REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ASSESSMENT OF KEEPING FOOD MARKETS WORKING: BUILDING RESILIENCE OF NUTRITIOUS FOOD SME’S IN THE FOOD SYSTEM (IN NIGERIA, KENYA, MOZAMBIQUE, TANZANIA, AND ETHIOPIA)

Issued by
The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK  
II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING  
III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION  
IV. OFFER OF SERVICES
I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

1. ABOUT GAIN

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the UN in 2002 to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition. Working with both governments and businesses, we aim to transform food systems so that they deliver more nutritious food for all people.

At GAIN, we believe that everyone in the world should have access to nutritious and safe food. We work to understand and deliver specific solutions to the daily challenge of food insecurity faced by poor people. By understanding that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model, we develop alliances and build tailored programmes, using a variety of flexible models and approaches.

We build alliances between governments, local and global businesses, and civil society to deliver sustainable improvements at scale. We are part of a global network of partners working together to create sustainable solutions to malnutrition. Through alliances, we provide technical, financial and policy support to key participants in the food system. We use specific learning, evidence of impact, and results of projects and programmes to shape and influence the actions of others.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, GAIN has representative offices in Denmark, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, we have country offices in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania. Programmes and projects are carried out in a variety of other countries, particularly in Africa and Asia.

2. BACKGROUND

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP) and will be the administrative lead organisation for this RFP.

The purpose of this RFP is to engage services of a Service Provider to undertake a comparative case study assessment of the project “Building Resilience of Nutritious Food SMEs in the Food System”, a sub-component of Keeping Food Markets Working. In response to the global pandemic, GAIN has developed a program of targeted support to help sustain core food systems, workers, and markets during COVID-19 emergency, Keeping Food Markets Working. GAIN’s goal is to mitigate the collapse of food systems by supporting food markets and the value chain companies while strengthening equitable policy responses that can be delivered quickly to support continuity and protect sustainability of key workers in food systems in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs), especially in Africa and Asia, which face potentially catastrophic supply and demand disruption. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are central to LMIC food systems and to GAIN’s COVID-19 response program¹. SMEs handle 70-80% of all of the food consumed in sub-Saharan Africa and it is essential that they are supported to weather this crisis. These SMEs operate on very tight margins and are struggling with challenges of labour, limitations on movement and transportation, and weakening of demand with lockdowns. They need assistance to cope with financial and management implications of their situations.

As such, GAIN is implementing the following activities as a part of “Building Resilience of Nutritious Food SMEs in the Food System”, a sub-component of the Keeping Food Markets Working program, in Nigeria, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Activities include:

1. Support to existing GAIN/SBN/Marketplace for Nutritious Foods SME partners via emergency grants to protect core operational capacity (networks reach 800 companies).

2. Mapping the financial and capacity needs of SMEs on the ground through surveys and other information gathering, to generate options for national support mechanisms (see footnote 1).

3. Providing remote training (online/mobile) to support SMEs to adapt to the current crisis and to enhance business resilience and food safety, in response to identified needs.

4. Creating a knowledge centre for SME business resilience to prepare for a post-COVID business environment and provide technical assistance to prepare companies to withstand continued market uncertainty and “build back better”.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

The successful applicant shall undertake an assessment that considers the effectiveness, relevance, and coherence in line with OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. In addition, the equity of the program activities should be considered, in relation to gender and other relevant social distinctions. Key research questions are as follows:

A. Effectiveness: To what extent did the program meet its objectives and plausibly contribute to stated impact? Consider the assumptions laid out in the Theory of Change and relevant literature and the plausibility of activities supporting “building back better” and nutritious diets. Consider the scale of activities and the likely extent of impact. Across country contexts and firms analyzed, what were the patterns of drivers and inhibitors of impact? What was learned about “good practices” for design and implementation of this or similar programs?

B. Relevance: To what extent does the program address an identified need? Consider the evidence at the time of program design (surveys and situation reports), how the situation has evolved, and to what extent pivoting of program focus was necessary and possible.

C. Coherence: Are there complementarities across the different activities? For instance, do the trainings and resources enhance the effects of the grants? Is there coherence with country governments’ (and key non-governmental organizations) actions and policies?

