAAs, payments are performance based and issued to an awardee after its successful completion of pre-defined programmatic milestones. Naturally these milestones would be determined when we finalize a grant agreement, but the Trade Hub would need "easy things to finance".

The Activity also may elect to issue a cost-reimbursable award in instances when: a) an applicant demonstrates sufficient financial management capacity to implement this mechanism and b) the mechanism is determined to be appropriate for implementing the program description.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for award under this opportunity, an applicant must demonstrate that it falls into one of the grantee categories below:

- a) Private Sector Companies
- b) Foreign Organizations (referred to as non-U.S. NGOs): either nonprofit or for-profit organizations that meet the definition in 2 CFR 200.47.
- c) Non-profit Organizations: Organizations that meet the definition of 2 CFR 200.70.
- d) For-Profit Organizations

Government entities are not eligible to apply.

Additionally, an applicant must be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including but not limited to pertinent local laws and status. In lieu of official registration, an applicant may still be eligible for award if it shows proof of effort to secure registration, exemption from registration, or cause for why registration is not optional or practicable.

Individual entrepreneurs and microenterprises that apply for grant funding must have a national Tax Identification Number and any requisite permits, licenses, and registrations required.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost share/leverage is required under this funding opportunity.

All grants must include cost share/leverage of public/private sector resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise. This means that the value of public/private sector resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise (cash and in-kind) contributed to the implementation of the grant activity must at least equal (1:1 match) the monetary resources provided by the Trade Hub, co-investments up to a 5:1 leverage ratio or higher are preferred. It is strongly encouraged that companies/organizations propose private sector resources, assets, capabilities, and expertise that exceed the 1:1 match minimum, and as such will be viewed more favorably.

The Cost-Share/Leverage will be structured into grants after three to six months when markets revive and trade resumes.

Cost-Share or Leverage can be either cash (e.g. from operating cash flow, donor funds or other), rate discounts, services, material or third-party contributions, such as equity investors loans from financial institutions, or a combination thereof. Other USG funding sources are not accepted for cost-share or leverage requirements. Examples of in-kind contributions that may be counted include:

- Commodities;
- Use of training or other purpose-specific facilities necessary to a program's implementation;
- Value of time donated by technical consultants or company employees whose work and expertise are necessary to a project;
- Value of salaries for staff dedicated to a project;
- Technology, communications and capital assets;
- Intellectual property rights; or
- Licenses.

Determining whether or not the private sector resources and contributions can count toward meeting the 1:1 matching requirement, the Trade Hub will consider the following criteria:

- Attribution and Additionality
 - o The contribution must support and advance the objectives and activities of the project;
 - o The contribution must be based upon the active engagement of the private sector partner in the design and development of the partnership;
 - o The application of the resources and contributions to activities under the proposed alliance must be attributable to the private sector entity's anticipated or actual engagement with the Trade Hub; and
 - o The provision or application of the resources must be qualitatively and/or quantitatively different than what the entity would have done in the absence of anticipated or actual engagement with the Trade Hub.
- Nature and Origin – the contributions and resources must be private in nature and origin; they must come from a critical and core partner to the partnership; and they must come from one or more of the following sources:
 - o Private for-profit entities such as a business, corporation, or private firm;
 - o Private equity or private financial institutions, including private investment firms, mutual funds, or insurance companies;
 - o Private investors (individuals or groups);
 - o Private business or industry associations, including but not limited to chambers of commerce and related types of entities;
- Value Proposition and Development Impact – the resources and contributions mobilized from the private sector should, in combination with the support provided by Creative, provide the partnership with a comparative advantage in achieving significant and sustainable impact on the targeted development challenge.
- Measurable – the resources and contributions must be something of value that can be measured in some form that permits evaluation of the contribution's impact on achieving desired results.
- Composition – most of the private sector resources should come in the form of cash, equity capital, with a letter of intent from the equity investor, and or debt capital with a letter of commitment from the financial institution.
- Timing of Private Sector Resource Commitments and Contributions – The mobilization, contribution, provision and/or application of the resources can take place at any time during the development or implementation of the partnership.

While cost-share and leverage are those resources, assets, capabilities and expertise are costs

not part of the amount provided by the Trade and Investment Hub, they are treated differently.

