



AGOA Export Promotion Program

October 2020 - March 2024

I. Background

The USAID-funded West Africa Trade and Investment Hub Project (the Trade Hub) is a five-year, \$140 million trade and investment facilitation Activity awarded in September 2019 that aims to improve private sector competitiveness in West Africa through market-based approaches. The Trade Hub is an integral part of the Prosper Africa initiative and partners with the U.S. and West African private sector firms to generate new private-sector investment in key sectors to create jobs and increase trade between the U.S. and West Africa, including through increased utilization of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). This Activity comprises of two main components: (i) a grant-making facility for private sector partnerships and (ii) technical assistance (TA) that directly supports, coordinates, and engages with qualifying recipients (i.e., partners and grantees) to achieve USAID's trade and food security objectives. The project aims to achieve a minimum of \$300 million in new private sector investment, 40,000 new jobs, and \$240 million in exports by 2024.

Under this Notice, the Trade Hub is encouraging export ready, or quasi-export ready West African private sector companies to apply for this AGOA export promotion program.

II. Objectives

The overall objective of this program is to expand West African exports to the U.S. markets with an increased use of the AGOA benefits.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, it is to:

- Assist selected export ready companies to upgrade their operations to meet U.S. markets and buyers' requirements;
- Assist selected export ready companies to identify new buyers in the U.S. and facilitate in negotiating deals;
- Understand the U.S. market demand for AGOA eligible products and link U.S. sourcing companies to West African producers.

Expected Results

This program is expected to contribute in achieving the Trade Hub's target of generating \$240 million in new exports sales of food ingredients, processed agro-products, beverages, apparel and textiles, leather, footwear, cosmetics, etc.

III. Key Performance Indicators

- Value of exports in targeted agricultural and non-agricultural commodities from supported firms/associations/entities;
- Number of buyer/seller linkages established in targeted agricultural/non-agricultural sector as a result of USG assistance;
- Number of firms receiving USG-funded technical assistance to export;
- Number of firms receiving USG assistance that have obtained certification with (an) international quality control institution(s) in meeting minimum product standards.

IV. Illustrative Activities that could be eligible for technical assistance

- ✓ AGOA eligibility determination and assistance on the export documentation required;
- ✓ U.S. FDA compliance issues including Food Facility Registration, Food labeling, etc.;
- ✓ Quality Certification including HACCP, Global GAP, BRC, U.S. NOP, WRAP, etc.;
- ✓ Trade shows and Exhibitions (including virtual events);
- ✓ Full Branding strategy and implementation for the U.S. market;
- ✓ Market access strategies and links to buyers (including demand driven, and market-led sales and marketing): the Trade Hub's intervention strategy will be applied along a "pull-based" approach, focused on increasing and upgrading value-added market opportunities and demand for high potential West African products.
- ✓ Trade missions for U.S. sourcing companies to visit businesses in West Africa that have huge potential in value chains like apparel, dried fruits and juice, cashew kernels, etc.);
- ✓ Logistics and inventory management (supply chain): The Trade Hub will be organizing a unique and innovative "common services platform" for West African partner enterprises on the East Coast of the U.S. This platform will considerably enhance the competitiveness of West African exporters. It is expected to cover the following aspects:
 - Proper selection of the right West African companies to participate on this Platform (strong and growing balance sheet, products that have markets and growth potential in the U.S., strong quality control measures, meet all the U.S. requirements for import such as FDA Bioterrorism act, etc.);
 - Upon U.S. arrival, having importer of record, consignee of record, transportation, proper warehouse/storage facilities, ability to fulfill orders- ship pallets, truckloads, samples, test orders, etc.;
 - Administrative Infrastructure (ability to have remote U.S. presence, handling accounting, invoicing of orders, ability to take payments, monitor inventory controls, etc.);
 - Sales Platform (U.S. brand management to oversee all the sales and marketing components, broker and distributor relationships, management of U.S. customers, private label, etc.).

V. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible under this program, a West African company must have:

- ✓ a good capacity of production with no major constrain on the supply side;
- ✓ quality products that meet international standards;
- ✓ previous experience in export;
- ✓ interest in starting or increasing exports (sales) to the U.S.;
- ✓ ability and willingness to contribute financially, when needed, with at least 25% of total Technical Assistance cost.

VI. Selection and Implementation Processes

Entry points for businesses:

- ✓ Trade Hub's events including AGOA webinars and training workshops;
- ✓ Trade Hub's website and Public Private Partnership Team;
- ✓ USAID Missions and U.S. Embassies;
- ✓ National Chambers of Commerce and National Export Promotion Agencies;
- ✓ Financial and Investment Institutions;
- ✓ Private sector associations including exporters' associations, etc.

Selection process for Technical Assistance

1. Interested companies will need, as a first step, to fill out and submit the Expression of Interest by using the AGOA Export Readiness Form. This editable Form is also available online to download from the Trade Hub website here <https://westafricatradehub.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AGOA-Export-Readiness-Form.docx>
The completed form must be sent to this email address: agoa@westafricatih.com along with any supporting documents required in the Form. The Subject line must be "Expression of Interest for AGOA Export Promotion Program".
2. Then, the Trade Hub will review and evaluate the application using 7 selection criteria. The selection criteria document is also available on the Trade Hub website here <https://westafricatradehub.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AGOA-TA-Selection-Criteria-En.pdf>
3. Companies that get a score above 50% will be invited for an online/virtual interview, to discuss further about theirs needs and plans, and to confirm their "export ready" status. Since this is a competitive process, companies that score high will be prioritize for interviews and technical assistance.
4. Then, a Trade Hub team could visit the applicant company, if necessary, to determine and/or confirm its eligibility to receive technical assistance under AGOA export Promotion Program, assess needs, and agree on a budgeted action plan and cost-share to be contributed by the participant of this Program.

5. The Trade Hub team will evaluate the participants' completed form (as per the set criteria) as well as additional elements such as the action plan and cost share and will make internal determination on accepting the applicant in the program.
6. If the decision is taken to pursue the partnership between the Trade Hub and partner company, a Partnership Agreement will be developed and signed by the Trade Hub and the partner company. This document will clarify the roles and responsibilities of both parties.

Apart from AGOA information services (AGOA eligibility determination and assistance on the export documentation required) and in some cases, FDA Food Facility Registration, all other technical assistance will follow the selection process describe above.

VII. Cost Sharing

There are three types of activities based on the cost share ratio:

- ✓ Assistance, guidance and mentoring provided through the Trade Hub's own experts will be free of charge for the selected export ready partner enterprises. Some direct costs (samples, shipping, lab. testing, etc.) will be borne by each partner enterprise;
- ✓ Specific, focused and tailored Technical Assistance delivered to a selected partner enterprise (or a cluster of partner enterprises) by external firms (including STTA consultants) will be paid on a cost share basis between the Trade Hub and the partner enterprise. The Trade Hub will prioritize companies that offer more than 50% cost share.
- ✓ Assistance related to the management and day-to-day operations of the logistics' platform will be borne fully (100%) by the partner enterprises who would be selected by the Trade Hub. In fact, the Trade Hub will assist in designing, put in place arrangements between partner enterprises, help in setting up the necessary staff and equipment, and provide advisory guidance.

VIII. Confidentiality

The Trade Hub acknowledges that all information prospective applicants develop in connection with their AGOA Export Competitiveness Program applications received by the Trade Hub in full confidence, constitutes "Business Confidential Information" (defined as any and all information about the prospective applicant's, including without limitation, information about applicant's business, plans, formulas, sales, branding and marketing strategy, technology, know-how, processes, knowledge, intellectual property, ideas, trade secrets, research and development, pricing policies, customer lists/customer prospect lists, vendor relationships and agreements, employees, products, projects, properties, processes and procedures, financial condition and performance and documents). "Business Confidential Information" also includes information of third parties that the Trade Hub is required to treat as confidential. However, the Trade Hub shall not be held responsible for "Business Confidential Information" dissemination with respect to information the Trade Hub can document is or becomes readily publicly available without restriction and/or through no fault of the Trade Hub.