D. Equity: To what extent do program activities consider and address the potential constraints that female business owners face in their context (country and sector)? Are there other social or organizational distinctions of businesses that are meaningful in terms of constraining or facilitating their success in this context?

Approach: A comparative case study approach is suggested. The approach should consider the complexity involved in the success or failure of a firm, especially in the current crisis situation. Comparing similarities and differences across cases will provide: a holistic view of how the program activities altered the behaviours and activities of the SMEs, guidance for improved implementation across different contexts, and test explanatory propositions about whether and why the activities achieved the stated objectives. The assessment should cover three levels: 1) national policy and regulatory situation, 2) the program theory of Change and implementation, and 3) the firm activities and setting.

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Level 1: National Policy and Regulatory Situation A review of national policy measures to support food systems businesses (specifically MSMEs) during COVID-19 will illustrate the policy and regulatory situation across all KFMW target countries, and as such would have broader relevance than just for this component. Countries included in the review are: Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Nigeria, India, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Pakistan. The review should build on existing and ongoing policy reviews and should consider what the policies are meant to address: what business environment constraints is the policy concerned with. Particular attention should be paid to stated or unstated implications of the policy measures for food security, nutrition or gender equity.

Level 2: Program Theory of Change and Implementation Review of program documents and data—including the program description, TOC assumptions, SME targeting criteria, and SME surveys—will clarify explanatory propositions to be tested and guide the identification of cases, setting up for Level 3\(^4\) analysis. A set of 2-3 cases should be identified per country targeted for SME grants (Nigeria, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Ethiopia). Cases should represent characteristics that are associated with firm resilience in the context of COVID-19 (according to program documents and SME surveys\(^5\)). Negative cases and women-owned businesses should be included.

Level 3: Firm Activities and Setting Finally, interviews with a set of grant recipients will build on SME survey data to better understand the stressors and responses during COVID. In particular, interviews will:

- Provide a deeper understanding of challenges faced with during COVID broadly (i.e., country context) and specific to their business (e.g., their sector or value chain);
- Explore grantee perceptions of the support GAIN provided (e.g., in terms of timeliness, appropriateness, and comprehensiveness);
- Discuss how businesses responded to challenges, the reasons for their responses, and to what extent GAIN support altered their activities or coping approaches, especially changes in their products offered, customer base, mode of sale/marketing.

Analysis should consider the plausibility of effects of the project activities on healthy diets of vulnerable consumers. For instance, considering quantities of nutritious foods marketed due to GAIN support, the socio-economic profile of typical customers, and innovations to support the convenience and safety of consumer food purchases. As needed, the Service Provider may identify key informants relevant to the grantee case studies to interview, such as peer businesses, suppliers, or other actors in their sector or supply chain, regulators or other policy actors familiar with the sector/value chain. It may be feasible to undertake these interviews virtually, by phone or video. This may be decided by the Service Provider.

3.1. OBJECTIVES

The core objective is to provide an evidence-based assessment of the attributes of SMEs and the business environment that are associated with success (building back better) and impact (supporting healthy diets) and the extent to which the program assumptions (Theory of Change) were confirmed. This should lead to a set of recommendations for supporting SMEs in the food system in the current crisis and in future crises.

3.2. DELIVERABLES

The proposed work will take place over the course of approximately 9 months. Below is an estimated timeline of deliverables:

\(^4\) A previous version of this RFP included a typo referring to “level 4 analysis. This has been corrected here to read level 3 analysis.

\(^5\) The program is currently collecting data on challenges faced by SMEs during COVID.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of Service Provider</th>
<th>26 January 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission of detailed research protocol, including methodology, field instruments, criteria and selection process for cases, and workplan (based, in part, on onboarding workshop with GAIN staff)</td>
<td>15 February 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of required materials to the relevant IRB</td>
<td>5 March 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of 10-Country national policy review preliminary report</td>
<td>30 April 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of 10-Country national policy review final report, considering GAIN feedback</td>
<td>31 May 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of draft comparative case study evaluation report</td>
<td>31 August 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of final comparative case study evaluation report, considering GAIN feedback</td>
<td>30 September 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of the final, cleaned, and anonymised interview data and study documentation (recordings and transcripts for qualitative interviews and in Nesstar for any quantitative research data) – to be delivered only once final report has been signed off by GAIN</td>
<td>9 October 2021</td>
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II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING

This section addresses the process for responding to this solicitation. Applicants are encouraged to review this prior to completing their responses.