1. Leverage strictly comes from the private sector, while cost-share does not;
2. Cost-share is binding and auditable under an award agreement, while leverage is not;
3. The determination of what constitutes leverage is based on the objectives, considerations and criteria set forth at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/GDA%20APS_APS-OAA-16-000001_2016-2018.pdf; the determination of what constitutes cost-share is set for at [2 CFR 200.306](#) and [ADS 303.3.10](#).

3. Limit on Number of Applications

An eligible organization may submit only one application. Please note that issuance of this RFA does not in any way obligate the Trade Hub to pay for costs incurred by a prospective applicant to prepare and submit an application.

D. APPLICATION & SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Content and Form of Application Submission

An application must be submitted in two separate parts: a) Technical Application and b) Cost Application. To prepare both parts, an applicant must use the templates provided in Attachments 2 and 3, which provide instructions on the required content and format. An applicant not adhering to these instructions, risks being considered nonresponsive to the requirements of the RFA and eliminated from further consideration.

Trade Hub encourage that all information should be submitted in English.

2. Method for Submission

The Trade Hub prefers to receive applications electronically via its online grants management portal, which can be accessed at the following link: <https://smart.fluxx.io/>. If an applicant has not previously registered in the portal, it must complete an initial registration form, which can be found at the following link: <https://smart.fluxx.io/apply/watih>.

Upon review and validation of the form by the Trade Hub, the applicant will receive an email with its username and password.

If applicant has previously registered on Creative's grants management system, SMART, PLEASE DO NOT register again. However, such applicants should contact the Lead Grants Manager, at grants@westafricatih.com with a notification of intent to submit application for this RFA.

Applicants are encouraged to use the online portal as it significantly reduces administrative burden for both the applicant and the Trade Hub. However, the Trade Hub recognizes that limited internet connectivity and/or access to information and communications technology may prevent an applicant from applying for funds through the portal. In such scenarios, the applicant may submit its technical and cost applications separately via email to grants@westafricatih.com.

Regardless of the submission method chosen, an applicant should retain for its records one (1) copy of its application and all enclosures that accompany it.

Should an applicant experience any difficulties submitting an application, it should contact the Grants department via email at grants@westafricatih.com.

3. Registration Requirements for U.S. Government Funding

To be eligible for award under this solicitation, all applicants are required to obtain a valid Duns & Bradstreet number (DUNS). Information regarding DUNS registration can be found at <http://www.dnb.com/get-a-duns-number.html>.

A U.S. NGO applicant must provide a valid DUNS number, be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application, and continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has: a) an active award with the U.S. Government or b) an application or plan under consideration by the U.S. Government or a U.S. Government implementing partner. Information regarding SAM registration can be found at: <http://www.sam.gov>.

The Trade Hub will not issue an award to an applicant until it has complied with all applicable requirements. As the registration process may take several weeks to complete, applicants are encouraged to register early. Please note that completion of an early registration does not constitute any commitment on the part of the Activity to make an award.

4. Submission Date & Time

Applicants must submit their Technical and Cost Applications prior to the closing date and time listed on the cover page. Applications that are submitted late are at risk of not being considered for review. Late applications are marked as "late." The Trade Hub reserves the right to accept and include late applications in the review and award process only when: a) The Trade Hub considers it to be in its best interest and/or b) applications received on time have not yet been opened and reviewed.

5. Funding Restrictions

An applicant that receives an award under this RFA is responsible for ensuring that it only incurs post-award costs that were approved and determined to be allowable, allocable, and reasonable

by the Trade Hub during pre-award negotiations. Furthermore, the Trade Hub will not reimburse a successful applicant for any costs it incurs prior to the date it signs a grant agreement with the Trade Hub.

6. Questions & Answers

Any questions concerning this RFA must be submitted in writing using the communication method described in the cover letter of this RFA and Section D.2 above. All questions must be received no later than the Deadline for Questions stated in the cover letter. Responses to questions received prior to this deadline will be furnished to all prospective applicants.

Any information related to this RFA that is provided to a prospective applicant may be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to the RFA on condition that: a) it is required to submit an application and/or b) its exclusion would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each application received by the RFA closing date will initially be reviewed against the eligibility criteria outlined in Section C above. Applications that do not meet these criteria will not be considered for award. Eligible applications that are incomplete will be determined nonresponsive and may not be considered for award.

Eligible, responsive applications may go through a preselection list based on the criteria stated in the RFA before being reviewed against the technical and cost criteria set forth below. Following this review, an apparently successful applicant may be requested to submit a revised application and/or respond to clarifying questions by a specified date. The Program reserves the right to award without requesting clarifications or additional detail in an application.

a. *Technical Evaluation Criteria*

The technical application will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Criterion #1	Description	Weight
Ability to mobilize quickly for rapid response	Illustrate how your company has the infrastructure and personnel in place to begin the activity as soon as possible (example, A tractor service already has 200 tractors with drivers ready and operational to plow land in Kaduna. The grant requested would help provide	25

tractor services to farmers at a subsidized cost for the upcoming season.)

Criterion #2	Description	Weight
Direct impact on low-income households	Number of low-income households directly and/or indirectly benefiting from this activity (example. The proposed activity would help shift garment production to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The grant requested would help provide wages to 100 factory employees for six months. The PPE produced would help supply national and private hospitals in Ghana, which would equip approximately 3,000 medical employees for one year).	20
Criterion #3	Description	Weight
Proposed cost-share/leverage contribution	All applicants must show substantial funding leverage of at least a 1:1 ratio with a target of 5:1 which can be applied during the two-years of the grant agreement. Also, cash leverage is much preferred to in-kind leverage so the more the cash contributions, the higher your application will score on this criterion. Applicants must show how their contribution is innovative, sustainable, and beneficial to their employees and the population in general.	20
Criterion#4	Description	Weight
Greater social benefit	Although the grant would aim to stimulate operations of a company, applicants should also show the social benefits of this activity, notably how it will positively benefit the population on a macro level taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic. Benefits can reference food security, economic security, health, or other areas (example, Food shortages of staple crops are expected to occur, due to reduced imports from Asia and other countries. The proposed activity would help increase the company's projected maize production by 2,000 hectares this upcoming season, which is expected to produce 12,000 MT of maize.)	25
Criterion #5	Description	Weight
Gender and youth approach	Applicants should show how women and youth, as direct and indirect beneficiaries will be engaged /participate in the activity. The target of at least 50% job creation for women and 50% for youth must also be met	10
Total Score:		100

b. *Cost Evaluation Criteria*

Once the technical review of the application(s) is complete, the Activity will evaluate the Cost Application(s) of the apparently successful applicant(s) for cost reasonableness, allocability, and allowability. Additionally, the Trade Hub will complete a capacity and risk assessment for each apparently successful applicant prior to award. The Trade Hub will use the results of the assessment to make a responsibility determination and, when a decision is made to proceed with award, select the appropriate award mechanism.

2. Review and Selection Process

To evaluate the application(s), the Trade Hub will establish a Selection Committee (SC) comprised of about three members with expertise relevant to the program requirements described in this RFA. Throughout the evaluation process, the Trade Hub will take every step to ensure that members of the SC do not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such with any organization submitting an application in response to this RFA. An individual shall be considered to have the appearance of a conflict of interest if that individual or that individual's spouse, partner, child, close friend, or relative works for, is negotiating to work for, and/or has a financial interest (including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors) in any organization that has submitted an application for review by the SC. Members of the SC shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from any applicant.

The Chief of Party or authorized delegee makes the final decision on all awards made under the RFA.

F. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Award Notices

A Notice of Intent to Award will be provided to the point of contact listed in the application of the apparently successful applicant(s). **Please note that such notification does not constitute or guarantee an award.** An apparently successful applicant must first demonstrate that it possesses or has the ability to obtain the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided. To this end, the applicant may be required to submit additional information about its organization (e.g., Articles of Incorporation or other documentation substantiating the legal character of the applicant or key individuals within its organization) for vetting purposes. Final issuance of an award will be contingent upon the timely receipt of the information requested and the successful completion of the Program's vetting process and pre-award capacity and risk assessment.

2. Award Administration

Any award resulting from this RFA will be administered in accordance with provisions provided in Attachment 4.

3. Reporting

Reporting requirements (including a reporting schedule) will be provided in the award document for any award resulting from this RFA. The specific reports required will depend on the award type and project duration; however, examples may include the following:

- Monthly Report(s) with activity updates for the reporting period, photos of project activities, challenges encountered during implementation, activities planned for the next reporting period, etc.
- Final Program Report including lessons learned, success stories, any impacts achieved vis-à-vis the funded project's goal and objectives, etc.
- Financial Reports including planned obligations, actual expenditures, funds remaining, etc. as well as a detailed Final Financial Report.