1. CONTACT

Please direct any inquiries and communications to the contact below. Responses will not be confidential except in cases where proprietary information is involved.

rfp@gainhealth.org

2. BUDGET

Applicants are required to provide GAIN with a detailed financial proposal, in a sealed file separate from the technical proposal. The final budget amount will have to be approved prior to starting the project. The budget submitted should include (i) clear breakdown of all costs (including number of days and daily rate for each person), ii) justification of overall value for money, (iii) a comprehensive budget justification should be presented for each category of costs. All prices/rates quoted must be inclusive of all taxes/VAT as required.

3. FORMAT FOR PROPOSAL

The technical proposal should meet the following guidelines:

- A narrative that does not exceed 10 pages of single-spaced text, inclusive of references, tables, and figures. It should detail the proposed process, timeline, and methodology for answering the key research questions detailed in the Scope of Work. Justification for the suitability of the approach should also be detailed.
• Detailed profiles (qualification, expertise, relevant experience etc.) of the agencies and individuals who will be completing the work should be presented (not counted in the 10 page maximum), including their full names, their expertise and publications in relevant research. Staff or partners based in-country (one or more of the countries under analysis) is suggested but not required.

4. SUBMISSION

One signed copy of the Proposal along with all the required information including the fee proposal should be sent to the GAIN email address mentioned below, subject line “KFMW Building Resilience of Nutritious Food SMEs”.

rfp@gainhealth.org

5. DEADLINE

Completed proposals should be emailed by 5:00 pm CET on 20 January 2021

6. UNACCEPTABLE

The following proposals will automatically not be considered or accepted:

• Proposals that are received after the RFP deadline.
• Incomplete proposals.
• Proposals that are not signed.

7. REVISIONS

Proposals may be revised and resubmitted before the deadline.

8. ACCEPTANCE

GAIN will not necessarily accept the lowest cost or any of the Proposals submitted. Accordingly, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria and mandatory requirements shall govern.

9. COMPLETION

• Proposals must be submitted on official letterhead of the lead organisation or firm and must be signed by a principal or authorising signatory of the lead firm or organisation.
• In case of errors in calculating overall costs, the unit costs will govern.
• It is the applicant’s responsibility to understand the requirements and instructions specified by GAIN. In the event that clarification is necessary, applicants are advised to email specific questions to rfp@gainhealth.org prior to making their submission.
• While GAIN has used considerable efforts to ensure an accurate representation in this Request for Proposal (RFP), the information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline. The information is not warranted to be accurate by GAIN. Nothing in this RFP is intended to relieve applicants from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this RFP.
• By responding to this RFP, the applicant confirms its understanding that failing to comply with any of the RFP conditions may result in the disqualification of their submission.
10. RIGHTS OF REJECTION

GAIN reserves the right to reject any or all submissions or to cancel or withdraw this RFP for any reason and at its sole discretion without incurring any cost or liability for costs or damages incurred by any applicant, including, without limitation, any expenses incurred in the preparation of the submission. The applicant acknowledges and agrees that GAIN will not indemnify the applicant for any costs, expenses, payments or damages directly or indirectly linked to the preparation of the submission.

11. REFERENCES

GAIN reserves the right, before awarding the Proposal, to require the applicant to submit such evidence of qualifications as it may deem necessary, and will consider evidence concerning the financial, technical and other qualifications and abilities of the applicant.

12. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

After awarding the Proposal and upon written request to GAIN, only the following information will be released:

- Name of the successful applicant.
- The applicant's own individual ranking.

III. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS SOLICITATION

1. NOTICE OF NON-BINDING SOLICITATION

GAIN reserves the right to reject any and all bids received in response to this solicitation and is in no way bound to accept any proposal. GAIN additionally reserves the right to negotiate the substance of the successful applicants’ proposals, as well as the option of accepting partial components of a proposal if deemed appropriate.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information provided as part of this solicitation is considered confidential. In the event that any information is inappropriately released, GAIN will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. Proposals, discussions, and all information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential.