Please note that issuance of final payment will be contingent upon the Trade Hub's receipt and acceptance of the Final Financial Report and/or Final Program Report. For Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs), final payment is also contingent on the completion of the final milestone and acceptance of its deliverables/means of verification.

4. Program Income

Any income generated under a grant awarded through this solicitation must be reported immediately to the program's Grants Department and will be evaluated and negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

The Trade Hub reserves the right to fund one, some or none of the applications submitted.

The Trade Hub does not use third-party persons, companies, or organizations to facilitate grant submissions.

The Trade Hub does not charge a fee for any grant submission.

Please report any suspected fraudulent activity to grants@westafricatih.com or hotline@creativedc.com.

Attachment 2: Technical Application Template

To submit your application, please complete the Full Application form that will appear when you log in to the program's SMART grants portal. Also, fill your application in the Technical Application template included as a separate attachment to this RFA and upload in SMART before you submit.

Attachment 3: Technical Application Budget Template

To submit your cost application, please prepare a detailed budget for your proposed project using the budget template included as a separate attachment to this RFA and then upload it to the Cost Application Documents section of the Full Application form in the SMART grants portal. If you are unable to use the online portal, include your proposed budget with your offline submission to the program's grants department.

Attachment 4: Provisions

Refer to ADS 303.3.24, Simplified Grants, paragraphs “a” through “h”
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303.pdf>

Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303maa.pdf>

Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mab.pdf>

Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mat.pdf>

Attachment 5: Certifications

A. CONFLICT OF INTEREST AVOIDANCE CERTIFICATION

When signing a grant agreement with the Trade Hub, a successful applicant's authorized representative will also be required to sign a certification affirming that the entity she/he represents (the Grantee) does not have any conflicts of interest pertinent to the award. Such conflicts would include, for instance:

- Personal or professional relationships with entities that could directly benefit from the award;
- Personal or professional relationships with other staff persons involved in administering the award;
- Personal or professional relationships with government officials that may have influence or oversight of matters directly pertaining to the award;
- Holding formal or informal positions in organizations that would be relevant to the award;
- Holding any financial interest in any entity that would be impacted by the award.

By virtue of the Grantee's actions in carrying out the award, the authorized representative's certification will affirm that she/he would endeavor to ensure that conflicts of interest or their appearance do not arise, understanding that such conflicts of interest would arise when there are situations in which the Grantee is involved in multiple interests (financial, personal, or otherwise) that could be conceived of as corrupting the motivation of herself/himself or the Grantee in the discharge of duties pertinent to the award.

Should such real or perceived conflicts arise, the authorized representative's certification will affirm that the Grantee will immediately inform the Chief of Party of the project with which the award is associated to discuss the matter.

B. OTHER CERTIFICATIONS

When signing a grant agreement with the Trade Hub, a successful applicant will be required to sign the *Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient* referenced here: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>.

Attachment 6: Trade Hub Performance Indicators Table
Included as a separate attachment to this RFA.

Attachment 7: Guide on Gender and Youth Integration for Applicants

Included as a separate attachment to this RFA

Additional Information on Planting Season

The primary/main agricultural planting season (ie rain-fed) for the tropical rain forest regions in West Africa ranges from March – October for a range of food crops; In the savannah and Sahelian regions, the planting season is between May to August. Late planting operations still take place in September to October in this region but in most cases, irrigation is employed – few exceptions are fields established in river basins.

The implication is that for a grant process that may last for 3 months (May-July), the chances of a grantee to successfully carry out rain-fed planting operations in the savannah and Sahelian regions of West Africa this year are slim. To work in this region this year, we must consider irrigated farming operations.

In addition, there are differing crop calendars from south to north, ie we can take a closer look at this to determine what and where it's feasible assuming a ramp up in early May. Irrigated, paddy rice and greenhouse production will have a bit more flexibility, eg irrigated rice through September. Rice is an important crop for the Trade Hub given the likely drop in Vietnam rice imports that most West African countries heavily rely upon as part of the standard food basket. Also, the second minor maize season begins in September.