3. RIGHT TO FINAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE PROPOSAL

GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final costs, and the final scope of work of the proposal. GAIN reserves the right to limit or include third parties at GAIN’s sole and full discretion in such negotiations.

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Team. The following indicate a list of the significant criteria against which proposals will be assessed. This list is not exhaustive or 100% inclusive and is provided to enhance the applicants’ ability to respond with substance.

Applicants are required to submit the following information, conforming to the guidelines given in this section:

- Clear articulation and understanding of the task
• Demonstrated ability of team
• Competency and track record to conduct proposed research

The full proposal evaluation criteria and weights presented below. All proposals and budget will be evaluated separately.

• Technical quality of proposal 50%
  o Providing detailed technical documentation of the proposed strategy.
  o Clear articulation of methodology and research tools and how they will meet stated research objectives.
  o Clear articulation of the rigour of the methodology.

• Competencies and roles 30%
  o Experience working in relevant topical areas.
  o Organisational capacity to conduct research outlined in RFP.
  o Demonstrated ability to produce work in a timely fashion.
  o Strength of in-country partnerships/staff

• Budget 20%

GAIN reserves the right to contact the individuals and contractor(s) in order to verify the information provided as part of the Proposal.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

The review process will involve a Review Panel with participants selected by GAIN.

6. LIMITATIONS WITH REGARD TO THIRD PARTIES

GAIN does not represent, warrant, or act as agent for any third party as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not authorise any third party to bind or commit GAIN in any way without GAIN’s express written consent.

7. COMMUNICATION

All communication regarding this solicitation shall be directed to appropriate parties at GAIN. Contacting third parties involved in the RFP, the review panel, or any other party may be considered a conflict of interest and could result in disqualification of the proposal.

8. FINAL ACCEPTANCE

Award of a Proposal does not imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. GAIN reserves the right to negotiate on the final terms and conditions including the costs and the scope of work when negotiating the final contract to be agreed between GAIN and the applicant.

9. VALIDITY PERIOD

The offer of services will remain valid for a period of 60 days after the Proposal closing date. In the event of award, the successful applicant will be expected to enter into a contract subject to GAIN’s terms and conditions.
10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Subject to the terms of the contract to be concluded between GAIN and the applicant, the ownership of the intellectual property related to the scope of work of the contract, including technical information, know-how, processes, copyrights, models, drawings, source code and specifications developed by the applicant in performance of the contract shall vest entirely with GAIN.

11. SCOPE OF CHANGE

Once the contract is signed, no increase in the liability of GAIN or in the fees to be paid by GAIN for the services resulting from any change, modification or interpretation of the documents will be authorised or paid to the applicant unless such change, modification or interpretation has received the express prior written approval of GAIN.

IV. OFFER OF SERVICES

1. Offer submitted by:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(Print or type business, corporate name and address)

2. I (We) the undersigned hereby offer to GAIN, to furnish all necessary expertise, supervision, materials, and other things necessary to complete to the entire satisfaction of the Executive Director or authorised representative, the work as described in the Request for Proposal according to the terms and conditions of GAIN for the following prices:

   a. Click or tap here to enter text.
   b. Click or tap here to enter text.
   c. Click or tap here to enter text.
   d. Click or tap here to enter text.

3. I (We) agree that the Offer of Services will remain valid for a period of sixty days (60) calendar days after the date of its receipt by GAIN.

4. I (We) herewith submit the following:

   (a) A Proposal to undertake the work, in accordance with GAIN’s requirements specified.
   (b) A duly completed offer of services, subject to the terms herein.

OFFERS WHICH DO NOT CONTAIN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED DOCUMENTATION OR DEVIATE FROM THE PRESCRIBED COSTING FORMAT MAY BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE AND NON-RESPONSIVE.

Date this day of Click or tap here to enter text. in Click or tap here to enter text.

_________________________ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)
_______________________ Click or tap here to enter text.

Signature (applicant)